



DANIEL MAUL

HUMAN RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND DECOLONIZATION

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
ORGANIZATION, 1940-70

ILO CENTURY SERIES



Human Rights, Development and Decolonization

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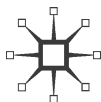
Human Rights, Development and Decolonization

The International Labour Organization,
1940–70

Daniel Maul

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Contents

<i>List of Photographs</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Timeline</i>	xvi
Introduction	1
The International Labour Organization	2
Human rights, development and emancipation	4
International organizations as historical actors	7
International organizations and decolonization	12
Prologue: Separate worlds – The ILO and “native labour”, 1919–39	17
<i>Mise en valeur</i> , indirect rule and forced labour:	
colonial social policy between the wars	20
The exception to the rule: the “Native Labour Code”	23
Part I “A People’s Peace in the Colonies”, 1940–47	
1 “The Promise of a New Earth to Till”: The ILO’s Colonial Work in Exile, 1940–43	31
“The time may come shortly”: the ILO in exile and the “native labour” issue	31
“Native labour” in exile	33
Tailwind	35
In the shadow of war	36
“A little less anonymity”	39
Securing the colonial contribution to victory:	
the Atlantic Charter and the ILC in New York, 1941	40
On the side of the Allies	40
The Atlantic Charter and colonial minimum standards	43
The tide turns	47
Colonial depression and the “people’s peace”	47
American scare	51
Promises	53

2 A Charter for the Colonies: The Colonies at the Philadelphia Conference, 1944	59
A parallel operation: colonial reforms in the ILO's post-war planning	60
Universalism in a colonial framework	61
Social policy in dependent territories	64
The pillars of the "people's peace"	65
The pitfalls of reform	70
Pious hopes?	73
The ideology of victory: the colonial reforms of Philadelphia	75
The "social conscience of mankind"	75
"Make sure that they too will taste the sweet fruit of victory": colonial reforms in Philadelphia	77
"Nothing can be done about it of course": the colonial powers in Philadelphia	79
Colonial charter or imperialistic stereotype?	82
3 A New World with New Ideas: The ILO and the Quest for a Colonial Post-war Order, 1945–48	86
"This is 1945!" The colonial principles of Philadelphia and the new international order	87
The ILC in Paris, 1945	89
Universalism put to the test: the Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1945	91
Paid holiday for the colonies	93
Wage policy	94
Growing impatience	96
The ILO on the side of the West and the completion of the colonial reform programme of 1947	100
Finding a place in the new order	101
The Conventions of 1947	105
Migrant labour	106
Non-discrimination	107
Freedom of association	108
Towards a different ILO: Indian independence and the start of the post-colonial era	111
Representation and regionalization	112
From the colonial economy to underdevelopment: new demands on the ILO	114

Part II The Tools of Progress: The ILO, 1948–60

4	Principled Development: The Beginnings of the Technical Assistance Programme (TAP)	121
	David Morse and the origins of the TAP	121
	Too much in a groove	121
	“Available for maximum cooperation”: the ILO and Truman’s Point IV Program	125
	Acting on poverty’s cry: technical assistance for underdeveloped countries	129
	“Help them move the ILO way”: the ILO’s integrated approach to development	131
	“Training, training, training”	131
	The other side of the coin: technical assistance and standard-setting	133
	The democratic road to modernization	136
	The successes and limits of the TAP	139
	The TAP as a political success story	142
	Between the past and the future: the post-colonial face of the TAP	146
	Colonial barriers	148
5	At Arm’s Length: The ILO and Late Colonial Social Policy	152
	The lull after reform: the colonial work of the ILO in the first years under David Morse	152
	New initiatives	156
	The long road to Africa	160
	“Not the slightest inclination of willingness”: the debate surrounding an African field office	160
	A new drive for change	164
	The ILO’s arrival in Africa	168
	The experts’ view: social policy in non-metropolitan territories from the perspective of the COESP, 1951–57	173
	“Native” experts or “real” experts: Who should sit on the COESP?	174
	The COESP as a voice for the International Labour Office	176
	Qualified universalism: the findings of the COESP	179
	Migrant labour	179

6 Universal Rights? Standard-Setting against the Backdrop of Late Colonialism, Decolonization and the Cold War	185
The ILO and human rights, 1945–60	186
Human rights and the integrated approach to development	186
Human rights disputes	189
The Penal Sanctions Convention: the last colonial standard	192
The Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955 (No. 104)	194
Discrimination in employment and occupation	197
The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	199
Forced labour	202
Attempts to define a “normal” level of coercion: the Mudaliar Committee	205
The Ruegger Committee and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	208
Freedom of association	211
Failure to overcome the colonial double standard	214
Tripartism under fire	218
Asia as a test case and the “educational approach”	220
Part III A Growing Conflict: Development, Human Rights and Decolonization, 1960–70	
7 A New Power: The ILO and the Growing Importance of the Developing World in the 1960s	227
The ILO and the new majorities	228
Pressure to reform	228
Politicization	230
“With us or against us”: the ILO’s South African crisis of 1963	236
Apartheid under fire	236
The ILO in the balance: the ILC of 1963	238
“Stronger than before”: the ILO after the crisis	242
The social side of development: the TAP in the 1960s	245
The ILO and the North–South conflict	245
A social response to the crisis	248
“First attempt at truly world-wide planning”: towards a World Employment Programme	250
New avenues for the integrated approach to development	255

8 An Intellectual Fashion: Human Rights Standards as a Barrier to Development?	259
The good society: the ILO's norms after African independence	259
A "question of honour"	259
Development as a state of emergency	261
The development offensive and coercion:	
the African youth labour service conflict	264
Standards or development? The Office divided	268
A positive concept of free labour	272
"Harsh realities": Freedom of association after independence	273
The ILO and the African trade union movement	273
Pandora's box: tripartism under renewed fire	278
Conclusion	286
<i>Appendix I: Selection of Important Conventions and Recommendations, 1930–70</i>	303
<i>Appendix II: Ratification of Core Human Rights Standards by Country and Date of Ratification (Selection)</i>	304
<i>Notes</i>	309
<i>Sources and Bibliography</i>	386
<i>Index</i>	403

Photographs

Cover photo: Future Indian and Kenyan vocational training supervisors in a mechanical engineering factory in Hyderabad (India), some time around 1960. Photograph published with kind permission of the ILO Historical Photo Archives.

The International Labour Conference in Philadelphia, 1944	29
Two Directors of the ILO: Edward Phelan and John Winant, 1940	42
Wilfrid Benson at the Philadelphia Conference, 1944	74
Chinese and Indian Workers' delegates in Philadelphia, 1944	83
Edward Phelan and General de Gaulle on the fringes of the ILC in Paris, 1945	90
The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru opening the first Asian Regional Conference in Delhi, 1947	116
Vocational training project in South-East Asia at the end of the 1950s David Morse, 1950	119 126
Jef Rens, Wilfred Jenks and David Morse, c.1954	140
Delegates are received by the French colonial administrators at the opening session of the COESP meeting in Dakar, 1955	165
Predominantly white: COESP meeting in Dakar, 1955	177
A rigid and racist labour pass system was installed under the South African apartheid regime. Here, a miner is required to give fingerprints. Johannesburg, late 1950s	198
During a visit by the Office's Assistant Director-General, Raghunath Rao, Egyptian trade unionists accuse the colonial powers of using forced labour on the Suez Canal	204
International Labour Conference, 1963	225
The Nigerian Minister of Labour, Joseph Modube Johnson, announces he is stepping down as President of the Conference at the ILC, 1963	242
Three areas of technical assistance in the 1960s	252
Vocational training centre in Kenya	252
Management training seminar in East Africa	253
Land use project in Chad	253
The participants in the first IILS course, 1962	257
On the fringes of the African Regional Conference in Addis Ababa, 1964	281
Workers' education seminar in West Africa in the late 1960s	282
Workers' education: an Office-run seminar in Asia in the 1960s	283

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Abbreviations

AAC	Asian Advisory Committee
AATUF	All-African Trade Union Federation
AFAC	African Advisory Committee
AFL–CIO	American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organisations
AFRC	African Regional Conference (ILO)
ARC	Asian Regional Conference (ILO)
ASS	Anti-Slavery Society (UK)
ATUC	African Trade Union Confederation
CCTA	Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa
CDWA	Colonial Development and Welfare Act (UK)
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (ILO)
CFA	Committee on Freedom of Association (ILO)
CGT	Confédération Général du Travail (France)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CIO	<i>see</i> AFL–CIO
CO	Colonial Office (UK)
COESP	Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories (ILO)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office (UK)
DAMP	David A. Morse Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton, USA
EC	Emergency Committee (International Labour Office)
ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration (US)
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (UN)
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America (UN)
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EEC	European Economic Community
EPTA	Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (UN)
ERP	European Recovery Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FIDES	Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social (France)
FO	Foreign Office (UK)
FPP	Francis Perkins Papers, Columbia University, New York City, USA
FTUC	Free Trade Union Committee
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GB	Governing Body (ILO)
GMMA	George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Md., USA
IALC	Inter-African Labour Conference
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICS	International Civil Service
IDA	International Development Association
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
IILS	International Institute for Labour Studies (ILO)
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILI	Inter-African Labour Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOA	Archives of the International Labour Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
IOE	International Organization of Employers
IPR	Institute for Pacific Relations
ISI	import-substituting industrialization
LAB	Ministry of Labour (UK PRO)
MF	Morse Files, ILO Archives, Geneva
MOL	Ministry of Labour (UK)
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, USA
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLC	Native Labour Code
NMTs	Non-Metropolitan Territories
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OB	<i>Official Bulletin</i> (ILO)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHIM	oral history interview (David Morse)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US)
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
PF	Phelan Files, ILO Archives, Geneva
PRO	Public Record Office, National Archives, London
RITU	Red International of Trade Unions
RoP	record of proceedings
SUNFED	UN Special Fund for Economic Development
TAB	Technical Assistance Board (EPTA)
TAP	Technical Assistance Programme (ILO)
TC	Trusteeship Council (UN)
TUC	Trades Union Congress (UK)
UAR	United Arab Republic
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN	United Nations
UNA	UN Archives and Records Section, New York City, USA
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	UN Industrial Development Organization
UNIHP	UN Intellectual History Project
UNRRA	UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
WEP	World Employment Programme (ILO)
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WHO	World Health Organization

Timeline

- 1940 International Labour Office's wartime exile in Montreal (to 1947)
- 1941 Atlantic Charter
Japanese victories in the Pacific; loss of most European colonial possessions in South-East Asia; Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brings the United States into the war
Edward Phelan takes over provisionally from John Winant as Director of the Office
First session of the International Labour Conference since the outbreak of war, New York
- 1944 Free France's colonial conference in Brazzaville, French Congo Conference and Declaration of Philadelphia
- 1945 End of Second World War
Establishment of the United Nations
- 1946 The ILO becomes a UN specialized agency
- 1947 India and Pakistan obtain independence
The Office returns to Geneva
Adoption of the colonial reform opus on "Social policy in non-metropolitan territories" (to 1948)
First (preparatory) Asian Regional Conference in New Delhi, India
- 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
David Morse becomes Director-General of the Office
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87)
- 1949 Mao Zedong wins Chinese civil war
US President Truman's Point IV Program is announced
Indonesia obtains independence
Start of the ILO's Technical Assistance Programme
Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)
- 1950 Start of the Korean War
Second Asian Regional Conference in Nuwara Eliya, Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
- 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina: end of French colonial rule in Asia
Start of Algerian war of independence
Soviet Union's reaccession to the ILO
- 1955 Bandung Conference on Afro-Asian solidarity, Indonesia
Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention (No. 104)

- 1956 Suez crisis
- 1957 Ghana becomes the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to obtain independence
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)
- 1958 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)
- 1959 ILO's first African field office opened in Lagos, Nigeria
- 1960 "African year": 17 colonies in Africa, most of them French, obtain independence
UN General Assembly adopts "anti-colonial" Resolution 1514
Start of the Congo crisis
First African Regional Conference in Lagos, Nigeria
- 1961 UN declares the 1960s to be the first "development decade"
First Conference of Non-Aligned States in Belgrade
- 1962 Algeria obtains independence
Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention (No. 117)
- 1963 Foundation of the Organization of African Unity
ILC marred by South African crisis
- 1964 First UN Conference on Trade and Development
South Africa leaves the ILO
Period of structural reform for the ILO (to 1966)
- 1969 Start of the World Employment Programme
ILO's 50th anniversary; 25 years since Declaration of Philadelphia
ILO awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- 1970 David Morse steps down as Director-General and is succeeded by Wilfred Jenks

Introduction

In the three decades following the Second World War a revolution took place within the international system of States. Between 1945 and 1975 around 70 countries gained their independence and the era of European rule over a large proportion of the world's population came to an end. Decolonization, however, was not neatly concluded with the series of official ceremonies in which political power was transferred from the colonial rulers to the leaders of the colonial liberation movements. Even where the "programme of total revolution" demanded by radical propagandists of decolonization such as Frantz Fanon was not put into place,¹ the attainment of national sovereignty was always accompanied in one way or another by extensive material and intellectual engagement with the economic, social and cultural legacy of the colonial era. Moreover, what is true of the former subjects of colonial rule in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Middle East also applies to the former colonizers: decolonization did not end abruptly the day their flags were taken down. The continuing relevance of the topic can be seen today in areas such as foreign policy and migration, or in the debates on the "positive" role of colonization for the colonized which are rekindled at regular intervals. In this sense decolonization has remained an ongoing project for all involved – a process which to some degree transcends the distinction between a colonial past and a post-colonial present.

This book aims to establish that in the wider attempt to understand decolonization in all its complexity, and in its long-term and global dimensions, international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) make an ideal object of study. The ILO, like other parts of the United Nations (UN) system, was through the period under study a world in miniature in which many of the major factors influencing the decolonization process took on clear and comprehensible contours. As the UN's "world social organization", the ILO was concerned with issues of central importance to this process, and the study of its activities has unique potential to open up the panorama of social debates connected with the dissolution of colonial empires, shedding light on how decolonization changed both discursive

patterns and the political weight of issues on a global level. Examining in the context of decolonization the debates conducted within the ILO on matters such as human rights and development is a way of revealing the values on which the social architecture of the global post-war order was based.

The International Labour Organization

The ILO is a remarkable institution for many reasons. Its position within the network of UN organizations alone is exceptional in two respects. First, the ILO is the oldest by far of all the constituent parts of the present-day system of international organizations under the umbrella of the UN family. Set up in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles and run under the auspices of the League of Nations before the Second World War, it was given the status of a UN specialized agency in 1946 – the only institution connected to the League to have survived the war unscathed. The ILO's original mandate to improve the conditions of working men and women the world over was partly a reflection of demands voiced by European philanthropists and social reformers and the international trade union movement since the mid-nineteenth century for an institution that, by bringing about international agreements in the field of labour, would help to ensure that social progress and concrete gains achieved on the national level (in areas such as working hours, wages and basic social security schemes) would not be annihilated by international economic competition. It was only during and immediately after the First World War, however, that these demands coincided with a political environment favourable enough for action to be taken. The fact that large parts of the workers' movement had closed ranks with their governments during the war was a major factor behind the latter's readiness to answer their calls. Even more importantly, the Russian October Revolution of 1917 convinced even hesitant forces among the Great Powers that some concessions had to be made to the moderate parts of the labour movement in order to calm its revolutionary potential. Indeed, in its early days the ILO was often described and defended against critics as a form of "revolution insurance". Employers' relative openness to an international organization concerned with labour issues at this juncture had much to do with this same fear of uprisings, combined with their recognition of the need for state intervention in the reconstruction of national economies destroyed by the war. Many held the ILO to be a suitable institution for the coordination of these efforts.²

The ILO is also distinguished within the UN system by its unique tripartite structure, an organizational principle made manifest in the fact that the delegations sent by each member State to the political bodies of the Organization include, as well as two government envoys, one representative each of the country's employers' and workers' associations, both

of whom have full voting rights. Unlike other international agencies, the ILO is thus not a purely intergovernmental forum. It is the only international organization which fully involves non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in its decision-making processes. Tripartism has always been more than a mere structural principle to the ILO. The Organization's tripartite makeup has lent a special element to all the discussions taking place in its forums. Not only has the participation alongside government envoys of representatives of capital and labour brought an alternative style of diplomacy and sometimes conflicting perspectives into the discourse, it also has ensured that the problems being tackled inside the ILO continue to be discussed within society in the member States on a much broader basis than could be expected if it were the Government's task alone to relay the results of these debates. Finally, tripartism has always been treated by ILO officials (as well as by a significant proportion of the ILO's constituents, in particular the workers) as one of the main ideological pillars on which the ILO rests. As this book will show, although tripartism has not remained unchallenged and its meaning has been subject to much reinterpretation in the course of the ILO's history, the concept – in as much it provides a framework and model on the basis of which potentially violent and disruptive conflicts of social interests can be settled in an ordered, regulated and above all peaceful way – still represents the genuinely liberal values on which the ILO was founded.

Aside from the tripartite aspect, the ILO's structure mirrors that of the UN and other international organizations. It has a permanent secretariat, the International Labour Office (often referred to here as "the Office"), headed by a Director-General and employing a permanent staff of international civil servants who work in the Geneva headquarters or in one of the ILO's regional and field offices. In the course of 90 years of history the International Labour Office as a body of international civil servants has undergone major transformations and grown enormously, as have its tasks.³ First of all, in comparison to its founding days, the ILO's profile has become much more global. Between the two world wars the ILO pursued its activities almost exclusively from Geneva, but starting in the late 1940s a network of regional structures began to be set up, which resulted in the decentralization of the ILO's work in many areas. This trend was, as the following study will show, not least a consequence of decolonization.

Constitutionally, the real political power within the ILO rests with the Governing Body (GB), consisting of Government, Workers' and Employers' representatives, which acts as the executive of the Organization and elects the Director-General. In the period under investigation, the Governing Body still bore a clear resemblance to the UN Security Council. It was composed of a specific number of members elected for a finite term, and a group of permanent members from States "of chief industrial importance".⁴ Finally, the International Labour Conference (ILC), often referred to as the "world

parliament of labour", is the plenary meeting of members or the "General Assembly" of the ILO and is convened annually.

The ILO's activities extend into three different areas. Its original task, which remains to this day one of its main fields of activity, was to define international labour standards. Since 1919 the annual sessions of the ILC have adopted nearly 200 Conventions and a similar number of Recommendations (instruments that are not binding under international law). While the standards adopted in the early years were intended predominantly to protect workers in the physical performance of their work, as early as the 1930s the ILO began to extend its standard-setting to a wider field of social policy, covering areas ranging from systems of social security to employment policy. In the period after the Second World War, human rights issues such as freedom of association and protection from discrimination at work increasingly became the object of the Organization's normative activities. After the Second World War the ILO also began to function as an agency of technical cooperation in areas such as vocational training and the formulation of social policy. Finally, the International Labour Office has, since its inception, acted as an institution of research into global social problems. Its authority as a source of information on social issues and compiler of labour and social statistics for governments cannot be overestimated, and has more than once been an asset that has helped the ILO to manoeuvre through difficult times.

Human rights, development and emancipation

The following study is as much about decolonization as it is about the role of international organizations as historical actors. Its major aim is to examine the ILO as a protagonist and seismograph in the decolonization process. Accordingly, the question of what inspired the concepts of social policy which the ILO attempted to bring to bear on decolonization is examined in as much detail as the questions of whether, how and to what degree the dynamics of the decolonization process affected the work of the ILO. In the context of this analytical framework, the recurring themes structuring the following investigation will be human rights and development. Three factors underlie this focus. First, these are concepts which increasingly dominated the ILO's activities during the period under consideration. Second, they provide a window on to the divisions which ran through the Organization in the course of and as a result of the dissolution of the European colonial empires. Third, the human rights and development discourses illustrate better than anything else both the expectations and demands which the ILO's new members placed on the Organization during the decolonization process and the ways the ILO found to meet those demands while still pursuing its own agenda.

The idea of universal and inalienable human rights took hold with unprecedented vigour around the middle of the twentieth century, lending the colonial liberation movements a new source of legitimacy in their demands for equality and self-determination.⁵ While the notion of the people's right to self-determination propagated in Versailles by US President Woodrow Wilson in 1919 had been an early source of inspiration to the nationalist movements in Asia in particular, and had given added authority to their calls for self-rule,⁶ it was during the Second World War that the idea of inalienable human rights, now reinterpreted as rights of the individual, really began to develop its anti-colonial force. The espousal of the idea during the war originated not least in the attempts of the liberal democracies of Europe and North America to find an intellectual response to a wartime enemy that had radically denied the validity of human rights of any kind both in theory and in practice. These attempts gained the concept some powerful advocates, particularly in the United States.⁷ For the European colonial powers among the wartime Allies, however, it turned out to be difficult to limit to the metropolitan sphere the promises contained in the Charter of the UN (1945) and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The notion that individuals had rights regardless of where and under which political system they lived opened up a realm beyond that governed by colonial power structures. It gave political and social movements in the colonies a means to challenge colonial rule by making the legitimacy of this rule conditional on the fulfilment of certain universal criteria. The idea of individual human rights initially continued to play only a marginal role in the political rhetoric of national liberation movements and the growing number of post-colonial governments that brought the anti-colonial struggle to the international arena. In the heads of their leaders the right of colonial peoples to self-determination still held top priority. As time went by, however, the same forces (soon joined by the Eastern socialist countries) began to recognize the usefulness to their cause of the obvious disjuncture between the newly promulgated universalist ideals and colonial practice. This goes a long way to explaining why the new language of individual human rights quickly began to feature so prominently in the anti-colonial struggle played out within the forums of international organizations post-1945 and, equally, why this language was fraught from the very beginning with serious contradictions.⁸

As political decolonization progressed, a second emancipatory discourse based on the concept of development increasingly began to feature alongside the human rights idea.⁹ For the post-colonial countries, the phrase "economic underdevelopment" gained currency, becoming arguably the central category used to describe the inequalities within the world community of independent States. The "new nations" emerging from colonial rule into political freedom perceived their efforts to catch up economically with the

rich industrial countries as the continuation on an international level of the struggle for national independence.

The further political decolonization progressed, however, the clearer it became that the two emancipatory discourses were not entirely consonant with each other. Many governments in the “Third World” began to believe that the two ideals of realizing human rights and creating rapid, sweeping economic progress were not necessarily compatible. During the 1960s, increasingly fundamental criticism was expressed of the first two “generations” of human rights discourse, based on the political and social rights of the individual, which came under attack as the expression of a Eurocentric world-view. From here the road led to the emergence, at the beginning of the 1970s, of a new, “third-generation” human rights discourse, giving priority to “solidarity rights”, such as the right to development or the right to freedom from colonialism – rights no longer of the individual but of States or societies. In a way these trends amounted to a twisted return to the group rights of the pre-1945 era or – seen from a different perspective – to the right to self-determination itself in new clothing. In the course of this debate the proclamation of culturalist concepts such as “Asian values” and the rejection of a human rights universalism accused of serving Western interests themselves became part of the call for decolonization.

To sum up, I suggest that “human rights” and “development” be viewed in the context of decolonization first and foremost as central emancipatory discourses. An examination of these discourses can help to identify the major political and intellectual shifts accompanying the decolonization process. This study will show that in every phase of this process the ILO was at the centre of debate in the fields of human rights and development, making its own significant contributions to the discussions. Its scrutiny of colonial social and economic development policies during and after the Second World War made it the arena of crucial debates on the moral foundations of colonial rule. The function the Organization fulfilled for the newly independent States that joined it in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was no less important. It provided them with a forum in which to articulate to the world community their demands for economic and social progress, and within which their problems in these fields could be discussed in a global context.

The Organization elevated human rights to a position of fundamental importance in its work even before the war ended. At the Philadelphia Conference in 1944, a milestone in the history of human rights, the ILO redefined its principles and standards as universally valid social rights of citizenship. From this point at the latest, the ILO’s norms provided a clear point of reference for political and social movements in the colonies. The Organization became a forum in which demands for equality could be formulated in the new and powerful language of social rights. Revitalized by their redefinition as human rights, the ILO’s standards were now offered

to the Organization's members, and in particular the new ones from post-colonial countries, as a universally valid yardstick of social progress.

Equally significant was the ILO's contribution to the emergence and propagation of the development idea within the UN system. I argue that the ILO was instrumental in establishing a global moral and conceptual consensus which made it possible better to define and measure the inequalities between rich and poor countries on the one hand and to separate the "developed" from the "underdeveloped" and "modernity" from "backwardness" on the other. The International Labour Office was itself an active participant in the debate concerning the "right way" to be taken by developing countries into modernity, especially with regard to the social aspects of this process. It drafted concepts to facilitate the modernization efforts of the post-colonial countries and ultimately also served as a practical agency of development assistance.

The ILO was, then, over the course of the whole period in question, a locus of interface between the human rights and development discourses. It set a stage on which the tensions and conflicts between the two ideas were played out, and at the same time was itself involved in an intensive quest for ways to reconcile the two concepts. Tracing the debates on human rights and development, historicizing them and analysing them as emancipatory discourses, serves the dual objective of shedding light on central elements of the intellectual history of decolonization inside the nucleus of the ILO and contributing to the historiography of human rights thinking and the development idea.

International organizations as historical actors

The investigation of the ILO's role in the decolonization process reflects an underlying understanding of the dual role of international organizations as historical actors.

On the one hand, the ILO provides an international forum. International organizations such as the ILO were among the main stages for political debates that were triggered by and raged in the background of the dissolution of the colonial empires in the years after the end of the Second World War. Like the UN system as a whole, the ILO was a central venue for the altercations of the Cold War, the growing conflict along the North–South axis over the world economic order or the international struggle against the South African apartheid regime. Accordingly, it offers insights into the way in which these debates were interlinked and how they affected each other.

On the other hand, the International Labour Office, the secretariat of the Organization, has an independent role as an active participant in the discussions. The emergence and growth of an international civil service (ICS) and the extension of the responsibilities of the secretariats of international organizations which accompanied this process constitute one of the most striking

developments to have taken place in the international system in the past century. What sets the International Civil Service apart from other bureaucracies is the fact that the loyalty of its members (according to the job description, at least) belongs not to their countries of origin, or to any other State or State union, but, by definition, to the “world community” as a whole. Although this is certainly an idealized image which the International Civil Service does not always live up to, possibly even in the majority of cases, it cannot be ignored that under the auspices of the League of Nations and the UN an international bureaucracy has grown up over the past 90 years whose responsibilities have grown continuously to encompass issues ranging from the international protection of refugees to health policy, world trade and the preservation of cultural heritage and the environment. The particularly long tradition of the International Labour Office, founded in 1919, gives it a special place in this context.

Theoretical studies with a historical focus that measure the weight and degree of influence of international organizations at both levels are in short supply.¹⁰ Even the UN and its specialized agencies have been the subject of only a small number of studies that go beyond a rather narrow focus on such organizations as international political forums.¹¹ Recently there have been some interesting shifts in the research landscape, though none great enough to obscure the fact that studies which take a historical approach still represent a small and insignificant minority in a field that continues to be dominated by political scientists and experts in international law.¹²

The situation with regard to the ILO is similar. As Jasmien Van Daele has shown in an excellent overview of the historiography on the ILO,¹³ there has never been a shortage of studies on the ILO’s history by either “insiders” (representatives of governments, workers or employers, and former officials) or “outsiders” (academics),¹⁴ yet works which attempt to place the ILO’s activities in their wider historical context without losing sight of the independent role of the International Labour Office are few and far between. Anthony Alcock’s history of the Organization, published in 1970, provides insights into the global political environment in which the ILO was working during the period under investigation, but fails to shed much light on the intellectual context in which the ILO sought solutions to the problems of the post-war period.¹⁵ Recent years have seen the first halting efforts to deal with the history of the ILO in a broader context, with the appearance of studies that integrate it with other fields of research such as labour history, the history of transnational expert networks and gender studies.¹⁶

One reason for the apparent historiographic reluctance to investigate the role of international organizations in international politics seems to be rooted in doubts about the extent to which such institutions can actually be regarded as autonomous actors. In methodological terms the question of “actor capacity” of the degree of autonomy of international organizations or their ability to generate ideas and to create acceptance of these ideas among their clientele – politically and intellectually independently from

the States that constitute them – is indeed a critical one. Compared to States, international organizations have very few instruments of real power in this respect. The ILO's options for imposing sanctions on those members that violate the provisions of its standards, for example, are extremely limited. This is one reason why dominant thinking in international relations theory is generally sceptical about the autonomy of international organizations.¹⁷

In contrast, more recent studies which build upon and, to some extent, move beyond functionalistic and regime-theoretical models plead for a gradualistic understanding of autonomy in the international system. As soon as States stop acting entirely autonomously and commit to international agreements, they argue, international organizations can no longer be regarded as completely lacking autonomy. Such studies draw attention to the ability of international organizations, working below the level of "simple" state power interests, to establish processes (e.g. human rights regimes) which, to some extent at least, continue to function regardless of changes in power constellations in the international system. They also note the ability of the leaders of such organizations to exploit the political climate in order to form alliances, identify their members' common interests, point members in the direction of such interests and seek partners with whom to realize a political agenda. The integration of governments into firmly established procedures, persistent campaigning for recognition of the organization's rules and lobby work carried out on the national level by political and civil society groups sympathetic to the organization's aims thus play a central role in the strategies pursued by international organizations. Their prospects of success depend not least on the ability of the organization's leadership to generate an *esprit de corps* among the staff – that is, to monopolize staff loyalty, to indoctrinate employees with the ideology of the organization and to elicit commitment to a common mission. In almost all of these fields the ILO has, even in the view of its critics, managed to do comparatively well.¹⁸

The question of autonomy and influence, of whether and how international organizations do actually develop "actor capacity", can only be answered by taking into account the interaction between the two levels on which they work. Not only do States constantly attempt to instrumentalize international organizations for their own purposes, the leaders of these organizations attempt in turn to assert their own agendas with the help of the political committees of their institutions. For all parties concerned, the chances of success always depend on the historical and political climate in which they are acting. In the 1930s, with the rise of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, the likelihood of international action was much lower than it was in the period of post-war planning investigated in this study, during which the idea of international cooperation was more or less universally embraced. When the era of political decolonization is considered in its entirety, the picture is not quite so clear. Although the Cold War, which dominated the international stage during this period, clearly defined

the framework within which international organizations could move and subjected them to some obvious constraints, it also, on occasion, opened up opportunities for action, as will be shown in the example of the ILO.

All that said, in the absence of powerful instruments to ensure compliance with its standards, the ILO, like most international organizations, depends above all else on the power of (international) public opinion to achieve its objectives. In this respect the concept of “discourse” becomes particularly significant in this study. The ILO will be examined in its function as a field of discourse inside which the International Labour Office and the members of the ILO interacted. Within the Organization, social policy standards and the discussions surrounding them set a benchmark for what may be regarded as progressive policy. The effective force of the resultant discourse lies essentially in the fact that it offers governments a chance to impart legitimacy to their own national policies on both the domestic and the international level. The fact that the ILO’s standards usually take the form of a compromise and are formulated in such a way as to enable as many countries as possible to ratify them make it difficult for governments to take up a position outside this normative discourse. Frederick Cooper, in his works on the social and labour policy aspects of decolonization in Africa, claims that such discourses have a tendency to develop a momentum of their own.¹⁹ In *Decolonization and African society* he looks at the role of the ILO as the catalyst of a universalistic social policy discourse in the transition from the late colonial to the post-colonial period. One of Cooper’s central theses is that, through the interaction between the International Labour Office and the ILO’s members, the Organization created, on the basis of categories such as social rights and development, a yardstick by which progressive policy could be measured. Embracing these policy ideals provided both the colonial powers and the post-colonial governments with the chance to legitimize, on an international level, their claim to power. At the same time, Cooper argues, these same policy ideals also gave independence movements and opposition groups within the post-colonial States a reference point on which to base their claims. In accordance with Cooper, the notion of discourse used in this study will be a pragmatic one, applied in order to trace and bring to the fore the interests and balances of power which were reflected in the policies of the ILO.

If the “soft” factors which really determine the degree of influence that international organizations can exert are taken into account, the range of instruments they have at their disposal when it comes to promoting their agendas is actually quite varied. They include the publication of reports and the results of research in national media, and the convocation of external commissions made up of high-ranking experts whose political or moral weight serves to endorse programmes that have largely been drawn up within the organization. Essentially, international organizations attempt to mobilize the “moral power” of public discourse by seeking partners and

allies both inside the organization and outside it – for example, the media. In this way, decision-makers at the national level are handed both possible options for action and ready-made arguments for use in whatever controversial debates are currently being conducted.²⁰ The function of international secretariats as global reservoirs of expert knowledge with excellent connections to the international research community is often overlooked, but is another important factor in the capacity for influence they have. Over the past 100 years international organizations have, in many areas, become both top-level think tanks in their own right and exchanges for ideas and knowledge generated elsewhere.

The influence which international organizations exert on national politics as a result of their involvement in the global research community can be traced by analysing the dialogue which took place between the ILO and groups described by the political scientist Peter Haas as “epistemic communities”. Haas sees the inexorable rise of such communities – “networks of knowledge-based experts” – as having started in the late nineteenth century, as the tasks facing governments became ever more complex, leading to the professionalization of politics and the expansion of administrative apparatuses. Haas defines epistemic communities as groups of experts, generally rooted in academia, who have “shared principled and normative beliefs”, “shared causal beliefs”, “shared notions of validity” and a “common policy enterprise”. Their role is to articulate problems, create a framework for debates both on the political level and within civil society, help States to identify their interests and formulate options for action which, according to Haas, are informed by the conviction “that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence”.²¹ The influence of such epistemic communities is most clearly felt not only in national administrations but – and this was especially true in the period following the Second World War – in international organizations’ secretariats, such as the International Labour Office.

The typical example of an epistemic community in the global transmission of whose ideas the Office played a central role is the Keynesian school of economic theory. Two other particularly significant – in the context of this study – fields of interaction between the International Labour Office and epistemic communities are the new development thinking advocated by colonial reformers between the late 1930s and the end of the 1940s and the rise of modernization theory in American social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s. The International Labour Office served as a sounding board for and a transmitter of expert knowledge, and, in many cases, provided the impetus for such knowledge to be forged in the first place. Intellectual and, sometimes, personal connections between epistemic communities and the research departments of the International Labour Office ensured that, in the work of the ILO, certain convictions and policy preferences took precedence over others. The Office also had at its disposal a wide range of ways of ensuring that its views directly influenced the development process of

the ILO's member States: via technical assistance and the direct access this afforded to ministries and planning staff; via training programmes and Regional Conferences; and, not least – thanks to its tripartite structure – via direct contact with interest groups made up of workers and employers from the member States. The reciprocity of the relationship between the ILO and epistemic communities is exemplified particularly well in the case of modernization theory. The rise of this school of thought was accelerated not least by the growing need of international organizations for development-related knowledge.²² At the same time, the practical experience of international development agencies, their successes and, even more importantly, their failures were some of the main sources of inspiration for the refinement and advancement of the theory on the academic level.²³

This study attempts to interpret the actions of ILO officials in the light of their complex relationships with such knowledge-based networks, to trace the influences that inspired the intellectual contribution the ILO made to the discussions surrounding decolonization and to investigate the factors and processes which shaped the ILO's concepts. Particular attention will be paid here to the specific opportunities afforded to the Office by the Organization's tripartite structure.

The two approaches chosen, then – the analysis of the International Labour Office's role as a (semi-)autonomous player interacting with epistemic communities and the examination of the ILO as a forum of world politics against the backdrop of the dissolution of European colonial empires – aim to open up new avenues for research on the post-war international system by contributing to both the diplomatic and the intellectual history of decolonization.

International organizations and decolonization

A vast number of studies since the 1960s have looked at the question of why, within a relatively short period of time, colonial empires that had been standing for many years suddenly collapsed like houses of cards. In the past two decades a clear trend has become observable in the historiographic treatment of the causes and course of decolonization which takes more account of the international factors that favoured that process of dissolution. These recent studies take a more complex view of decolonization than older analyses, which interpreted the process either as a planned transfer of power and the result of mere cost-benefit calculations in the metropolises or, alternatively, as the result and conclusion of the struggle for liberation by national independence movements. Most authors now discuss decolonization as a multidimensional process on which three simultaneous influences came to bear. The dissolution of the colonial empires is interpreted as a consequence of, first, developments inside the centres of colonial power (the metropolitan dimension); second, developments in the colonies

themselves (the peripheral dimension); and, third, power-political shifts in the international system (the international/global dimension).²⁴ Within all these interpretative frameworks, and even in those studies in which the emphasis lies on international factors fuelling the dynamics of the decolonization process, the influence of international organizations is generally viewed as marginal. International bodies such as the UN usually feature as nothing more than projection screens reflecting the global political constellation of the post-war period, which was, according to the master narrative, anyway favourable to the dissolution of the colonial empires, thanks to the dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union, two basically anti-colonial superpowers, and the constant decline in the political and economic importance of the European colonial powers. Only a handful of studies highlight the significance of the UN as a forum in which colonial rule was denounced by the growing number of post-colonial countries until it finally became the object of general condemnation.²⁵

There are studies which do indicate the active role played by international organizations in decolonization, however, and most prominent among them are those dedicated to the history of the human rights idea and development thinking, both of which have become vibrant fields of research over the last decade.

With regard to the former, the question of if and to what extent human rights made an impact on the decolonization process has just recently been the subject of lively controversy. While Samuel Moyn argues that human rights became a force in international politics primarily during the 1970s against the backdrop of a very particular period of the Cold War,²⁶ others have taken a different view.²⁷ The crucial question that has to be faced by both sides, and in fact by any proponent of the argument that “human rights matter”, is how to measure their influence.

The same holds true for the role of international organizations in this context. Paul Gordon Lauren’s *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* is a case in point.²⁸ It provides a precise historical contextualization of the rise and progression of human rights thinking in the twentieth century and emphasizes the immense significance of international organizations in propagating the idea of universal human rights and thereby providing colonized peoples with a clear point of reference for their demands. One shortcoming of Lauren’s book, as in fact of most of the literature on international human rights, is that it concentrates on the conflict between the supporters and opponents of human rights without examining in any depth the clashes that have occurred *within* the human rights discourse since the 1950s, including the debates within international organizations (both on the forum and on the secretariat level).

It is precisely these schisms that generated the more recent debates in which proponents of cultural relativism have emphasized the Western character of the first two “generations” of individual civil and social rights,

denying their validity for the non-Western world. One major point of dispute between universalists and culturalists is the value of the human rights work of international organizations during the decolonization process. While universalists emphasize the positive contribution such work made to safeguarding the rights of the individual and establishing common values within the world community before and after independence, culturalists tend to regard it as having served and continuing to serve Western claims to hegemony.²⁹

The debate surrounding the function of international organizations in implementing ideas on development – ideas that were essentially formulated in the West – is similarly controversial. One assumption that is more or less undisputed, however, is that during the period after the Second World War, and particularly with the beginning of activities in the field of technical assistance, the UN system played an important role in “decolonizing” development thinking. The involvement of international organizations elevated the concept of development from a strategy pursued by the colonial bureaucracies from the late 1930s onwards to lend new legitimacy to their claims to political control in the face of economic and social crises to a subject of discussion fit for the sphere of international politics.³⁰ Positively construed, this process is presented as the transformation of a colonial control discourse into a global ideology which unified all its participants behind the common goal of a prosperous world and permitted the post-colonial nations to formulate their demands for economic emancipation in the international system. Critics, on the other hand, argue that international organizations paved the way for a state of “knowledge imperialism” inspired by Western models in which the colonial control discourse was actually revived on a global level.³¹ There is a distinct lack of research into how and under what conditions concepts of development and modernization took hold within international organizations, and the question of why and on what points such concepts were accepted or criticized has not been sufficiently investigated either. This is particularly true of the period which marked the climax and turning point of the decolonization story – the 1950s and 1960s. This neglect of the role of UN organizations such as the ILO, whose activities centred on the sensitive and highly politicized fields of social and economic policy, has distorted the view both of the historical roots of contemporary discursive paradigms and of the conflicts which surrounded development and human rights during this period of transition to a new international order.

* * *

The period under investigation runs from 1940 to 1970, the core phase of the decolonization process. The cut-off points are provided by two breaks in the Organization’s history. It was in 1940 that the ILO was forced to leave

the European arena and go into exile in Canada, coming down unambiguously on the side of the Allied Nations. That year also marked the start of a fundamental debate on the reform of the Organization's objectives and methods, soon to centre on the human rights idea. And it was in 1970 that the ILO's leading figure in the post-war era, David Morse, passed the position of Director-General on to his successor after a period of 22 years in office that had changed the face of the Organization more profoundly than any other in its history.

The study is divided into three parts which follow on from each other chronologically. Part I, "A people's peace in the colonies", looks at the period from 1940 to 1947: the war years and their immediate aftermath. This section focuses on the ILO's efforts to integrate the colonial territories into a new general discourse of social rights. The first chapter examines the conditions under which the ILO's programme of post-war colonial reform came into being, with emphasis on the debates and influences which acted on the Organization during its period in exile. The second chapter deals with the presentation of the draft colonial programme at the Philadelphia Conference of 1944, one of the major turning points in the history of human rights in the twentieth century. Against this backdrop, the ILO's plans for colonial reform are analysed in the context of Allied plans covering the social aspects of the post-war order. The third and final chapter of the first section looks at the actual form the documents on colonial social policy took and the way they were shaped by the human rights debates of the immediate post-war period. Particular attention is paid to the significance of the East-West conflict and the effects of decolonization in Asia on the debates and programme of the ILO.

Under the heading "The tools of progress: The ILO, 1948-60", Part II examines the ILO's shift towards new activities in the field of development assistance. The main area of focus is the ILO's attempt to combine the aspects of its programme directed at the developing countries with the principles and standards of the Organization on the one hand and a universally valid model of modernization on the other. Chapter 4 explores the reasons and motives that, with the Cold War looming and decolonization in full swing, caused the ILO and its new Director-General, David Morse, to open up a new field of activity for the Organization in the area of technical assistance.

Chapter 5 deals with the difficulties the ILO faced in its attempts to involve colonial Africa in its new spectrum of activities as an agency of development. It looks at the strategies the ILO developed in order to counter the colonial powers' resistance to ILO "interference" in Africa and traces the ways it found to participate in the debate of the 1950s surrounding colonial social policy. The meetings of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories set up by the Office for this very purpose are used to explore the ILO's position on colonial policy and also to generate inferences about the coordinates of late colonial social policy.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the significance of human rights thinking in the ILO's approach to modernization. The focus is on the specific opportunities and problems posed by the idea of human rights for the ILO in its efforts to convince the post-colonial "new nations" of the universal validity of its values. The human rights discourse is analysed in the highly charged context of late colonial rule, decolonization and the East–West conflict that formed the backdrop to the debates surrounding the basic principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia, which in the course of the 1950s were transformed into international labour standards. The issues at stake included discrimination, forced labour, freedom of association and penal sanctions for breaches of employment contract in the colonial territories. The acrimony of the disputes and the degree of acceptance which the principles in question found within the Organization and the member States serve as indicators of the robustness or fragility of the approach to modernization which the ILO had prescribed itself.

Part III, "A growing conflict: Development, human rights and decolonization, 1960–70", explores the new challenges facing the ILO as a result of the rapidity with which decolonization progressed after the start of the 1960s. Chapter 7 initially looks at the immediate effects which the new majorities and balances of power within the ILO had on the life and structure of the Organization and its programme of work. The conflict which emerged on the issue of South Africa and its policy of apartheid serves as an example of the level of influence wielded by the new nations, the power of their actions and the extent to which the policy of the ILO began to change under their growing weight. The chapter also examines the effect on the ILO's technical activities of the ever more salient North–South divide, and the avenues the Organization explored in an attempt to take account of the development needs of its members.

The eighth and final chapter deals with the ILO's efforts to assert the value of its human rights principles in a world that had changed profoundly since the end of the war. Focusing on two issues, forced labour and freedom of association, it explores the controversies which saw the developing countries increasingly challenging the value of basic ILO principles on the grounds that they were obstacles to economic progress. The chapter examines both the Office's attempts to solve these problems and the limits placed by the new political maxims taking hold at the end of the process of decolonization on the universality it claimed for its human rights standards.

Prologue: Separate worlds – The ILO and “native labour”, 1919–39

In 1928 Albert Thomas, the first Director of the International Labour Office,¹ travelled to East Asia in order to see for himself the social problems facing the population. Thomas began by touring some of the independent countries in the region, and then took up the invitation of the French and Dutch governments to visit a selection of their colonial territories. As soon as Thomas set foot in Indochina, Hanoi's French-speaking press launched a fierce attack. His visit was deemed an attempt on the part of the ILO to interfere in the internal affairs of the French colonial administration, and Thomas himself was denounced as a communist. The next part of his trip, to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), was also marred by ill-feeling. Thomas was appalled by some of the conditions under which workers were expected to serve Java's plantation economy, which in his eyes were tantamount to slavery. Even while the Director was still there, the Dutch colonial administration made clear that it resented his comments, and once back in Geneva Thomas almost triggered a diplomatic crisis with his report on the trip, despite the extreme caution with which it was formulated and its concession that the controversial forms of contract labour Thomas had witnessed appeared to be a remnant of past practices which were, happily, on their way out. The report was criticized in the strongest terms and Thomas accused of having grievously abused the hospitality of the Dutch colonial administration.²

This anecdote is a good illustration of the fact that anyone hoping to address the problems of colonial social policy during this period was entering a minefield. Claiming exclusive sovereignty over their possessions, the colonial powers did not appreciate any kind of “meddling” in their affairs. The metropolises' resolute refusal to expose their rule to any level of international monitoring was one of the main reasons the colonial territories hardly featured at all in the work of the ILO during the 1920s and 1930s. The premise that in colonial affairs they were not to be held accountable

was a kind of *sine qua non* attached by the European powers to all their work in international forums. After the First World War the major colonial powers, Britain and France, had increasingly begun to define themselves as “trustees” of their colonies. To some extent, this was a reaction to the new moral force of the national movements in their territories, for example, the Indian Congress Party, which were demanding their share in a victory to which the colonies had made an important contribution. However, this change in terminology had as little to do with any intention on the part of the colonial powers to initiate radical political reforms as it did with a willingness to submit their rule to increased international control.³ Even at the establishment of the League of Nations the dogma of absolute national sovereignty over colonial affairs triumphed. The only concession made by Britain and France to their anti-colonial American ally was not simply to annex the confiscated German territories and the Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire, as they had planned,⁴ but formally to entrust them to the newly established League of Nations Mandate Commission. In its way, the mandate system laid the foundations for a new international discourse on colonial responsibility, although the demands placed on the mandate powers were, in reality, moderate, not even extending, for example, to an obligation to promote the political or social development of the territory in question.⁵

During the ILO’s first two decades, the colonial powers’ claim to sovereignty was effectively never disputed within the bodies of the Organization, an acquiescence in which its predominantly European character at this point played an important part. Nine of the 12 seats on the Governing Body were initially taken by representatives of European governments – among them all the colonial powers except Portugal.⁶ Despite the membership of some Latin American, Asian and even two African countries (Ethiopia and Liberia), the world outside Europe had, at best, a marginal place in the Organization’s work.⁷ The initial absence of the two major powers critical of colonialism, the United States and the Soviet Union,⁸ also contributed to the fact that, in the period between the two world wars, the colonial powers met with little or no effective resistance to their determination to keep their international possessions out of the international spotlight. Any objections that were raised usually came from the ranks of the Workers’ group. Although colonial issues were not a priority for the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), which loosely organized the Workers’ group’s activities between the wars, its representatives did their best to ensure that the social problems of the colonies were not swept under the carpet entirely.⁹ The Workers’ group also proved a useful counterweight to the colonial powers when it came to deciding on the institutional measures that would determine how the ILO dealt with the colonial territories.

One of the most important decisions regarding the ILO’s constitutional treatment of the colonies was taken at the Second Session of the ILC in

1920. The issue under debate was whether and how the provisions of international labour standards could be applied to overseas territories. The starting position of the colonial powers on the matter was highly restrictive. The delegation representing the British Empire originally wanted each administering power to have sole discretion on whether and to what extent a Convention would apply to its overseas territories. This position stemmed from the fear that a system whereby the colonial power was forced to declare openly whether it held a Convention to be applicable to its territories or not would be the first step in the direction of international accountability. At the insistence of the Workers' group, spearheaded by the French trade union leader Léon Jouhaux, the Conference finally agreed on a formulation which, outwardly at least, emphasized the obligations of the colonial powers. Jouhaux argued that although most of the planned standards were not applicable in their entirety to the colonies, it would still be wrong to dismiss them as fundamentally irrelevant to the colonial workforce. He saw it as part of the "development of civilisation" to give these workers the opportunity to profit from at least some of these standards, which he saw as tools for progress.¹⁰ The French Government was eventually brought round to the same point of view, and the resulting compromise went down as Article 35 of the Constitution, otherwise known as the "colonial clause". According to this clause, Conventions adopted by the Conference would apply as a matter of principle to non-autonomous territories (or "non-self-governing territories" to use the ILO terminology of the inter-war period), (a) except where local conditions made the Convention inapplicable and (b) subject to such modifications as considered necessary to adapt the Convention to local conditions. The colonial powers thus retained the freedom to exempt their colonies from certain international labour standards without these territories automatically falling outside the scope of ILO standards in general.¹¹ In practice, however, Article 35 provided the colonial powers with an effective means to ensure, up to the Second World War, that all initiatives aimed at achieving more rapid social progress in the colonies, or at securing the larger-scale implementation of ILO norms, came to nothing.

Another issue which reinforced the principle of national sovereignty was the question whether the colonies should be allowed to send their own delegations to the annual sessions of the ILC. The only colonial power which permitted this was Britain, which had allowed India to be a full member of the Organization right from the start.¹² However, the case of India was exceptional. Before 1939, no metropolitan government ever included a representative of any other colonial territory as a direct participant in its delegation, although prominent figures from the colonies were very sporadically called upon in an advisory capacity to help with the ILO's standard-setting work. The few colonial representatives who did participate in the ILC were almost always part of the Workers' delegations, though occasionally also to be found among the Employers.¹³

Despite the formidable political ramifications of the topic, the International Labour Office kept the problems of colonial labour in its sights from the start. The “Native Labour” section of the Office was a small (its staff numbered between one and three in the period before the Second World War) but dedicated department which, starting in the 1920s, collected and evaluated information from the colonies. As it did so in close cooperation with the colonial powers, friction was kept to a minimum. The good relations it built up turned out to be particularly important at the end of the 1920s, when the ILO began to take a more public and more stringent approach to the abuse of colonial labour. Luckily, its initiative coincided with increasing criticism from within the metropolises themselves of official responses to the social problems in the colonies, and its cause was boosted by growing calls for international action.

***Mise en valeur*, indirect rule and forced labour: colonial social policy between the wars**

The appalling social situation in the colonial territories and the grave abuses which the ILO set about tackling at the end of the 1920s could largely be traced back to the colonial powers’ decision after the First World War to pursue a policy more closely focused than previously on exploiting the colonies’ resources and increasing their productivity in order better to serve the needs of the metropolitan economy. Initial calls for a comprehensive *mise en valeur* of the colonies in this sense, as envisaged by the French colonial minister Albert Sarraut in 1923, and a short time later by his British counterpart Lord Milner, did not meet with much enthusiasm.¹⁴ Governments were simply not willing to use up metropolitan budgets on colonial projects. London, Paris, Brussels and The Hague did all, at different times, provide funds for major infrastructure projects such as the expansion of rail networks and ports, and made considerable efforts in other areas to offer favourable conditions to private capital.¹⁵ Anything beyond this, though, the colonial State was expected to fund from its own pocket; and nowhere was the principle of colonial “self-sufficiency” more rigidly applied than in the area of social policy. Social improvement was generally left to religious missions or the large European companies that had set up branches locally. In some places (such as the mining regions of South and Central Africa), private companies were actually responsible for the first attempts to set up social security schemes, although even these only benefited a closely defined group. However the problems were tackled, the crucial fact was that the metropolises saw no need for direct state action. The notion of burdening British or French taxpayers with the costs of colonial social policy would have appeared quite absurd to politicians in Paris and London during this period. The few local health services under state supervision to be found in the colonies had to be financed by funds generated independently by the colony itself.¹⁶

This reluctance to get involved in social development was not rooted solely in views on the appropriate use of metropolitan money. Essentially, the very idea of social policy as applied in the metropolitan sphere contradicted outright the particularistic doctrine propagated between the wars which drew a clear distinction between the European and the colonial spheres.¹⁷ For the British advocates of indirect rule, which formed the ideological basis of colonial dominion, particularly in Africa, it would have been a grave mistake, for example, to promote a policy which provided the indigenous population with an incentive to leave the rural areas and move permanently into “European” working conditions. Wherever the need for labour arose, short-term, migratory forms were favoured and the social security costs were left to be shouldered by the indigenous workers’ “natural environment” – that is, the rural areas from which they came and to which they were expected to return when their labour was no longer required. Up until the start of the Second World War it was general policy to avoid, as far as possible, “stabilization” at the place of work and permanent migration to the cities. European-style social policy aimed at creating a stable, waged workforce had no basis in the ideology of the period. Lord Lugard’s *The dual mandate*, the manifesto of indirect rule, gives a glimpse into the thinking behind this particularistic social or “development” ideology.¹⁸ Lugard’s central theory was that the colonial powers had the double duty of enabling the world to benefit from the wealth of natural resources to be found in their territories while at the same time helping the colonial population towards prosperity and progress. Out of consideration for the fundamental “otherness” of the indigenous population, however, natives must be allowed to move only in contained, protected realms. This would give them the opportunity to pursue a course of independent, but supervised and, above all, cautious, development. The dual mandate did not rule out educating the indigenous population to accept European working habits, but postulated that this was a process that needed to be conducted with extreme patience.

In practice, of course, indirect rule seldom lived up to this ideal. It came to mean social and political stagnation imposed from above, and the often unscrupulous extraction of temporary labour from the indigenous communities.¹⁹ Although indirect rule was practised mainly in British territories, all the colonial labour regimes of the period between the wars worked on similar lines. Essentially, they all distinguished between a “European” and a “traditional” economic and labour sector, and satisfied the need for workers in the former using methods of coercion. As a result, forced and compulsory labour became one of the central features of inter-war colonial rule. Left up to the free play of social and economic forces, the increased need for labour which arose during the period of economic expansion in the 1920s would have been impossible to meet in colonial communities with predominantly subsistence economies. The construction of railways, roads

and ports for southern Africa's growing mining industry, or for the plantations of South-East Asia and West Africa, demanded a larger workforce than was available on a voluntary basis. Moreover, private economic interests in the colonies had methods available to them with regard to the recruitment and disciplining of indigenous workers that would have been unthinkable in the metropolises. The result was a plethora of non-economic constraints that effectively forced individuals to provide labour in return for wages, or even without remuneration. In many cases the colonial administrations acted, sometimes against their will and sometimes on their own initiative, as agents of local economic interests.²⁰ The local power structures inherent in indirect rule often had the catalytic effect of making the indigenous authorities (and their French counterpart, the *chefferie*) into intermediaries in the labour recruitment process. In many places in the 1920s, what can only be described as recruitment "roundups" were carried out using the full force of the colonial State.

There were some regional variations in the role of the colonial State, however, and practices also varied over the course of the decade. In order to recruit labour for the construction of railways in West and Central Africa, for example, France set up the institution of the *deuxième portion du contingent*, a system of labour service disguised as military service in which the "recruits" were placed under military supervision and forced to work for the duration of their service.²¹ Other methods, implemented in close cooperation between public and private interests, included limiting the amount of land indigenous populations were allowed to own to below the level needed for subsistence, passing laws banning "vagrancy" and imposing taxes on indigenous communities – all with the aim of forcing their members to take on waged labour.²²

The brutality of the recruitment methods and working conditions that arose in the course of the policy of *mise en valeur* after the First World War, combined with the destructive effect that the mass recruitment of men of employable age was having on the social structures of indigenous communities, became a subject of comment in the press that caught the public imagination. As a result, the topic of forced labour systems pervaded all aspects of contemporary debate on colonial policy. In Europe and North America in particular, the problem mobilized a wide public composed of groups rooted in large part in the tradition and discursive framework of the anti-slavery movement.²³ And precisely because, in the international discourse of the 1920s, the opposition to colonial systems of forced labour was so closely linked to the century-long struggle against slavery, the ILO was ultimately asked to turn its attention to the issue. When, in 1926, the League of Nations adopted the Slavery Convention, it simultaneously mandated the ILO "to prevent compulsory labour or forced labour from developing into conditions analogous to slavery".²⁴

The exception to the rule: the “Native Labour Code”

The League of Nations’ mandate gave the ILO a legitimate basis on which to take action on forced labour. However, it now had to find a way of integrating the field of “colonial labour” into the general activities of the Organization. As the international labour standards which the ILO had so far created were essentially tailored to the situation in the industrialized nations of Europe, this was initially problematic.²⁵ The basic idea behind these early labour standards was to safeguard on an international level the social progress that had been made in particular domestic contexts. They were a way of eliminating the short-term competitive advantage which a country with low standards, or indeed a complete absence of standards, had over countries which applied stricter norms. The ILO’s standards were universal only in that they were deemed to apply equally to the very distinct group of States defined by the content of the norms themselves.²⁶ As a result, it was no easy undertaking to integrate colonial labour into the cosmos of regular international labour standards. The issue of colonial labour highlighted the fact that ILO norms were not designed to confer rights on the individual but were actually directed at the sovereign nation State, which afforded them validity by means of legislation.²⁷

As a consequence, neither those in favour of decisive action to tackle forced labour (the ILO included) nor the colonial powers were keen to see a forced labour Convention adopted in the form of a regular standard. The first group was aware that the labour systems which the League of Nations feared could turn into “conditions analogous to slavery” were almost all to be found in colonial territories, and that, in order to be effective, the document needed to formulate as explicitly as possible that its objective was to eliminate these systems. The colonial powers had even less reason to want colonial issues to be dealt with within a regular Convention. They feared that a standard which addressed the home country and the colonies alike had the potential to be interpreted as a signal that the metropole and the periphery were actually comparable, an impression they wanted to avoid at all costs.

After consultation with the colonial powers, the ILO got around the problem by deeming colonial labour to be a special form of labour – “native labour” – to which separate norms applied. A Native Labour Code (NLC) was drafted to stand alongside the International Labour Code, which consisted of all the Organization’s Conventions to date. That solution remains to this day the only instance in which the ILO has recognized a distinction between one region or particular group of workers and the rest, and the only occasion when it has deviated fundamentally from the basic premise of universality which has governed its standard-setting activities since 1919.²⁸ For, despite the specificity of the NLC, the “colonial clause” remained intact,

thus entitling the colonial powers to apply the NLC only partially or only in certain territories. As a result, the colonies became, on the spectrum of ILO standard-setting, an area where less stringent rules applied.

All four Conventions – the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 30); the Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936 (No. 50); the Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939 (No. 64); and the Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939 (No. 65) and two Recommendations that the ILO passed between 1930 and 1939 in constructing the NLC revolved around the problem of forced labour. The discourse that surrounded the development of the NLC clearly reflected the limits of thinking on the socio-political aspects of colonial rule in the period between the wars. Both the opponents and the advocates of forced labour accepted that there was a basic difference between “normal” and “colonial” labour. They shared the view that colonial policy had a duty to “educate” the indigenous population. The main area of controversy was the question of whether the abolition of forced labour and related phenomena was a help or a hindrance in the performance of this duty. Although in the debate on Convention No. 30 there was more or less unanimous agreement on the long-term objective of the instrument – to abolish forced labour – there were many serious differences of opinion on everything above and beyond this, especially with regard to the “educative” methods currently in use and the time frame that should be laid down for the abolition of all forms of coercion.²⁹

An early advocate of the immediate abolition of all forms of forced labour was the Office’s Director, Albert Thomas.³⁰ Thomas believed that forced labour was entirely counter-productive to the attempt to educate indigenous people to accept European working habits. Not only did it lead to a hatred of authority, it also generated contempt for work itself. He warned that the continued use of forced labour might further fuel the race war that in his view was already looming, and also cautioned that it created fertile terrain for communist propaganda in the colonies. Thomas argued that the colonial administrations would do better to make a sustained effort to educate the indigenous population in such a way as to convince them of the advantages of work. The ILO’s role, he believed, was “to lift the chains that still bind the native so as to prepare him for the next educative step”,³¹ a position that won him wide support from the Workers’ group within the Organization.³²

The British Government, which had a long tradition of opposition to slavery and had played an important role in getting the issue of forced labour on to the agenda of the League of Nations and the ILO, was the only colonial power to support the immediate abolition of forced labour for private purposes. Its support was instrumental in overcoming the resistance of the French, Belgian, Dutch, Portuguese and South African governments on certain controversial points. These powers were particularly critical of the distinction between forced labour for public purposes (which was acceptable,

according to majority opinion) and forced labour for private interests. They also argued that the transition periods laid down in the draft of the Convention, during which measures of coercion would continue to be tolerated, were too short. With varying degrees of vehemence they bemoaned the backwardness and immaturity of colonial peoples. Many speakers expressed the opinion that the very nature of Africans and Asians and the "primitiveness" that still distinguished them made coercion a necessary evil. Even Blaise Diagne, the Senegalese member of the French National Assembly who was acting as an adviser to the French Government delegation at the ILC in 1929, defended measures of coercion in the French colonies as honourable efforts being made in the name of civilization, with the potential "to elevate and favour the future of African Races".³³

The agreement that was finally reached at the ILC of 1930 represented, in its way, a breakthrough for the opponents of forced labour.³⁴ It obliged its signatories to abolish forced labour "in all its forms" and permitted transitional periods only with regard to work performed for "public purposes". The main success of the supporters of the Convention was to have pushed through a complete and immediately effective abolition of forced labour for private purposes. The Workers' group also managed to move the Governing Body to set up a permanent commission on forced labour, which would guarantee that even countries that did not ratify the Convention would be subject to a certain degree of monitoring. However, as it was still left entirely up to the colonial powers to decide whether or not they would implement the Convention, Britain remained, until well into the Second World War, the only power to ratify it and at the same time declare its unlimited validity for all its territories. Belgium, Portugal and South Africa initially did not sign the Forced Labour Convention at all, and France and the Netherlands imposed so many limitations on it that its practical consequences became all but non-existent.³⁵

There were other loopholes, too. Detailed provisions that laid down what was not to be deemed forced or compulsory labour effectively permitted the continued existence of some types of unfree work. Along with military service and forced labour imposed as a penal sentence by a court (as long as it did not serve private interests), the document exempted any work or service forming part of the "normal civic obligations of citizens", as well as "minor communal services of a kind which, being performed by the members of the community in the direct interest of the said community, can therefore be considered as normal civic obligations incumbent upon the members of the community". All the clauses, but these latter two in particular, seemed to disregard entirely the different ways they would inevitably be construed in a society of citizens and a society under colonial rule, respectively.³⁶ They blurred the strict dividing line which, in the colonies, separated citizens and subjects, and established a concept of "normal civic obligations" without civil rights to go with them.

The debate surrounding the three other Conventions by which the ILO extended the NLC in the years preceding the Second World War was conducted under similar premises to the forced labour discussion. In all three cases, the main aim of the authors of the respective Convention was to protect colonial workers from the consequences that arose when private economic interests and instances of state control and discipline joined forces.

The primary objective of Convention No. 50 was to check the involvement of the colonial State in recruiting labour for colonial companies, and thus to establish the principle of a free labour market governed by the laws of supply and demand. Convention No. 64 dealt with specific forms of "indentured labour" in which the colonial State had also been shown to abet corporate interests. The link between the State and private economic interests was again brought into sharp focus by the discussion on the application of penal sanctions in the prosecution of breaches of employment contracts by indigenous workers. At the 1939 Conference, the Workers' group in particular denounced this widespread practice as an unholy alliance between private profit interests and the colonial powers. The initiators of Convention No. 65 believed that as long as employers in the colonies could threaten indigenous workers who unilaterally broke off a contract with prison or corporal punishment, they were effectively freeing themselves from the obligation to create acceptable working conditions and levels of payment. This prompted the Indonesian adviser to the Dutch Workers' delegation, Soekiman Wirjosandjojo, to ask the Conference whether a system in which the colonial State protected private companies in this way was not simply "slavery in disguise".³⁷ The advocates of penal sanctions, however, emphasized how important they were in teaching the colonized population to assume European working habits. In the end no majority was found for the immediate and unconditional abolition of penal sanctions, as demanded by the Indian Government representative Nimbkar,³⁸ and although the final version of the Convention reflected the demands of the colonial powers and spoke only of progressive abolition without laying down a binding time frame, it remained ineffective until the 1950s, when the issue appeared on the Conference's agenda for a second time.³⁹ Until then, not one of the colonial powers except Britain was prepared to ratify it.⁴⁰

Two recommendations adopted in conjunction with the Forced Labour Convention completed the NLC.⁴¹ Both attempted to formulate clear principles to guide the colonial powers in the economic development of their territories in such a way as to protect indigenous communities from the "evil effects which too sudden changes in the habits of life and labour may have on the social conditions of the population".⁴² One of them was directed against the excessively vigorous pursuit of *mise en valeur* in general, the recruitment of non-indigenous workers⁴³ and the various forms of indirect coercion mentioned above (taxes, vagrancy and pass laws, land legislation, etc.) via which the colonial administrations attempted to stimulate and influence the supply of indigenous labour. The other dealt with the provisions that needed to

be made in the cases where forced labour continued to be permitted.⁴⁴ The ILO's decision to adopt these principles in the form of "mere" recommendations, that is, non-binding declarations of intent, was indicative of the fact that it was simply not possible at this point to go any further. Anything which left the narrow framework of an abstractly formulated commitment to "free labour" and attempted actually to address the situation on the ground would not be accepted as part of a binding Convention.

The verdict on the ILO's approach to colonial problems during the first 20 years of its existence is far from unequivocal. From a humanitarian point of view, the Organization deserves applause for notching up some significant achievements. Despite the constitutional obstacles facing it, the ILO managed to draw attention to the most pressing problems of colonial labour in the period between the wars. It highlighted the dark side of the philanthropic rhetoric used to justify colonialism in the 1920s and early 1930s and, by creating instruments to counter the worst abuses of colonial labour, contributed to establishing, in international discourse, the staged abolition of such abuses as the mark of progressive (colonial) policy. The separate framework within which the discussion of colonial labour took place reinforced this shift in perception to some extent. The problems in question fell explicitly into the domain of colonial policy, which made it difficult to dismiss them with a reference to the "otherness" of colonial conditions. However, the very fact that the NLC defined native labour as an area to be treated separately made it difficult for the ILO to deal on a broader level with the problems of social policy in colonial territories. The NLC reproduced the conventional distinction between metropolitan standards and colonial standards, citizens and subjects, and distinguished between work carried out under "normal" conditions and that performed in a colonial context. Within the "duty of education" discourse that governed the issue of colonial labour, the ILO's documents came down firmly on the side of "free" labour, without, however, ever breaking out of the basic framework of colonial thinking. Even within the ILO the colonies remained, before the Second World War, an area where separate and, ultimately, less stringent rules applied. Neither the internal power structures of the ILO nor the thinking of its officials permitted the application of the regular canon of norms to the colonies. The idea of interpreting the problems of colonial labour primarily as issues of social policy, and therefore to be addressed by means of a universal approach, had not yet established itself either within or outside the Organization. It was not until the end of the 1930s that the first signs of a change in thinking in the colonial bureaucracies and the International Labour Office became perceptible.⁴⁵ In the words of one long-serving official, the period between the wars had, to put it generously, produced nothing more than "preparatory work" for the phase of much more far-reaching colonial reform which the ILO was to enter just a few years later.⁴⁶

Part I

“A People’s Peace in the Colonies”, 1940–47



The International Labour Conference in Philadelphia, 1944

1

“The Promise of a New Earth to Till”: The ILO’S Colonial Work in Exile, 1940–43

Both the International Labour Office’s first cautious attempts to move beyond the tight framework of the NLC towards a broader approach to social problems in the colonies and the first attempts at colonial reform within the colonial bureaucracies were rudely interrupted by the Second World War. When in 1940 the ILO headquarters was forced to leave Geneva for exile in Canada, its main priority initially was just to be able to continue its colonial work at all. The Office’s colonial expert, Wilfrid Benson, was sent to London, but, apart from liaising with a small circle of British reformers, he could not do much more at first than review what had already been achieved. When the ILO began planning for the period after the war at the Conference of 1941, colonial issues were still way down its list of priorities. In the end, it was only the course of events taken by the war itself that reinstated colonial reform as a matter of urgency – indeed, one of even greater urgency than previously. The universalistic message of the Atlantic Charter, an attempt by the liberal democracies to make up lost credit by promising their people a better and more socially just future, could not easily be kept from the colonies. The loss of South-East Asian possessions to the Japanese and America’s entry into the war also raised new arguments for a change in policy. In fact, this phase of the Second World War caused a literal “sea change of Empire”.¹ The colonial powers now increasingly recognized that a new approach was needed – first, to recover their dominion over the colonies and to safeguard it for the period after the war, and, second, to accommodate the anti-colonial criticism and demands of their American allies. The Office saw these developments as a challenge to come up with an outline for a new social policy for the colonies.

“The time may come shortly”: the ILO in exile and the “native labour” issue

Before the ILO could think about taking steps to improve the situation of colonial workers, it first had to deal with a number of issues that bore on its

own survival. After France capitulated to the German army in the summer of 1940 and the British Expeditionary Force retreated from mainland Europe, neutral Switzerland found itself surrounded by territory controlled by the Axis powers.² The climate in which the international organizations situated in the country were working had deteriorated rapidly since the beginning of the war, and it now became unbearable.³ The ILO began to look around for alternatives. The most obvious choice was London or somewhere in the United States. The United Kingdom had been one of the ILO's greatest supporters and defenders from the start, and the British Government had expressed its willingness to host the Organization as early as 1919. However, London in 1940 was a city under siege, and could not provide the ILO with the freedom of operation the Office desired. The United States had been the Organization's biggest contributor since its accession during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, and supported the ILO extensively in many ways. But despite the imploring pleas of the American Director of the Office, John Winant,⁴ and those of Roosevelt's own Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the American President did not feel able to accommodate the Organization. He feared that an invitation to the ILO in the election year of 1940 would further provoke the isolationist tendencies that were still prominent in Congress and in public opinion.⁵

The solution was finally offered by the Canadian Government, which, after intercession by the British and American administrations, offered the ILO space on the premises of McGill University in Montreal.⁶ Moving to a nation at war (as part of the British Commonwealth, Canada had declared war on Germany in September 1939) was for the ILO a significant step away from its previous neutrality and a sign of its endorsement of the Allied cause.⁷ By September 1940 almost the entire directorate of the International Labour Office, with a small team of staff, had travelled via Lisbon to Montreal and into an uncertain future. A few officials remained in Switzerland to oversee the administration of the Organization's property and to maintain contact with the Swiss authorities, but apart from that, the bulk of the ILO's work was, until 1947, carried out in exile in Canada.

For the International Labour Office, the move to Canada marked the beginning of an intense, if passive, phase of observation of international developments. The skeleton staff's main priority now was to pool its resources and wait for a favourable moment to get actively involved in international plans, as soon as they appeared on the agenda, for the period after the war. In order to ensure that the ILO's period in exile did not end in the gradual winding down of the Organization, it was important for the Office to use its remaining staff capacity to obtain as detailed a picture as possible of the developments that could be relevant to the structuring of the post-war order. Although colonial issues were initially not a priority, preparatory measures were taken in this area too.

“Native labour” in exile

One person who made his way to Montreal along with the majority of the other senior officials was the head of the Native Labour Section of the Office's Diplomatic Division, C.W. Weaver. Because of the shortage of staff under the new emergency administration, Weaver, who had previously been able to concentrate on colonial issues alone, was forced to take on a range of other duties. As a result, he had little time for more than mere administration in the field of colonial labour, which, to begin with, was not one of the Office's main concerns in Montreal anyway. Meanwhile, in order to limit the inevitable weakening of the Native Labour Section and to keep an eye on colonial developments from an ILO perspective even under wartime conditions, the Director, John Winant, before leaving for Montreal in August 1940, sent an Office representative to the ILO Liaison Office in London to work from there as a commissioner for colonial issues.⁸ The man designated for this post, the Briton Wilfrid Benson, had been a long-serving member of Weaver's Native Labour Section in Geneva, where he had mainly been responsible for the British colonies. Benson's outpost in the British capital, insignificant as it may have seemed at the beginning, was to become a key position from which much of the ILO's new concept for colonial development after the war was shaped.

It was no coincidence that Winant had chosen London as the new locus for ILO work on colonial labour. London was the capital of the most important colonial power. Furthermore, from 1940 onwards it provided asylum to the governments-in-exile of Belgium and the Netherlands, and to the anti-Vichy organization of Free France under the leadership of General de Gaulle, thus accommodating within the city limits all the other European powers with colonial possessions except Portugal.⁹ Accordingly, the British capital was well placed to serve as the cradle of international debate on the colonial policy of the post-war period, and Benson was the point at which all the threads of information from the colonies were to come together. The colonial powers gave their material to the ILO's man in London, who in turn was to provide monthly summaries in his reports to headquarters in Montreal.

Considering the relatively low rank he had previously held in the International Labour Office, Wilfrid Benson was an exceptional figure. At the start of his London mission he was 40 years old and had spent almost half his life in the service of the ILO, which he had joined in 1921. His superiors all described him as highly intelligent and praised his extraordinary capacity for analytical and conceptual work. They also valued his journalistic work for the International Labour Office, which evidenced true literary talent.¹⁰ It was probably this very talent, however, that had prevented Benson from climbing more rapidly through the Office's hierarchy. In 1930 he had published a novel entitled *Dawn on Mont Blanc*,¹¹ in which he had depicted the atmosphere in Geneva in League of Nations circles “in so damaging a

light", according to Director Albert Thomas, "as to be calculated to bring it into serious discredit".¹² For this he received an official reprimand from the directorate and was excluded from promotion for an initially indefinite period. As it turned out, however, Benson's literary tendencies proved to be a positive asset when he took up his post in London. Since the 1920s he had had links with the Bloomsbury Group, the circle of artists and intellectuals surrounding Virginia Woolf, and as a result also had contact with members of the Labour Party who were knowledgeable about colonial affairs, including Leonard Woolf and Arthur Creech-Jones, who would later head the Colonial Office under Prime Minister Clement Attlee.

All in all, when he arrived in London Benson already had a well-established network of contacts, both with the relevant official bodies and with British organizations and individuals that had an interest in colonial affairs. As it had been his duty since the mid-1920s to advise the British delegations to the ILC on colonial issues, and he had since 1931 been analysing Britain's reports to the ILO on the Conventions it had ratified, he was well acquainted with the relevant figures in the British Colonial Office (CO) and the Ministry of Labour (MOL). In the course of this work, he had also had the opportunity to build links with British companies and trade unions, and with humanitarian organizations such as the Anti-Slavery Society (ASS), for which Benson had in the 1930s, anonymously and with the consent of his superiors, composed texts on the evils of forced labour and the consequences of African industrialization.¹³

Benson also had close ties with the Fabian Society, the think tank of left-wing intellectuals which provided the Labour Party with many of its ideas.¹⁴ The Fabian Society did not consider the colonial question a priority at this time, reflecting the position of the Labour Party as a whole. It had not yet reached the point where it would question the very idea of Empire itself;¹⁵ although its members regarded British colonial rule sceptically, they wanted to improve it through reform. Benson had been writing anonymous articles for publications brought out by the New Fabian Research Bureau, an academic subdivision of the Fabian Society, since the beginning of the 1930s.¹⁶ When in September 1940, a month after Benson's arrival in London, the Society set up the Fabian Colonial Bureau, a move in which Benson believed he had played a major role, he was offered a place on the Centre's main committee.¹⁷

Benson's views corresponded with those of the British left in many respects. As early as the 1930s, during work on the Native Labour Code, he had questioned whether a purely negative policy whose sole intention was to protect indigenous workforces from abuse would be sufficient in the long term. He was convinced early on that guidelines for a new type of policy were required, and although at this point he had no ready concept of what future colonial social policy should look like, he had a wealth of ideas about how the change could be accomplished. He insisted that responsibility for social

policy had to be assumed by the colonial State, calling for the metropolises to abandon their reluctance to invest financially in the economic and social development of their overseas possessions. Furthermore, Benson was of the view that the colonial workers themselves needed to be given greater opportunities for participation. He was a critic of the particularistic practice of indirect rule and advocated the promotion of social institutions, in particular trade unions, modelled on those of the metropolises.¹⁸

Tailwind

By the time Benson arrived in London, these convictions were no longer just his personal opinions but reflected tendencies in official colonial policy that had started to emerge in the last few years before the war as a delayed reaction to the social consequences for the colonies of the world economic crisis. The visible impoverishment of the colonial world and the social unrest now breaking out in many parts of it finally secured the attention of the metropolises. Contemplating the combination of these circumstances with a perceptible increase in political activity among colonial populations, exemplified by Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign launched in India at the beginning of the decade, colonial politicians began to fear that things were getting out of control.¹⁹ A long spate of social turbulence in the British Caribbean – particularly Jamaica and Trinidad – between 1935 and 1938 became the starting point for the biggest reform initiative that had yet been seen, the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA) of 1940.²⁰

A royal commission had been set up to look into the causes of the “West Indian riots” – a reaction to the devastating effects the world economic crisis had had on the Caribbean's export-oriented sugar economy – and its report concluded that the main factors preventing an improvement in living conditions and the urgently needed diversification of the economy were poverty and the consequences of poverty: low productivity, low levels of education, poor health, low wages and low taxable income. At the same time, the report pointed out that instruments of industrial conflict mediation and opportunities for trade union organization were lacking, and that this deficit posed an additional risk to social stability.²¹ In its analysis, the report concluded that without more financial commitment and a more active social policy on the part of the home country, the situation would deteriorate irretrievably. Police repression alone would not suffice in the future to dampen the potential for unrest nourished by the dire social situation.

The impact of the commission's report was huge, particularly as it was supported by a series of other publications.²² One of these is particularly noteworthy: Lord Hailey's *African survey*, published in 1938, which came to similar conclusions with regard to the need for a reform of British colonial social policy.²³ Both documents encouraged reform-oriented politicians such as Malcolm Macdonald, British Colonial Secretary from 1938 to 1940, to introduce into the policies of the metropole a more active

commitment to social affairs. This included the first ever open endorsement of colonial development policy and an unprecedented admission of the metropole's financial responsibility for the welfare of the people of the Empire. Furthermore, the development of trade unions in the colonies now actually became a goal of colonial policy, albeit in the hope of "taming" the colonial workforce by creating a predictable and thus controllable negotiating power. The CO had some years earlier, in fact, already attached "labour advisers" from the ranks of the British trade union movement to selected colonial administrations.²⁴

Signs that a new perspective on social issues was beginning to open up, and above all indications of willingness to commit financial resources to the colonies, were also visible in the policies of other colonial powers. The French Popular Front Government (1936–38) broke with the utilitarian policy of *mise en valeur* and espoused instead the altruistic development of the colonies by the French State, although a lack of time and insurmountable institutional resistance within the colonies prevented this policy from ever getting far beyond the drawing board.²⁵ Similar approaches suggesting a growing willingness on the part of the metropolises to assume a greater commitment to social policy could also be seen in the Netherlands' strategy for the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and in Belgian policy in the Congo after the mid-1930s. However, both these policies were motivated by thoroughly paternalistic considerations.²⁶

In the shadow of war

More far-reaching colonial reform initiatives were prevented by the war. When hostilities broke out, discussion of the Colonial Development and Welfare Bill within the British Cabinet was still in full swing. One argument for passing the measure was that it would send a signal to the colonies that would strengthen the cohesion of the Empire and thus be beneficial to the war effort. This consideration moved even many sceptics in the Government to agree to the passing of the CDWA five months after the start of the "phoney war". Its effect, however, was limited. In the first place, the war dampened the central government's willingness significantly to extend financial help to the colonies, so the funds at the CDWA's disposal remained modest. Second, hostilities also hindered the distribution of funds, so the scope of the Act was initially limited almost entirely to the Caribbean.²⁷ After the passage of the Act in 1940 the reform debate died down, forced into temporary oblivion by more immediate wartime priorities. For the governments-in-exile that arrived in London one by one in the course of the year after the German invasion of Belgium, the Netherlands and France, this was even more the case. As some of them no longer even had contact with their overseas territories in this period, direct reform initiatives were out of the question anyway.

This was the situation confronting Wilfrid Benson when he took up his work in the London office. In a meeting with the legal adviser to the International Labour Office, Wilfred Jenks, prior to his departure from Geneva in August, he had been given orders from Winant to concentrate his activities first and foremost on compiling a catalogue of general principles for colonial labour policy. He was then to take this document to the colonial powers and register with them, early on and in a general form, the ILO's demand to be involved in post-war planning.²⁸ Benson's first impression of the atmosphere in London, however, was that the war was absorbing everyone's attention and that anything unrelated to it was simply not held to be relevant. Since the French defeat in June, England had been standing alone against the Axis powers: its capital was suffering nightly raids by German bombers and the fear of an invasion of the British Isles was omnipresent.

All in all, Benson's first months saw him off to a bad start. The building in which the ILO's London office was housed became one of the first victims of the wave of Luftwaffe attacks that hit the capital in September 1940, forcing Benson to take himself and his work to a public library. A more serious setback, though, was that under these conditions it was almost impossible to arouse interest in long-term colonial planning. That month he wrote to Montreal: "With each new shock of the war, ideas connected with anything but the mechanics of destruction appear temporarily to lose their interest, and this nation in arms appears inclined to seek unity by forgetting differences of opinion rather than by hammering out a new political and social philosophy."²⁹ The situation was similar with regard to the colonies themselves, whose value at this point was measured solely in terms of their usefulness to the war effort. Benson found himself forced to adapt his own strategy to the prevailing circumstances in order not to make a nuisance of himself to those in charge of colonial matters. As it would be a "dis-service to the Office for me to risk earning the reputation of a busybody", he made the tactical decision to be available to all "those who wish to use the Office but to avoid making myself conspicuous".³⁰ At the CO's request, Benson provided it with a short memorandum in October commenting on the CDWA in the name of the International Labour Office. Formulated very cautiously, the memo praised the direction in which the CDWA pointed, which it deemed to be in harmony with ILO policy, and apart from that simply suggested that it would be a good idea to continue implementing it despite the disastrous military situation. However, he never received a response.³¹ Until well into 1941, Benson's contact with the CO remained sporadic. His relations with the governments-in-exile were not much better. Benson's suggestion that the Belgian Government, which had re-formed in London in October 1940, might ratify the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 as a sign of good will and solidarity towards its African possessions met with an icy rebuff from the Colonial Minister-in-exile de Vleeschauwer.³²

As a result, Benson dedicated most of his attention in the first months of his posting to those unofficial reformist groups that had intensified their activities following the debates on the CDWA. First and foremost, he observed the work of the newly established Fabian Colonial Bureau headed by Rita Hinden,³³ and the activities of Political and Economic Planning (PEP), a group set up in the 1930s with the aim of overcoming the consequences of the world economic crisis in Britain. Within the framework of the CDWA debates, PEP had begun to show an interest in international affairs, including colonial issues.³⁴

In the first half of 1941 PEP, the Fabian Society, the British section of the League of Nations Union and the Anti-Slavery Society all published memorandums on the baseline of future colonial policy. They all contained calls, some more pronounced than others, for an “internationalization” of colonial rule and increased political participation for colonized peoples, and appealed to the Government to support trade unions and significantly to increase development efforts.³⁵

Benson’s reaction to these documents is a good indicator of his thinking at this time. The most conceptually advanced of the four memorandums was the PEP paper, which established at the outset that political and economic development had to go hand in hand, but insisted that the colonies had to finance themselves to a certain extent. It suggested that the ILO could help here by defining minimum standards tailored to the economic situation of the colonies, and that until they had been achieved the self-financing dictate would be suspended and the metropolises would guarantee that living standards were upheld. Ultimately, the paper postulated, the social development of the colonies could be achieved only as the result of successful economic planning. To Benson, economic development here appeared to be regarded as almost an absolute good from which social security would inevitably follow. His own view was that, on the contrary, a superordinate social objective had to be defined first, and economic planning could follow.³⁶

The League of Nations Union suggested making the Native Labour Code a “world minimum” which all the ILO’s members with colonial responsibility would have to ratify unreservedly in the future. The Union also called, as did the Fabian Society, for labour standards from the ILO’s regular canon to be extended to the colonies.³⁷ At the same time, the ILO should actively help to establish trade union rights for the colonial workforce. With a few differences, all the authors wanted to make the ILO into an instrument for bringing colonial populations a step further out of the ghetto of the Native Labour Code and guiding them in the direction of universally valid rights. This was a view shared by Benson, who went as far as to criticize the Anti-Slavery Society for remaining too bound, for his tastes, to the old role of the ILO as a mere protector of indigenous labour. In this regard, Benson was appalled by the attitude of

Anti-Slavery Society chairman William Greenidge, who believed "beneficent autocracy" to be the solution to the social problems of the colonies.³⁸

"A little less anonymity"

As early as the end of 1940, Benson made it clear to Montreal that he did not want his strategy of not offending official circles at a time when the war was absorbing all intellectual and material resources to be taken as a cue for inactivity. He thought it advisable that the ILO start to inch cautiously but positively towards the official circles where colonial policies were made, "that the time may shortly come when a little less anonymity is advisable, and that even at present the publications of the Office should clearly show that the ILO is maintaining its interest in colonial affairs".³⁹ Benson noted that it would be a good thing for the Office to put feelers out now so as to be prepared for the start of post-war colonial planning, and in doing so to remind people of the Organization's existence before the ILO's interest in colonial affairs was forgotten completely.⁴⁰

The reply from Montreal was a long time in coming. One of the reasons for this was the staff shake-up at the top level of the Office that took place at the beginning of 1941. In February, John Winant was appointed to the post of American Ambassador in London. He was succeeded as Director by the Irishman Edward J. Phelan, a long-serving, high-ranking ILO official.⁴¹ Soon after Phelan took up office, planning began for a Conference which the ILO would use to reimpose itself on the world's consciousness and to announce its intention to play a part in the Allies' reconstruction plans. In this connection, the Office asked Benson in the spring of 1941 to draw up a detailed report on the situation in London and to weigh up the ways in which the ILO could become active in the field of colonial policy.⁴²

Benson was convinced that even if the Allied governments did not want to recognize how far-reaching the coming developments would be, the Office should get on with preparing for discussions on colonial reconstruction. Although an overriding focus on the war still prevailed, making all longer-term planning appear premature, changes in thinking were becoming evident, he wrote. Interest-driven policies had already fallen into wide disrepute, to be replaced with the view that future policy needed to take more account of the common good. One useful starting point for action might be the concrete problems in the colonies that would inevitably issue from the war. The example Benson gave was the domestic policy debate currently being conducted on the state of the British health system, whose weaknesses had been revealed by the war and a post-war restructuring of which was now being promised.⁴³ Benson predicted that this kind of specific crisis situation would also arise in the colonies, in direct proportion to their involvement in the Empire's war effort. This alone would lead to almost revolutionary situations in poor regions and make many areas ungovernable,

which in turn would provide further support for social reformist thinking as the war mercilessly uncovered the weaknesses of colonial policy.⁴⁴

This was the point at which Benson saw the need for new visions. He believed that developing guidelines for “positive social policies” for the colonies could be as significant to the war effort as to the future of colonial rule. The ILO could offer its assistance by drawing up a social treaty for the colonies. The Organization had to start looking beyond the concrete problems of the war and to come up with a concept for a better future. To be able to wage war efficiently with the active involvement of the colonies, the colonial powers would have to hold out to their overseas possessions the prospect of a happy and secure future that could make up for the sacrifices of the present. In this time of hardship and sacrifice, it was essential that the powerful recognize “that we little people now need the stimulus of the promise of a new earth to till”.⁴⁵

Securing the colonial contribution to victory: the Atlantic Charter and the ILC in New York, 1941

Montreal was somewhat hesitant about embracing Benson’s suggestions from London. The fact that the New York Conference of October 1941 – the first plenary meeting of the ILO since the beginning of the war – really did mark a turning point in colonial policy was due more than anything to timing, for 1941 turned out to be the year that brought those very stimuli for colonial reform of which Benson had spoken. The Office initially set other priorities, wanting to use the first wartime session of the Conference to position itself on the side of the Allies and thus get a foot in the door of the European reconstruction debate. In that enterprise the colonies played only a minor role. However, the major international documents of the year, first and foremost of course the Atlantic Charter, which appeared a few months before the Conference, provided those delegates who supported a colonial reform agenda with the necessary intellectual tools to engineer a new departure.

On the side of the Allies

Just over two years after the last session of its Conference (in the summer of 1939, immediately before war broke out), the ILO was in danger of slipping into oblivion. The time had gone by without any noteworthy initiatives on the part of the ILO to bring it to the attention of the world’s public. Its officials were unanimously convinced that it needed something to haul it back into the spotlight, where it would unambiguously make clear its intention to play a part in structuring the post-war order.

Apart from the reduction in its human and financial resources, one essential factor that had hindered the Office in its activities in exile was the ILO’s failure to express its clear support for the Allied cause, as demanded

by many of the Organization's remaining members and especially by the governments-in-exile from countries occupied by the Nazis and the international trade union movement. The ILO's undefined position at this time had less to do with hidden sympathies for the Axis powers than with officials' fear that a clear statement in favour of the democratic Alliance could put the neutral countries in its membership in an extremely awkward position, especially as Sweden, Switzerland and some of the Latin American countries had been real assets to the ILO's work in the period between the wars.⁴⁶

It was a series of events in the course of 1941 that enabled the Office to take the decisive step of convening a wartime session of the Conference and declaring its support for the Allied war effort. The most important factor in helping the Office to overcome its reservations was the change in the US position. Roosevelt's "Four freedoms" speech to Congress at the beginning of the year had already signalled that the United States would continue to relax the isolationist stance that the country had maintained since the end of the First World War,⁴⁷ and that, despite refusing to enter the war itself, it was unambiguously on the side of the democratic States.⁴⁸ Material aid to Britain and to China, which was battling the Japanese occupation, was extended in the first half of 1941. In August that year Roosevelt met the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, on board a warship off the coast of Newfoundland to discuss a common strategy, the modalities of American assistance and, not least, common war aims. The most important result of that meeting was the publication on 14 August 1941 of the Atlantic Charter, a milestone in the history of human rights and international cooperation.⁴⁹

Both Roosevelt's speech and the Charter provided important impulses for the ILO. The "Four freedoms" speech had not been limited to American domestic policy: on the contrary, Roosevelt had declared the values promoted therein to be valid "everywhere in the world".⁵⁰ The third and fourth points, "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear", corresponded to the founding philosophy of the ILO, according to which social justice was a precondition for lasting peace.⁵¹ The Atlantic Charter made this link even clearer, promising under Point 6 that a peace would be established "which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want". The passage that the officials in Montreal really took as a virtual invitation to the Office to make use of the momentum of the Allied war effort, however, was the one stating that "they [Roosevelt and Churchill] desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security".⁵²

From the US point of view, the ILO was in a position to play a decisive role in helping to ensure that the objectives of the Atlantic Charter were achieved. Labor Secretary Frances Perkins and John Carter Goodrich, Chairman of the ILO's Emergency Committee (the wartime body set up to take political policy decisions for the Organization in the place of the regular Governing Body)

and a member of Perkins's Department of Labor, at least, believed that the ILO was suitable for the task.⁵³ In view of this, no one was too surprised when, following Perkins's intercession, the US Government issued a formal invitation to the ILO to come to New York for its first ILC since going into exile.⁵⁴

In October 1941 delegates from 35 nations met on the premises of Columbia University for what was to be an extraordinary Conference. Many of the delegations included very prominent figures: participants included the future British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Jan Masaryk, Paul-Henri Spaak and Salvador Allende, who at this time was the Chilean Minister of Health.

The United States' clear statement of its position had enabled certain neutral Latin American countries to take part in the Conference. The spirit of the Atlantic Charter was perceptible in almost all the delegates' speeches, which swept aside any remaining doubt and clearly embraced the cause of the democratic nations. One example of the mood at the Conference was the humiliation dealt to the Vichy Government, which had merely been invited to send an observer from its Washington Embassy, while the Free French representative Henri Hauck, de Gaulle's shadow Labour Minister, was accepted by delegates as a full participant.⁵⁵ Many of the speakers made it clear that from now on the ILO would participate fully in the "crusade" for democracy



Two Directors of the ILO: Edward Phelan (*left*) and John Winant, 1940

which the war was increasingly becoming – at least in the language of the public statements issued in the course of 1941.⁵⁶ In his opening address, Carter Goodrich evoked the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and appealed to his listeners not to regard this gathering as a routine meeting: “The Conference is an act of faith!”⁵⁷ The Peruvian delegation proposed a resolution calling for action on the points of the Atlantic Charter relevant to the ILO to be set in motion immediately. And Frances Perkins’s statement that a free world had above all to be one that offered “security and comfort for the ordinary man” was to be understood as an indirect formulation of the ILO’s new task.⁵⁸

This was also the task that Phelan set the Organization in his report to the Conference, *The ILO and reconstruction*,⁵⁹ which described the ILO as being the only organization in a position to implement the social goals of the Atlantic Charter, thus bolstering its demand to be involved in reconstruction and in all the economic and social issues relevant to the structuring of the peacetime order after the Allied victory. In Phelan’s view, only the ILO had the necessary experience to rise to the challenge of such a task. Furthermore, its tripartite structure would guarantee that civil society was involved in discussions regarding the structure of the post-war order, which would lend them additional legitimacy.

What the Office had in mind for the Organization with regard to the structuring of the post-war order was an all-inclusive social mandate. Phelan wanted the ILO to move far beyond the narrowly defined field of labour protection and labour rights it had concentrated on to date. His vision was for the Organization to get actively involved in the process of linking economic progress to social justice by defining social policy standards in areas ranging from labour market and employment policy to training and social security, housing and nutrition.⁶⁰

Phelan’s report demanded that the post-war order be more democratic and more just and that the societies devastated by war be given the prospect of a world that had moved on from the crisis experience of the inter-war period and offered its inhabitants more security. By referring to the Atlantic Charter and Roosevelt’s four freedoms, which formulated rights that were universally valid, the ILO in New York made an early contribution to extending the notion of human rights into the field of social policy.

The report also unambiguously embraced the cause of the liberal Western democracies in the face of the Nazi challenge. At a time when the future still seemed dark and uncertain, with German troops continuing the march into the Soviet Union they had begun in July, the Conference in New York was an important signal of optimism and long-term perspectives.⁶¹

The Atlantic Charter and colonial minimum standards

The very fact that the Director’s report was so enthusiastic in its support for the democratic cause and the Atlantic Charter made the virtual absence from it of colonial issues all the more conspicuous. A mere half-page of the

100-page document was dedicated to the future colonial policy of the ILO, and it took hardly any account whatever of Benson's suggested vision of a social charter for the colonies. Absolutely no formulations were used that could have been perceived by the colonial powers as heralding excessive interference in their internal affairs. The only desire expressed was that the existing Conventions of the Native Labour Code be given a more prominent place in colonial planning.

The non-committal tone of these lines and the fact that colonial work was not on the agenda of the Conference amounted to a slap in the face for those in favour of a true change of policy in the colonies, who also found this lack of interest to be a blatant contradiction of the spirit of the Atlantic Charter. The Charter, with its fundamental claim to universality and its reference to the "right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live", held an irresistible appeal for colonial reformers and populations. Even if hard-liner imperialists such as Winston Churchill disputed the universality of the right to self-determination contained in the Charter, and thus the very validity of the document itself with regard to the colonies, they could not prevent reformers and nationalist politicians in the colonies from repeatedly making it the starting point for their demands. Even moderate colonial politicians would, on occasion, take advantage of its propaganda value and invoke their support for the (colonial) principles of the Charter as testimony of their good will towards the colonial peoples.⁶²

The clear moral language of the Charter, combined with the scope it offered for interpretation, helped to set in motion a dynamic that eventually led to the ILO's being given a mandate in New York to deal with issues of colonial labour in a broader way than previously. In the months before the Conference, various groups had attempted to seize the moment and to compel the British Government to put colonial issues on the agenda. At the end of August, Charles Wilton Wood Greenidge, the Secretary-General of the Anti-Slavery Society had challenged Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin, who was responsible for putting together the British delegation, to include the topic of "native labour" in discussions of a just post-war order. Greenidge made explicit reference to the Atlantic Charter and suggested extending certain aspects of Points 5 and 6 to the colonies, thus ensuring that the colonies were involved in the war effort and in planning for the time after the end of hostilities: "The British delegation should make declarations assuring colonial workers that they too will share in any plans made for the development of social justice after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny."⁶³

However, British officials were not prepared to do this, even if some of them did think long and hard about the propaganda value this kind of statement might have had.⁶⁴ In the end their reservations prevailed, and as the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) was not particularly interested in colonial issues either,⁶⁵ no initiative came from Britain after all. Many critical

observers considered this to be an unforgivable failure and a betrayal of the ideals of the Atlantic Charter, which, contrary to all official statements, was in reality clearly held to apply only to the metropolises. Harsh criticism was expressed by Harold Moody, Chairman of the League of Coloured Peoples in Britain, in a meeting with Benson.⁶⁶ In an article which appeared in the journal *The New Leader*, George Padmore, a theoretician of Pan-Africanism working in England and a mentor to many future African statesmen such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, also severely criticized the first few days of Conference proceedings and condemned above all the absence of colonial representatives from the British delegation, whereas over a dozen reporters had been brought to New York from the Caribbean alone just "to observe Britain at work".⁶⁷

Equally critical voices were to be heard at the Conference itself. The few representatives from non-Western countries, including in particular the delegations from India and China, bemoaned the fact that the ILO was once again uninterested in anything beyond Europe and the American continent. Sir Shanmukham Chetty, the Indian Government delegate, called upon the ILO to move its focus eastwards and to make the welfare of Asian populations, whether under colonial rule or not, its priority. He feared that promises regarding a new world after the war smacked of double standards: "We in the East often get a feeling that when European statesmen speak of democracy, self-determination and standards of living, they have mainly the white races of the world in their minds."⁶⁸ The Chinese Workers' delegate, Chu, took the same line, and added a political component to the demand for universally valid standards. Not only must economic stability and social security become values that were applicable to all peoples, but social security must also be enjoyed from a position of free citizenship, for economic security was meaningless "without political independence".⁶⁹

An important factor that prevented the colonies from being swept under the carpet in New York was the line taken by the Dutch delegation. The Dutch Government, currently in exile in London, wanted first and foremost to demonstrate the cohesion of the Dutch colonial Empire, despite not having much real influence on its East Indian colonies.⁷⁰ Every component (Government, Employers and Workers) of the exile delegation, therefore, included an adviser from the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). At the opening of the New York meeting, the Government representative van den Tempel cited the "deep sense of unity – which indeed always existed, but which is once more so clearly demonstrated in this crucial hour – between the Netherlands East Indies, the West Indies and the Motherland", and spoke of "spectacular" successes in the colonial social policy of the years before the war, a policy which he regarded as an early manifestation of the Netherlands' commitment to the principles of the Atlantic Charter.⁷¹ Van den Tempel was supported in his remarks by the Employers' representative, de Villeneuve.⁷²

However, the tone struck by the Dutch Workers' representatives and their attitude to the Charter were entirely different.⁷³ The Dutch East Indies adviser to the Workers' delegation, Hindromartono, expressed doubts as to the real significance of the alleged progress and insisted that the interests of the indigenous population in Indonesia were still taking second place to the profit demands of the metropolises. He spoke of two worlds, white and non-white, separated by an apparently impenetrable border on either side of which entirely different concepts of law prevailed.⁷⁴ Not content with merely drawing attention to the injustice prevailing in the colonies, Hindromartono also submitted a resolution concerning the social conditions in colonial territories which called upon the Office to define minimum standards for colonial social policy and to take an active part in establishing trade union organizations.⁷⁵

As Hindromartono's status as an adviser prevented him from submitting the resolution himself, it was presented on his behalf by the Dutch Workers' representative, Jacobus H. Oldenbroek. This gave it additional weight, as Oldenbroek was not only a renowned and highly respected trade union leader in his own country but a key figure in the exiled trade union circles currently in London; he had also been one of the leading intellectuals in the IFTU before the war.⁷⁶ This meant that the resolution had the implicit approval of a large proportion of the Workers' representatives at the Conference. In his own speech, Oldenbroek called on the Organization to help establish the principle of freedom of association everywhere in the world, saying that it was little short of an obligation on the part of a Conference which claimed to embody the moral superiority of the democratic States. Anyone who did not recognize this principle unreservedly, said Oldenbroek, indirectly addressing the colonial powers, could not be described as "democratic in the accepted sense of the word".⁷⁷

The Conference's adoption of the resolution by a majority gave the Office its first firm basis for the extension of its colonial work. By the end of the Conference, its organizers were already trying to cover up the impression of uninterest in colonial matters given by the Director's report. In a press release, the Office stressed the importance of accompanying the continued development of social services with steps towards more political autonomy in the colonies. The ILO's previous activities were described as having been nothing more than a "first attempt" at introducing international labour standards into colonial policy, and it was suggested that in the future these standards would have to take the form of a "Colonial Charter". This would require the connection between economic development and progress in social policy to be acknowledged more widely than before. The critical sentence came at the end of the text, however. The social mandate the ILO had been called upon to accept was, the press release asserted, globally applicable – a statement intended to disarm the resistance to this "internationalization" of colonial policy which the Office was sure it would face.⁷⁸

Although the tone of the press release was relatively non-committal, it did contain certain points that were guaranteed to make the colonial powers, still clinging to the principle of national sovereignty in colonial matters, uneasy. Even if the Conference did not provide the breakthrough that would actually lead to the extension of the ILO's normative standards to the colonies in the post-war world, a shift in the discourse was perceptible. Other strong impulses towards reform would make themselves felt in the months that followed.

The tide turns

Not long after the delegates from the New York Conference had gone their different ways, events took a dramatic turn. The end of 1941 and beginning of 1942 would prove critical both for developments in the war and for the fate of colonial rule. At the centre of the drama was the increasingly aggressive and initially extremely successful Japanese military machine in the Pacific. On 7 December 1941 the surprise attack by Japanese warplanes on the American Pacific fleet stationed in Pearl Harbor led to the United States definitively and unambiguously entering the war on the side of the Allies. This move, which Britain had long been waiting for, hugely improved the chances of an Allied victory, but also gave the Europeans a very critical partner when it came to colonial issues.⁷⁹ Three months later, on 8 March 1942, Dutch troops in the Netherlands East Indies capitulated to the Japanese invaders, thus sealing the end of a military campaign in the course of which Japan's military had brought under its control large swathes of South-East Asia which had been under European or, in the case of the Philippines, US rule. Events in South-East Asia had a devastating effect on imperial confidence in the metropolises and provided new fuel for the debates on colonial reform, which began to resemble, in terms of content, the general, non-colonial reform debates of the war years.

Both these developments advanced the move towards reform taking shape in the ILO, which in 1943 slowly but surely began to place itself at the forefront of the planning process.

Colonial depression and the "people's peace"

The collapse of the South-East Asian colonial empire under Japanese pressure boosted ideas for colonial reform within the ILO by reviving domestic discussions on colonial policy. In Britain and in the colonial policy circles of the other powers, the news from South-East Asia came as a huge shock. The French had been forced to recognize the supreme authority of the Japanese in Indochina as early as 1940, following the military collapse at home, and had been governing there since only with the permission of and under instruction from Tokyo. Major Japanese offensives after Pearl Harbor then brought the American-administered Philippines and the Dutch East Indies

under Japanese control too. At the same time, the Japanese army conquered the British-ruled Malaysian peninsula and Burma, and by April 1942 was even threatening the northern border of India. The fall of the naval base Hong Kong on 25 December 1941 and of the allegedly unconquerable fortress Singapore on 15 February 1942 led to a huge loss of confidence among the British population in the inner cohesion of the Empire. From many people's point of view, the most frightening aspect of events was the weakness of the resistance put up by the indigenous population against the invaders. Although China and Indochina had provided ample evidence of the brutality of Japanese occupation, the advancing invaders had even occasionally been welcomed as liberators. This raised fundamental questions about the basis of British rule. With the fall of Singapore, which made both India and Australia strategically more vulnerable to Japanese invasion attempts, public criticism of colonialism increased perceptibly. It was as if the British had suddenly "ceased to believe in Empire".⁸⁰

Furthermore, the Japanese triumph had badly tarnished the myth of white superiority. Churchill's disparaging remarks on the interpretation of the "colonial" passages of the Atlantic Charter reflected a type of old school thinking which the victory of a "coloured" army showed to be entirely misplaced.⁸¹ Radical opponents of colonialism in Britain thus welcomed the events in South-East Asia as the beginning of the end of white supremacy. The League of Coloured Peoples, for example, unashamedly celebrated the Japanese successes in February 1942 and warned Britain of a "second Ireland" in its remaining colonies if India and Africa were not put on the road to independence quickly.⁸² The defeat was far more, then, than a military debacle.

Wilfrid Benson, however, who had been following events in the East with as much consternation as most of his compatriots, also recognized in them the opportunities that were opening up for social reform. The reformers themselves, he noticed, were gripped by a new resolve. "Among settled habits of thought jarred by the Eastern events are those of the Colonial reformers," he observed after the fall of Hong Kong.⁸³ Summarizing the mood in London, Benson wrote that now the ideal world of the Empire and belief in British infallibility had come crashing down and the colonies no longer corresponded to the image of a "Federation of Cocktail Parties" they had previously enjoyed, a policy of small steps was no longer enough.⁸⁴ Benson spoke of a type of open conspiracy between reform-oriented groups, parliamentarians and liberal colonial bureaucrats – a conspiracy to create a new colonial policy capable of putting the Empire back on to a stable footing.⁸⁵

In its quest for new moral foundations that could be used to underpin colonial rule after the war, the colonial discourse in these months took on a marked resemblance to the general reform debate. Fuelled by the principles of the Atlantic Charter and strengthened by the reconstruction plans of the New York Conference, the reform debate had gained significant momentum

in recent months. The call for positive war aims that could be held up as a democratic alternative to Hitler's ideas of a "new European order" had taken hold in society and inspired a wealth of plans for a more just post-war order. Social policy was suddenly swathed in optimism, democracy was "reawakened" and, amid the war and destruction, plans began to emerge for a new age of social justice.⁸⁶

In Britain, including the circles surrounding the governments-in-exile, and in the Resistance movements in Europe, a consensus about the nature of such an order slowly began to form. If democracy were to win back the credit it had lost, it would have to be mixed with a strong social component, and societies would have to be more egalitarian and more integrative than before. The years between the wars were now interpreted throughout the democratic camp as having been a time of political, economic and social crisis for democracy, which through sheer inactivity had prepared the ground for the rise of fascism. The State would now have to be given more capacity for planning and intervention. Economic policy would, in future, be judged in terms of the function it fulfilled in creating social security for citizens.

This thinking was not propounded only by the economist John Maynard Keynes, who had now become respectable in Europe after inspiring Roosevelt's "New Deal" across the Atlantic. The first perceptible expression that it had taken hold in Britain was the 1942 report *Social insurance and allied services* which the British Government had commissioned the social reformer William Beveridge to write and which would become the basis on which the British welfare state was established after the war. Statements by other British politicians and by European governments-in-exile pointed in the same direction.⁸⁷

Admittedly, colonial issues never had quite the visibility of these debates about the future of the European post-war order. Even after the catastrophe in Asia, colonial debates were pushed into the background by those on domestic policy.⁸⁸ What was new, however, was that the principles of colonial reform were now converging with those being discussed for the metropolises. It was agreed that "constructive colonialism", rather than philanthropy, was now what was needed. Policies of low financial investment and particularism would have to make way for purposeful intervention and a level of economic development that would benefit the colonial populations, who in turn were to be treated more as citizens and less as subjects. The colonial thinkers in the Fabian Society were a good example of this "new generation" of thought. Their first programme of action called for three steps: first, the successful integration of the colonies into the Allied war effort; second, a declaration by the British Government that the Atlantic Charter was wholly applicable to the colonies; and, third, clear timescales for colonial reform.⁸⁹ Margery Perham, then a reader at Nuffield College, Oxford, and one of the most influential voices from the academic milieu

within the colonial debate, launched a full-blown attack in *The Times* on the philosophy of indirect rule. In the East, she argued, its postulate that “common citizenship” was impossible and that only the iron framework of an imported State was holding the separate groups in their places had been definitively revealed to be false. It was now up to the State to take rapid and thorough action to bring the problem of the “tropical East Ends” under control.⁹⁰ Problems with migratory labour and the destruction of social structures and proto-industrial towns needed to be tackled by means of determined interventionism. Laissez-faire had failed everywhere and needed to be replaced, with the active participation of the colonial populations and within a clear timeframe until their final independence, by decisive action on the part of the colonial State.⁹¹

Simultaneously, *The Economist* expressed similar sentiments, stressing that colonial peoples must be shown what they would gain by a British victory. The disappointment throughout the Empire over Churchill’s repeated insistence that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to the colonies was understandable and would have to be overcome. The political deal it was now time to formulate would have to consist of political and socio-economic elements in equal part, the writer continued.⁹² Even colonial bureaucrats and figures close to the Government now felt obliged to take a tone more fitting to the new circumstances. Lord Hailey published the first article to raise doubts about the term “trusteeship”, arguing for its replacement by the concept of “junior and senior partnerships”. He went on to say that, in future, the colonies must be treated in the same way as deprived areas were at home. Raising the living standards of the population had to be the top priority.⁹³

In April 1942, with the air thick with statements like these, a meeting was held in London of the International Labour Office’s Emergency Committee. At this meeting, the inseparability of the general and the colonial reform debates became clear. The delegates listened attentively to the words of the Labour Party’s Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour in the wartime Cabinet, who explained his vision of a “people’s peace”, a concept often invoked during those months. Bevin argued that, unlike so many before it, this war was being fought in the name of a greater good. The victory of the democracies had to and would result in the improvement of social conditions everywhere. This was not a “rich man’s war” but a “people’s war” that must be followed by a “people’s peace” – and, Bevin assured the gathering, the ILO was to have a major role in formulating this peace.⁹⁴

The remarks of the British Labour Minister prompted the Indian and Chinese delegations and various Workers’ representatives to take the stage themselves and apply them to the world outside Europe. The Indians Erulkar and Lall and the Chinese Ling took up Bevin’s expression of a “people’s peace” and emphasized that this could not be limited to the Western world, but had to include Asia and the entire colonial world.⁹⁵ They insisted that

the ILO prescribe itself a programme of work and define the areas in which it wanted to achieve concrete improvements in the colonies.

The London meeting was a good opportunity to do this, as it had been designated to follow up on the resolutions of the previous ILC. On the basis of the colonial resolution adopted in New York, it was now decided to mandate the Office "to give special attention to the problems of the dependent territories, and to report to the Governing Body what appropriate steps might be taken to secure the results aimed at by the resolution".⁹⁶ It was agreed in advance that trade unions should be promoted, mechanisms established to mediate in industrial disputes, social services set up or developed and minimum wages set. Furthermore, the Office was to study all the issues relevant to the economic and social development of the colonies and to improving colonial living standards. As the resolutions of the Emergency Committee initially called only for a study and not for the adoption of concrete standards, all the colonial powers involved voted for them.⁹⁷ In reality they had few direct results, apart from the fact that the Office now had its first formal mandate to make plans concerning the social order in the colonies after the war.⁹⁸ What was significant, however, was the change in the discourse, especially when the outlines of the new project were compared with pre-war colonial practice. All the indications were that targeted state social policy and trade union organization, both of which implied a certain level of citizenship, were on the way to being recognized as appropriate means to lessen the misery of colonized peoples.

Despite this, however, it became clear to Benson after the London gathering that the willingness of the colonial powers actually to commit themselves to a new policy had not really increased very much at all.⁹⁹ Hopes that the CO would now be prepared to help to convince other colonial powers that the ratification of the four pre-war Conventions was an absolutely necessary signal of good will, for example, came to nothing.¹⁰⁰ This was a particular blow to Benson in his dealings with the Belgian Government, which, despite its approval of the London resolutions of the Emergency Committee, continued to refuse even to consider ratifying the Forced Labour Convention.¹⁰¹

All in all, the change in official thinking did not take place quite as quickly as the mood at the beginning of 1942 might have suggested. It was now of especial benefit to the Office that the US entry into the war opened up new opportunities to gain support for a programme of colonial reform. The United States' anti-colonialism and the concessions the colonial powers believed they were obliged to make to it proved to be extremely helpful to the reformers in the Office.

American scare

The British, who had lived for almost two years in constant fear of an invasion of their "island fortress", celebrated the American entry into the war

as their salvation. With regard to the Empire, however, the US involvement brought anxious questions with it. There was a general feeling of apprehension about the new partner's anti-colonial leanings, and although, as the British historians Porter and Stockwell recognized, "there was no coherent American view on British Imperialism", it was well known that the Americans were, on the whole, strongly opposed to colonialism.¹⁰²

Large groups of the American public were indeed fundamentally opposed to helping to defend the imperial interests of the European powers. This opposition was reflected in Roosevelt's attempts to pressure the colonial powers to take on substantial obligations both in the Atlantic Charter and in the Declaration of the United Nations of 1 January 1942, in which 26 Allied States recognized the principles of the Charter.¹⁰³ It was also a significant influence on Roosevelt's policy towards China, which was based quite clearly on the intention of creating a counterweight to the colonial sphere of influence in Asia, and Washington's open support of the Indian Congress Party's "Quit India" campaign, begun in 1942.¹⁰⁴

As well as the moral aspect of American anti-colonialism, certain concrete economic interests were also at stake. All the members of the Alliance knew that the war would offer the United States the opportunity it had long been demanding in opening up to trade regions of the world that had hitherto been closed to it by colonial restrictions. To appease precisely those Americans who feared that US entry into the war on the side of the colonial powers might compromise the country's moral position, Roosevelt tried to emphasize the powerful potential for change of the combined forces of economic-strategic interests and anti-colonial commitment.¹⁰⁵

For the Europeans, all these strands added up to a threat to the future of their rule, and led to fear and uncertainty about America's intentions. The "American scare" was the major reason why many colonial officials now started to think independently about how the future of colonial rule could be secured and the demands of the Americans satisfied at the same time.¹⁰⁶

For the Office, too, it formed the starting point from which a reform agenda could be developed – particularly after the ILO was allocated an important role in American plans for "opening up" the colonies in the period after the war. In a memorandum produced for the American Department of Labor in May 1942, Carter Goodrich presented his ideas about the future "colonial" role of the ILO. At the end of the war, he wrote, the ILO would become part of a "New Deal" for the colonies. Under the heading "Labour standards for dependent areas" he demanded a "radical rethink" on the part of the colonial powers. All colonial territories should be converted into mandates with a view to awarding them full independence as soon as possible. A prerequisite for the possession of mandates would be the application of all the relevant ILO standards. Goodrich felt that the Native Labour Code would no longer be enough, and argued that the Organization would have to be enabled to see through "the progressive development and enforcement

of more comprehensive labor standards". He also called for the ILO to be able to send a tripartite delegation with full voting rights to future mandate commissions, and to be given the powers to hold special labour conferences for mandate territories. Opening the colonies to international trade and protecting colonial labour by means of standards were two processes which in Goodrich's view had to go hand in hand.¹⁰⁷ His suggestions amounted to a sweeping "internationalization" in which the ILO was to play a major part.

The practical collaboration between the United States and its allies also produced some useful points of reference for the ILO. In 1942, for example, an Anglo-American Caribbean Commission was set up to facilitate coordination between the partners on all the problems caused in the region by the war. Following an acute supply crisis which threatened to escalate dangerously, in 1943 the Commission expanded its remit from dealing with military issues alone to long-term economic and social planning. A similar example of Anglo-American cooperation which was extended into the social sphere was the Middle East Supply Centre. The ILO would later look to these projects as models for the successful extension of social standards to colonial territories.¹⁰⁸

For the time being, the American scare offered the perfect means to increase the colonial powers' willingness to cooperate with the International Labour Office. Frustrated by the lack of support he was receiving from the authors of official British colonial policy, in November 1942 Benson wrote to the CO, calling in no uncertain terms for it to take a more cooperative attitude to the International Labour Office's ambitions to become more actively involved in colonial social policy and pointing out the unpleasant alternatives it faced if it refused to make the necessary concessions. Either the ILO must be allowed to plan its future policies with fresh input and support from the governments concerned or "new institutions" would take its place that were "capable rather of reflecting American opinions and policies than developing solutions emerging from the realities of the colonial situations". His warning that he "doubted" whether the ILO's old powers would be enough "to encourage American acceptance of the wider colonial policies" played on the same threat.¹⁰⁹ For good measure, Benson referred to a conference he was about to attend in Montreal of the New York-based Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) and mentioned the "programmes that may be suggested to the ILO" – another hint in the same direction, as the Institute for Pacific Relations, although formally an international NGO, worked in close cooperation with the State Department during the war and was known for its anti-colonial position.¹¹⁰

Promises

Aware of the fear of American anti-colonialism, encouraged by the ongoing reform debates in Britain and frustrated by the continuing lack of willingness to cooperate on the part of British colonial politicians, Wilfrid

Benson made it clear to the CO in his letter of November 1942 that the time for resistance was slowly but surely coming to an end. Although the Office's main priority was still to secure the signing of all parts of the Native Labour Code by the colonial powers, very soon, he warned, the Office "may...be faced with the necessity of attempting more".¹¹¹ This "more" would consist of the ILO drawing up principles of colonial post-war policy to which the colonial powers would then give their commitment in an official document. The document would lay down for the colonies "lines of advance towards social reforms through the development of a local sense of social responsibility".¹¹² The colonial powers had to recognize that the only way they could win back the trust and belief in their good intentions that the colonies had lost, and thus stabilize their control in the long term, was to take this path through the ILO. In Benson's view, only an international organization such as the ILO was in the position to lend the term "colonial partnership" substance and legitimacy. The ILO could be a helpful mediator between the Allies too, and thus reduce the "world ignorance and suspicion of colonial policy" that currently prevailed.¹¹³

The CO's response to this initiative was less than enthusiastic. Geoffrey Hibbert, who was responsible for the social section of the CO, found Benson's message "woolly and obscure". He interpreted Benson's intention as being "to try and find out whether the Colonial Office would be sympathetically disposed to the idea of the ILO taking a hand in Colonial labour affairs".¹¹⁴ Hibbert and his colleague Major Granville St John Orde-Brown, the adviser on labour affairs to the Colonial Secretary, also took the letter as an attempt by Benson to get himself put in charge of the ILO's colonial activities. Orde-Brown, who found Benson's missive "vague and also somewhat sinister", was determined to make sure the man would meet with energetic resistance in the event "he contemplates installing himself in this office".¹¹⁵

But the suspicions of the British Colonial Office regarding Benson's career ambitions were to prove as unfounded as the hopes that persisted in some circles that the ILO would restrict itself to its traditional activities in the colonial arena. The CO's reaction to Benson's request reflected the fact that Britain still had no coherent concept of how imperial renewal was to be achieved. It was agreed that reforms were necessary, but this consensus had not yet produced anything more concrete than non-binding utterances regarding increased social and economic development and greater political participation.¹¹⁶

It was not until 1943 that the first indications appeared that the CO was becoming more open to Benson's suggestion regarding the ILO's usefulness in the preservation of the Empire. The first sign was Colonial Secretary Lord Cranborne's statement, in response to a direct enquiry in December 1942, that the British Government was convinced of the "important part which the ILO has to play with regard to labour conditions in the colonies".¹¹⁷

This U-turn had various causes. First of all, more evidence had surfaced of the strength of America's anti-colonial intentions. The Foreign Office's attempt to show the American public an "acceptable face of imperialism" at the Institute for Pacific Relations's conference at Mont Tremblant in 1942, to which it sent its most senior experts, Arthur Creech-Jones and Lord Hailey, failed to impress the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull.¹¹⁸ In March 1943 Hull came up with a draft "Declaration of the United Nations on National Independence" which shocked the British by suggesting the full application of the self-determination clauses of the Atlantic Charter to the colonies.¹¹⁹ As long as this plan was on the table – until the end of 1943 or thereabouts – Whitehall had to look even more desperately for ways to plan a future for its Empire that would meet with American approval but at the same time avoid Britain's relinquishing control. At this point, London agreed, theoretical discussions about partnership would not suffice.¹²⁰ Additional impetus came from the situation inside the remaining colonies. From Suriname to the Indian subcontinent, the periphery had been fully drawn into the war effort, both in terms of sending soldiers and in terms of its increased contribution to production for the Allied victory. The consequences of the conflict, even where actual fighting was limited, were to be felt in more or less all of the colonies. They expressed themselves in the form of food shortages, forced labour campaigns and massive interference in local economic structures, and made an already precarious situation even more unstable. Forced labour, which had almost been abolished in British-ruled areas previous to 1939, experienced a real renaissance in the 1940s, particularly in East Africa. In Bengal, between 3 and 4 million people died in 1943 as a result of a famine exacerbated by shortages and administrative failure.¹²¹ Local resistance was the order of the day and support for anti-colonial movements grew.¹²² A "carry on regardless" attitude was becoming ever more difficult to justify. A consensus grew that although coercion alone might be the more practicable path for the duration of the war, it was possibly also the more dangerous, and in the long term – with a view both to upholding colonial control and to the international system – might even be counter-productive. As a result, support for the war would have to be sought constructively. A vision had to be created which would make clear to the colonial populations what they had to gain from their participation in the war effort against the Axis powers.

These considerations were a boost to those in the CO who were in favour of developing colonial social policy and who saw in it – especially in the light of the social unrest of the pre-war period – the future of the Empire. In April 1943 the energetic Sydney Caine took over responsibility for a new Development and Welfare Section in the British Ministry for Colonial Affairs. His approach – more planning and more financial commitment – was a convincing way of justifying the view of many British colonial politicians that if political control must be given up, then it would be done gradually and in slow steps. The socio-economic goal to which the home

country was now prepared to make a commitment became a condition on which political independence was made contingent, allowing the prospect of independence to be pushed somewhere into the very distant future.¹²³

The year 1943 marked the breakthrough of development policy thinking within the colonial bureaucracy. In addition to the psychological factors outlined above and its role as part of the strategy to retain power over the colonies, this thinking was also fuelled by economic considerations. The advocates of the new colonial development approach believed that in the light of Britain's steady loss of power vis-à-vis the United States, its economic future would depend on what the Empire had to offer. To ensure that the colonies would be able to contribute accordingly, a much more comprehensive and interventionist policy than that followed in the pre-war period was indispensable.¹²⁴

In 1943 the official line in Britain and among the other colonial powers changed to endorse the active development of the colonies after the war. Public statements promising a new, more socially just future for the dependent territories were made frequently – especially by the governments-in-exile. In a radio address in December 1942, the Dutch Queen Wilhelmine promised her former subjects a post-war Commonwealth built on a “solid basis of full partnership” within which there would be “no room for discrimination on the basis of race or nationality”. The Indonesians would be granted greater autonomy and more freedoms at an imperial conference once the occupation was over, and, this notwithstanding, the Netherlands would honour its social responsibility to its colonies.¹²⁵ That same month, the South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts explained in an article his new, broader understanding of the term “trusteeship”, promising that it would be far removed from the policy of “racial supremacy” and would place much more emphasis on social conditions. South Africa would thus become part of a world “that will be governed by the principles of the Atlantic Charter”.¹²⁶ However, a rapid extension of political participation to the indigenous population was as absent from Smut's ideas as it was from those of the Governor General of the Belgian Congo, Ryckman, who the following year also embraced the principle of trusteeship, seeing in it the duty to “progressively introduce the natives to all the benefits of civilization, economic, political and moral”.¹²⁷

Late, but all the more flamboyantly, at the Brazzaville Conference in January 1944, Free France announced a new policy for the French overseas territories. Since the end of 1942 the entirety of what had been France's African possessions had been controlled by the Comité Français de la Libération Nationale. De Gaulle chose Brazzaville to announce France's plans for the imperial future because French Equatorial Africa under Felix Eboué was the only region to have been loyal to him from the beginning.¹²⁸ De Gaulle linked the promise of renewal with a pledge of social progress – first because France was “a nation whose immortal talent is designed for

innovations which, little by little, lift men to the summit of dignity and brotherly love where, one day, all will meet”, second, because “in the chaos into which a temporary defeat had thrown her, the populations of all her overseas territories in all parts of the world remained faithful and enabled her to find bases from which to plan the liberation”, thus forming an “unbreakable tie between France and her Empire”, and, finally, because, “learning from her defeat, France is animated by a zeal and wish for regeneration both for herself and for her dependencies”. De Gaulle promised an alignment between the home country and the colonies on both the political and the social level.¹²⁹ In Brazzaville, the outlines of the development policy that was to come into effect after the war were laid down. More extensive economic and social planning, and coordination between the two, were to be used to improve living standards. The fact that the supreme priority for the majority of the participants in the Brazzaville Conference was to strengthen France’s claim to imperial rule without making any concessions to demands for self-governance was without doubt one of the reasons why the social promises to come out of the gathering were so expansive. However, Brazzaville was also, if not first and foremost, a demonstration of Free France’s good will towards America. In general, Washington’s anti-colonial attitude frightened the governments-in-exile even more than it did the British, as they knew that their future – or essentially their rebirth – as colonial powers would depend for better or worse on the acquiescence of the American Government.¹³⁰

No comparable declaration to that of Brazzaville was issued for the British Empire, and ultimately, none ever could be. This was because the British embraced an entirely different colonial doctrine, which had made the independence of the island’s possessions, however distant a prospect this might be in the minds of colonial politicians, its ultimate goal. For the same reason, the demands of British groups such as the Anti-Slavery Society for a major colonial charter were never met either.¹³¹ Instead, there came statements by figures such as Lord Hailey, who now spoke of the post-war colonial State as the “most active agency for promoting social welfare and improving the general standard of living”.¹³²

Despite the varying starting points and philosophies behind the political declarations issued at this time by the colonial powers, they still had more in common than separated them. They wanted to secure the future of colonial rule; they emphasized the social dimension of post-war policies above political aspects and they promised development, intervention and financial commitment. Much of this was still rudimentary, remained vague or served predominantly propagandistic purposes, but for the International Labour Office these statements provided the long-sought foundation it needed for its work. There were also increasing signs that the colonial powers were making an effort to demonstrate good will towards the ILO. In 1943 Belgium finally agreed, after a long period of resistance, to ratify the Forced

Labour Convention, and in the same year the British Government was the first to sign the two Native Labour Code Conventions from 1939 on penal sanctions and long-term employment contracts.

The Office was aware that, with the war now entering a critical phase, the urgency of becoming actively involved in post-war planning was increasing. A sign that it recognized the time was ripe for an offensive into the colonial field was its request that Wilfrid Benson move from London to Canada, to put his expertise on colonial policy at the disposal of the rest of the Office. In the months that followed, Benson commuted between Montreal and the British capital,¹³³ also travelling on various occasions to the United States to coordinate his work with those sections of the State Department that had an interest in colonial issues, and with the Department of Labor. From January 1943, his mandate changed: he was no longer just to dedicate himself to studying colonial developments, but asked to produce a memorandum which would lay out the lines of future ILO policy on colonial issues. The work on a social charter for the colonies could begin.¹³⁴

2

A Charter for the Colonies: The Colonies at the Philadelphia Conference, 1944

In 1943 it became increasingly clear that the time to re-plot the coordinates of colonial social policy was drawing closer. Encouragement and inspiration for the authors of new policy came from many sources. In addition, as post-war planning by the Allies progressed, the ILO was forced to confront some existential questions. The Office recognized the increasing need to get actively involved in international planning and thus to relinquish, to some extent, its traditionally cautious approach. A new world was being created and the ILO would have to move into areas that had previously been out of its reach if it was to make a place for itself. Wilfrid Benson was given the task of drawing up one of the documents described by the British historian Mark Mazower as “blueprints for the golden age”,¹ the outlines upon which a just post-war order would be based.² Benson’s plan for a “people’s peace in the colonies” was a document which, in its universalistic language and calls for active development, represented an almost total break with the Organization’s “native labour” work in the period before the war. Its adoption at the Philadelphia Conference, where the ILO proclaimed the idea of universal social rights and convincingly claimed for itself a role in structuring the post-war order, was a milestone in the treatment of colonial social policy on an international level.

The colonial powers accepted the new beginning first and foremost because of its potential propaganda value, and also because they believed the development approach might revive their claim to colonial rule. Although this enabled the ILO to set out “minimum standards of social policy” for the colonies, it did not deflect the hefty load of criticism the Organization was to receive. For even if the reforms it proposed were based on universalistic principles, the colonial framework to which they related remained in place. This “double standard” was the Organization’s last concession to the political claim to power of the colonial rulers.

A parallel operation: colonial reforms in the ILO's post-war planning

In the year after the New York Conference at which the ILO had registered its intention to be involved in the Allies' reconstruction plans, the main theatres of war began to witness a dramatic change of direction. In a naval battle off the Midway Atoll in June 1942, Allied naval units put an end to the advance of the Japanese in Asia, and in the winter of the same year the German advance into the Soviet Union was definitively crushed in the *Stalingrad Kessel*. At this point serious consideration began to be given in the Allied headquarters to the matter of how the post-war order should actually be structured.

Faced with these developments, ILO officials in Montreal were forced to recognize that the Organization's position was worse than initially thought. Edward Phelan had adopted a rather passive style of leadership since 1941, but once the Organization had recommended itself at the New York Conference as the future executive organ of the social postulate of the Atlantic Charter, it had felt quite securely anchored in the Allied camp. The Office simply assumed that it would automatically be involved in all further steps towards structuring the post-war order and therefore collected a wealth of information on the post-war plans of its members and used this to come up with a master plan for reconstruction. Certain operational activities, such as the expert assistance on setting up social security systems which the Office had provided to some Latin American countries during the war, and the involvement of its officials in drafting the Beveridge Plan, had also helped delude Montreal into believing that the ILO would be given the chance to prove its worth and that it was facing a relatively certain future. However, many in Montreal failed to notice the indications to the contrary that began to emerge as soon as the war turned in the Allies' favour and post-war planning entered a more concrete phase. On closer inspection, the ILO's position was anything but secure.

The further Allied plans for an international post-war order progressed, the more the ILO's link with the League of Nations, which was perceived in retrospect as having fallen short of what was required of it, proved burdensome for Montreal. The most serious disadvantage with which the Office had to contend, however, lay in its unresolved relationship with the Soviet Union and the latter's growing significance within the Allied wartime coalition. The Soviet Union was neither a member of the ILO nor particularly sympathetically disposed to the Organization. The reasons were not solely of an ideological nature – Moscow resented the fact that the ILO had deprived it of its permanent seat in the Governing Body some years earlier and effectively suspended it as a member.³ Now it was becoming clear that the Soviet Union would have a significant say in the design of the post-war order, frenzied attempts began to persuade it to rejoin the Organization; to these Moscow

initially reacted coolly, not wishing to commit itself.⁴ A particularly ominous sign for Office officials, however, was that now even the United States seemed to be wavering in its support. Washington had suddenly begun to talk only of the ILO's participation in the economic and social aspects of post-war planning, whereas the Organization had previously been earmarked to coordinate all activities in that field.⁵ That the tide was turning against the ILO was also clear in the Allies' first arrangements for the institutional structure of the post-war order. At the UN Food and Agriculture Conference in Hot Springs, Virginia, in May 1943,⁶ and at the inaugural meeting of the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in November the same year, new international organizations threatened, with the support of the Allies, to encroach on the ILO's area of competence. Another indication of the Organization's waning significance was the fact that Roosevelt and Churchill did not find the time to visit Montreal during their meeting in Quebec in August 1943, despite the fact that Phelan had called on the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, especially to lobby for such a visit.⁷

Within the ranks of the Organization, the international trade union movement was particularly alarmed by these developments. The movement had high expectations of the ILO and hoped, through it, to become directly involved in negotiating the socio-economic post-war order. The workers now began to increase pressure on the Office to win back the initiative for the ILO.⁸ In a joint memorandum, the TUC's liaison officer to the ILO, Joseph Hallsworth, and the nominal Secretary-General of the exiled IFTU, Walter Schevenels, called upon Phelan to schedule a meeting of the Governing Body and to reinforce the ILO's claim to a prominent role in reconstruction planning before it was too late.⁹

The Governing Body eventually met in December 1943 in London, where it decided to convene as soon as possible a regular meeting of the International Labour Conference, the main purpose of which would be to lay down the Organization's future policy and to give it the opportunity to find a place in the emerging system of international organizations. It was agreed that the ILO would make a formal declaration at the Conference which would formulate a blanket social objective for all its policies and at the same time provide the Organization with the legitimation to go about achieving this objective. The general feeling was that, above all, the ILO must obtain the power to become involved in economic issues to a greater extent than it had before the war.¹⁰ The Governing Body's decision was an important step in bringing the ILO back to the centre of Allied post-war planning.

Universalism in a colonial framework

In contrast to the run-up to the New York Conference in 1941, this time the colonies were part of the picture from the beginning and, following the resolution by the Governing Body, an important item on the agenda

of the forthcoming gathering.¹¹ The Office's proposal, which was put to the Governing Body for approval under the heading "Minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories", was that the Conference adopt a Recommendation which would serve as a starting point for later Conventions. This document was to contain five points:

1. a formal declaration regarding social policy in dependent territories which was to mention explicitly the social aims of economic development and call for international assistance to be sought on issues of development and the coordination of the various aspects of social policy;
2. a reminder that members were still expected to sign the Conventions of the NLC;
3. a call to consider the gradual extension of the ILO's regular canon of norms to the colonies;¹²
4. the statement that future Conferences should, ideally, devote themselves to more detailed regulation of colonial problems by passing the necessary Conventions; and
5. the confirmation that improved mechanisms and rules would be sought to safeguard more effectively the acceptance and application of ILO standards in colonial territories.

In connection with the last point, the Office called for the Organization to be given the chance to expand its regional structures in order to be able to provide more ILO expertise on the ground to help with the development of social policy. Finally, it was proposed that the ILO build up more direct links with workers' organizations in dependent territories.¹³

This programme of action was a compromise that attempted to cater to the interests of different groups. First, the prospect of venturing further into the field of colonial social policy was in itself of value to the Office. It meant, as Point 5 made clear, that officials would have the chance to extend their own spheres of activity, and it would open up new avenues to the Organization. If the period after the war was to be marked by a major increase in activity related to economic and social policy in the colonial territories, who better than the Office to provide the necessary expertise? If some territories were to gain independence at the end of the war, who better to advise them on the establishment of their own social systems than an international organization with a wealth of experience in this field? It was in the ILO's very best interests to seize this chance to establish itself in the post-war order. But it was also extremely important that the form and content of the proposals should create as little controversy as possible and secure as much support as possible for the programme as a whole.

These considerations aside, the very fact that a colonial item had been put on the agenda of the Conference sent an important signal to those members or elements of the Organization that were critical of colonialism – the

United States, the Workers' representatives, the Asian and Latin American countries, and of course the Soviet Union, which, however, remained outside the ILO. The ILO demonstrated that it had no political scruples about recognizing colonial problems for what they were and addressing them. The text which the Office presented to the Governing Body spoke openly of the "many deep shadows in the picture" which were blighting the colonies and which made action essential.¹⁴ Wilfrid Benson, who had been thinking about how to increase the chances of making the colonial programme a reality, had argued for the inclusion of critical passages such as these. He felt that the particular political circumstances under which the Conference was being held – meaning mainly the participation of the Soviet Union and the United States' keenness to support a colonial reform programme – would be the decisive factors in determining whether the planned reforms would sink or swim.¹⁵

Other aspects of the content, but in particular the way the proposals were formulated, took significantly more account of the sensitivities of the colonial powers. The Office simply could not afford to alienate these powers – especially in the case of Britain, which was one of the Organization's main supporters.¹⁶ For this reason, the text which the Office presented to the Governing Body promised (employing the time-honoured "carrot and stick" method) that if the metropolises accepted the ILO's new colonial principles within the framework of a new international order, it would give them a means to quell scepticism about the aim and purpose of colonial rule by pointing to concrete policy measures which evidenced their progressive attitude and good intentions. If, on the other hand, such scepticism continued to be dismissed with rhetoric only, the danger would continue to exist that misunderstandings could arise between peoples whose mutual good will was essential for world security.¹⁷ This was another hint that, although the colonial powers could only profit from agreeing to ILO standards of colonial social policy, a lack of willingness to cooperate would have unpleasant consequences in the form of hostility from two major anti-colonial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and resistance by national movements in the colonies themselves. The ILO offered a forum in which the colonial powers could demonstrate their "progressive spirit" for a comparatively low price.

To guarantee that the price really would not be too high, the Office initially only sought to anchor its programme of action in a Recommendation, not a more binding Convention. Benson judged the chances of obtaining a Convention too poor in the current climate, and recommended holding off for the time being.¹⁸ The more decisive concession to the colonial powers, however, was the fact that the proposed standards still distinguished between "normal" (metropolitan) and "colonial" areas. The initiative was about minimum standards for dependent territories, not about extending to the colonies the norms that applied to the home country. To some extent this was a continuation of the pre-war tradition of distinct spheres

of application for the standards laid down in the International Labour Code and in the Native Labour Code. The draft indicated to the colonial powers that full account had been taken of their interests, while prudently safeguarding the Office from criticism on this point by containing the reminder – directed at those who branded the separate treatment of colonies and independent countries an expression of continued colonial thinking – that colonial rule remained a fact of life that could not be ignored. As long as this was the case, the colonies would not be able to send their own representatives to the ILC (in another part of the document, the colonial powers were explicitly called upon to change this), and as long as general Conventions continued not to be automatically applied to the overseas territories of ratifying countries, this kind of separate process for the colonies continued to be necessary.

The ILO's tactic of appeasing the colonial powers by accepting their double standards paid off as early as the Governing Body meeting in London, where the paper was adopted as the basis of Conference negotiations by all the colonial powers present (Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands), and by the United States, India, China and the Workers' group too.¹⁹ In summary, the adoption of a new programme for the colonies was sold to the colonial powers by the ILO as a "parallel operation", part of and yet outside the ILO's attempt to become actively involved in the reconstruction debate.²⁰

Social policy in dependent territories

By the end of 1943, then, the way had been cleared for a new colonial programme, and the framework laid down within which it was to be realized. The Governing Body's decision elevated to an official tenet of ILO policy a concept of colonial social policy whose contours Wilfrid Benson had progressively defined in the course of 1943. Benson had first published the principles according to which he believed colonial reform must progress in the February edition of the ILO's monthly publication, the *International Labour Review*, under the programmatic heading "A people's peace in the colonies".²¹ In the summer he had turned these principles, plus a programme of action through which they could be put into practice, into a long memorandum entitled "The ILO and colonial progress", which he first exposed to the criticism of official and unofficial circles in London before making it into an Office document, "Minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories", that would serve as the starting point for the debates of the Governing Body. After the London resolutions, Benson, now holding the post of head of the Indigenous Labour Service in Montreal, came up with a preliminary report for the Conference and the draft of a colonial Recommendation. The ILO's new colonial principles took shape, then, within just under a year. Once they were down on paper it became clear how far the Organization had moved from its pre-war position. Although the Conference would, ultimately, still be voting

on “colonial” principles, what the ILO was now offering was universalistic language packed into a particularistic framework.

The pillars of the “people’s peace”

“A people’s peace in the colonies” was the culmination of all the input Benson had received and processed since taking up his post in London. Its publication in the *International Labour Review* had significant diplomatic motives. Benson’s strategy was to praise approaches already in place and to follow them through to a hypothetical point in the future, drawing conclusions that did not necessarily correspond with the actual intentions of those concerned. Benson noted an increased sense of social responsibility among the colonial powers, sparked by the experience of the world economic crisis and finally ignited by the war. There could be no going back to the old notion, prevalent in colonial policy, of colonial peoples as tributary populations and of the role of the State as simply that of an arbiter between private interests and philanthropic considerations. The world economic crisis, the consequences of war (especially the loss of large parts of South-East Asia), the participation of the United States and, above all, the involvement of the colonies in the Allied war effort had now made more radical thinking unavoidable. Whatever the consequences of the metropolises’ willingness to make political compromises might be in the period after the war, only the promise of “constructive and positive policies” would take proper account of the raised hopes of the colonial peoples. Benson did not fail to refer to the crusade-like nature the war had already taken on by this point. The way it had developed had highlighted the impossibility of limiting to European affairs the intellectual struggle against the “master race” principle.²² Benson’s suggestion in the face of all this, which harked back to Ernest Bevin, was a “people’s peace for the colonies”, a peace order based intellectually on a universalistic approach and held up by four programmatic pillars: (1) the subordination of all colonial policy to a superordinate social objective; (2) a move away from the laissez-faire of the pre-war period to a commitment by the colonial State to active economic and social development; (3) the safeguarding of participation by the indigenous populations as a contribution to social development “from the ground up”; and (4) the increased “internationalization” of colonial social policy.

Benson believed that the relationship between the metropolises and the periphery was as much in need of overhaul as the conditions within the colonies. He hoped above all that a new approach would overcome the separation between the colonizer and the colonized, between the “traditional” sphere and the European realm. With all due regard for regional particularities and differences in levels of development, the way the metropolitan governments treated their overseas possessions had to correspond to the way they treated the home country itself. This was the core of Benson’s universalistic approach: colonial subjects must become citizens. The inhabitants

of the colonies must be treated like the “poorer citizens” at home. This statement was to be understood as a direct rejection of the particularism of indirect rule. Describing the indigenous colonial populations as citizens lifted them out of their allocated sphere of “traditional” law and removed their status as subjects of the colonial State. Two separate spheres of law became one realm: citizenship.

This notion also implied a change in the way the role of the metropolises was viewed. With the principle of citizenship in mind, colonial social policy obliged the responsible State to offer its colonies the same social security as it did the deprived areas of the mother country.²³ The other points of the reform programme were also born of this fundamental rejection of an approach which categorically distinguished between metropolitan and colonial policy. The programme was justified by a widening conception of social responsibilities – the underlying current in the discourse of the time – which Benson wanted to apply to colonial reconstruction as much as it was generally applied to national reconstruction.

According to “A people’s peace in the colonies”, all future policy would have to be subordinate to an overriding social objective. Each economic or political measure would have to be analysed in terms of its social usefulness and, if necessary, adjusted in accordance with this goal. The various hybrid forms of *laissez-faire* and national imperialism which had characterized colonial economic policy in the period between the wars had, the article claimed, been discredited by the experiences that followed the world economic crisis.²⁴

In Benson’s eyes, subordinating colonial policy to a higher-ranking social goal had many justifications. The first of these was humanitarian, but Benson also mentioned – pointing to the example of the British commissions which had dealt with the strikes and hunger revolts in the Caribbean and West Africa – the relevance of social issues to order and control in the colonies. In addition, he used a classic “human capital” argument, claiming that economic policy led by social considerations was required “for stubborn reasons of economic necessity”, as improving the living standards of colonial peoples was inextricably linked to the productivity of their work, which in turn was the starting point for lasting economic and social development. Benson was able to refer here to certain wartime developments whereby the growing recognition of the connection between productivity and living standards, and the fear of strikes and uprisings in areas of production relevant to the war effort, had brought into existence a number of coordinating bodies to which governments would be able to have recourse after the end of hostilities. However, he was under no illusion about the speed of change, recognizing that those in favour of a superordinate social objective were not yet “the dominating force in colonial policies”.²⁵ There was a long way to go before the colonial State would become an active agency for development whose priority was the social progress of the colonies, as Benson envisaged.

Most of all, the priorities implicit in current economic policy would have to be turned on their head, for “the development of colonial wealth must be dictated by, instead of dictating, the development of popular welfare”.²⁶

Coordination and planning in the service of a superordinate social objective were, therefore, the order of the day. Benson warned that, in order to meet their new obligations, the metropolises would have to abandon their reluctance to use their powers of intervention when it came to economic and social affairs. The colonial State needed to become “the most active agency for promoting social welfare”,²⁷ whose duty it was to come up with a coordinated social policy programme which took account of the links between policies dealing with education, nutrition, health and employment. Contrary to the view that had previously prevailed, that the colonies should generate their own funds to finance social services, Benson argued that it was the State that needed to invest this money, and additionally to take on supervisory and control functions. Metropolitan governments should take to heart the lessons of the period before the war and promote the economic independence of the colonies. This would require first and foremost – for food policy reasons apart from anything else – preventing a recurrence of the extreme export-orientation of the period before the world economic crisis. The diversification of colonial economies, the expansion of domestic and regional markets, and industrialization were all to be promoted to the extent necessary.

In order to ensure that economic policy measures such as these fitted in with the superordinate social objective, coordinating bodies would need to be created or, where they already existed, expanded. Here Benson held up in particular British examples such as the CO’s Colonial Labour Advisory Committee. What Benson was suggesting in this area corresponded more or less to the basic principles of those Keynesian-inspired recipes the ILO had begun to use in the 1930s to counter the results of the international economic crisis in the industrialized world.²⁸

Benson was convinced that an economic and development strategy of this nature could not simply be coercively imposed by “colonial headquarters”. The involvement of the populations concerned was a central element of his ideas on development policy. The dilemma that assistance with economic and social development for the colonies must necessarily come from outside, thus potentially hindering the development of local and regional responsibility, had to be addressed by democratization within colonial society. Awakened a “social consciousness” in the groups at which the policy was aimed was a prerequisite for the success of the colonial development project. Continuing the “master and servant relationship” under a different heading would not succeed.²⁹ As an alternative, Benson suggested recognizing and consciously promoting trade unions and other forms of democratic representation of interests, and integrating more indigenous representatives into the institutions of reconstruction. He did not formulate this point more precisely for the

simple reason that it was a highly controversial issue. However, his rejection of the notion of “benevolent autocracy” was clear, and his suggestions formed another building block in the new universalistic approach. Here too, Benson rejected the philosophy of indirect rule, which was based on the notion of areas of separate development, and spoke of the target groups of future colonial economic and social policy as “potential citizens of the emerging political community”.³⁰ When he was later called upon to justify the continuing distinction between general and colonial norms in the Office’s draft to anti-colonial forces in the Governing Body, Benson explained the benefits of this “social development from the bottom up” approach for regions on the way to imminent political independence. As long as colonial conditions were in place, it was critically important to ensure that preparations for independence were made on all levels of society. By helping the areas concerned to develop the foundations of a social policy relevant to their socio-economic situation, the ILO was contributing to promoting the development of a social conscience which would continue to grow as the political independence of these areas increased. In addition, this would permit the progressive extension of international labour standards to the colonies.³¹

Another point which Benson approached with caution was the growing international responsibility of the colonial powers. He spoke here of interdependence and the various forms of Allied cooperation in the war, and concluded from these reflections that the future would be characterized even more strongly by regional collaboration and international cooperation, which would necessarily involve the colonies. He also made veiled references to the United States’ interest in opening up the colonies to the international community. More significantly, however, in the conclusion to his essay Benson took a postulate from the preamble to the ILO Constitution that had long been limited to the industrialized countries – that world peace could only be built on social justice – and extended it to the colonial realm. He thus indirectly gave the world community a legitimate interest in participating in the development of social policy beyond the borders of national sovereignty. Benson argued that justice and worldwide economic and military security could be achieved only if the war brought a “people’s peace” for colonial peoples too, because only this could provide a firm foundation for progress.³²

The frequent references to the “people’s peace” promised by Bevin were symbolic of Benson’s attempt to link his draft outline of colonial reform with the general debate surrounding a just post-war order. From the coordination of economic and social policy to the use of planning and control as instruments and the increased commitment of the State in general, there was a need for constructive and positive policies in the colonies and the metropolises alike.³³ The only justification for treating the colonial populations differently in anything, Benson wrote in the memorandum that would

form the template for the Governing Body's resolution in December, lay in practical reasons relating to the fact that they were in a situation of political dependence. The only way to combat backwardness, poverty and dissatisfaction in the European possessions was in collaboration with the powers that administered them. The notion of a colony was outdated anyway, he claimed, having originated in an entirely different era.

Benson's approach can be described as one of gradual universalism. The active social and economic development of colonial societies by the metropole was a method and a goal at the same time – it both embodied progress and would bring about progress. Benson did not base his concept on universal rights and claims, at least not explicitly. Effectively, though, this was exactly what his approach amounted to. By suggesting that the colonies should in future be treated like underdeveloped regions inside the metropole and their inhabitants like "poorer citizens", and by calling for increased activity of a welfare state kind and for social democratization, Benson drew the colonial world into the discourse about social rights that was gaining momentum in the Allied countries at the same time. The idea of an overarching social objective which the State was in charge of realizing could be tied in with the language of the Beveridge Report and other social reformist promises to the populations of the warring liberal democracies, which started from the idea of social rights vis-à-vis the State, or, in other words, social citizenship. Benson's plan was not to abolish the NLC, but to replace it gradually with elements of the general canon of standards. Benson felt in retrospect that the effect of the NLC had been, inevitably, to promote stagnation. In his view labour standards needed to protect workers from abuses, but also to contribute to economic and social development. They had to advance social development both from the top down and from the bottom up, and that required the active participation of the populations concerned.

In summary, Benson stated that in order to realize a "people's peace" in the colonies it was necessary to define the wider political and social objectives of that which "may for convenience be called colonial rule", and to ensure that the colonial peoples were able to share in the definition of a world economic policy which would effectively contribute to raising their standards of living. In conclusion, he declared that social policy was always to be planned "in unison with political and economic advance".³⁴ It was in precisely these three fields that Benson saw the ILO's role. The Organization should analyse the colonial policies of the individual powers, summarize the currents and approaches on which they were based and out of them form general principles which could be used as the basis of the colonial policy of the future. The ILO would integrate the colonies into the debates surrounding an international post-war order and thus help to promote their social, economic and political development.

The pitfalls of reform

After completing "A people's peace in the colonies", Benson travelled back to London to re-establish his old contacts and to begin work on a colonial plan of action for the International Labour Office. He wrote a memorandum entitled "The ILO and colonial progress" and began seeking opinions on it from both official and unofficial circles.³⁵ The memorandum emphasized the aspect of internationalization and the role the ILO envisioned for itself in that process slightly less strongly than his article had done, but apart from that the content was the same: the cornerstones of the programme remained the subordination of all policy to a social aim, international and national efforts to provide financial, economic and technical assistance, participation for the colonial population across the board and the integration of all the measures that would benefit the colonies into the general process of global socio-economic development.³⁶

The comments and criticism which "The ILO and colonial progress" attracted bring the precise features of Benson's reform ideas into sharper focus. The reaction to the paper highlighted, for example, that contradictions were inevitable where a programme based on universalistic propositions was to be put into practice in a political setting that continued to be colonial and particularistic.

The responses Benson received were, from unofficial circles at least, overwhelmingly positive. Predictably, the most unqualified approval came from the left. Arthur Creech-Jones agreed wholeheartedly with Benson's "programme of advance", which in his view laid down the "broad lines of a great labour and social charter".³⁷ The head of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Rita Hinden, was particularly enthusiastic about the demands for the participation of the colonial populations. She shared Benson's view that even well-meant approaches would, like the CDWA, degenerate into "benevolent autocracy" if it were not ensured that the target groups themselves could play an active role. She agreed that the establishment of local institutions, civil liberties and self-help must be an "integral part of all the wonderful schemes of 'mice and men' which we are laying down for the colonies".³⁸

Leonard Woolf, who at this point was a member of the Labour Party's Imperial Advisory Committee, saw things in a similar light, although he warned that it was illusory to hope that local forms of democratic participation could grow from any form of indirect rule whatsoever, as Benson had suggested as a possible starting point for democratization from the ground up.³⁹ However, they all agreed that the ILO, "which almost alone emerged from the League of Nations as a great beacon of light and power", as the Reverend H.M. Grace from the Conference of British Missionary Societies put it, should try to extend its activities as far as possible into the field of colonial policy along the lines that Benson had set out.⁴⁰

Certain academic commentators, however, had substantial objections to the paper. Although their tone was positive, they highlighted contradictions

in Benson's new approach that could not easily be dismissed. The British South-East Asia expert J.S. Furnivall, a political economist who had taught for a long period in Burma and who was part of the Institute for Pacific Relations's research network, focused on the relationship between economic development and international labour standards. In his view, the extension of international labour standards to the colonies – especially those which were politically further advanced, meaning in particular the South-East Asian region – could actually hinder development following independence. Higher standards would render many countries less able to compete. "Are the tropics to be hindered in attaining economic and political independence through legislation and standards imposed by the West; and how far in imposing such standards and introducing such legislation is western humanitarianism coloured by economic interest?" Furnivall wondered.⁴¹ Would labour standards for the colonies, at least for those on the brink of independence, prove in the medium term to be a way for the colonial powers to prolong political and economic dependence beyond independence day? Furnivall was actually anticipating a debate here that would break out in earnest a few years later. Benson's strategy could lead to success only if the "humanitarian aspect" was supported on a major scale and properly reflected in plans for the organization of the world post-war economic order; otherwise, "modern reforms" would only serve to increase economic inequalities. Furnivall also stressed, however, that he did not reject Benson's concept; he just wanted it "to suggest a greater emphasis on the economic implications of welfare policies in its reactions on the interest of politically vocal groups in the colonial power, and the need for controlling such interests and other economic forces if we are to subordinate colonial policy to world welfare".⁴²

Sir Alan Pim, former head of the British Economic and Finance Commission for Africa and an executive board member of PEP, was concerned by a different problem. He asked whether endorsing increased development efforts by the colonial State would not perhaps change the definition of admissible coercion. Pim himself, like the brains trust he had headed, was a determined advocate of dynamic colonial planning and intervention, especially in Africa. He was in favour of abandoning entirely the particularism of the pre-war period, and of industrialization and settlement at the place of work ("stabilization"). Pim saw the ILO's role as being to create an international consensus on colonial post-war policy that would centre on these elements. However, he recognized that positive policy would also require decisive action by the colonial State which would not always be compatible with the philanthropic philosophy of the NLC. Although forced labour for private companies or for purposes not obviously in the public interest would be out of the question even in the future, many difficult questions would arise, he feared, when it came to forms of labour that clearly served the goal of developing backward regions. These included, for example, the forced cultivation of certain crops for educational reasons or in cases where inactivity

would lead to the loss of natural resources (e.g. soil erosion). For Pim, the answer to these questions was clear: trusteeship was an empty phrase unless it raised the general standards of living. It was necessary for the well-being of indigenous populations that “the European trustee dare not show too much patience and tolerance. It must bring into action its own resources of knowledge and technique directly and quickly.”⁴³

Benson's take on the matter was not too far removed from Pim's, even if Benson did not make his position quite so clear. He had not taken the reinterpretation of the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 lightly, though. In an exchange of letters in 1941 he had criticized Lord Hailey's calls for forced labour to be permitted in African development under certain circumstances. Hailey had suggested that he “would for a generation abandon ‘the progressive abolition’ of forced labour and use the latitude allowed by the Convention” in order to be able to make use of the whole spectrum of ways to recruit workers for projects that were in the public interest. While Benson had initially been critical of this point of view, in “A people's peace”, his tone in relation to this issue was significantly milder. He now argued that under certain circumstances, socio-economic development had to take priority over the rigid application of existing norms. International labour standards, he admitted, had a doubly ambivalent character. First, they were purely negative when their sole intention was to protect against abuses, and constructive only when they contributed to economic and social development. Second, as a result, the same measure “which for a primitive community is an armour against oppression” could for a community on the brink of independence that had already found ways of articulating itself become a “strait jacket preventing development”.⁴⁴ With regard to forms of forced labour for the purposes of development, as proposed by Hailey and, later, Pim, Benson recognized that while in one case “forced labour akin to slavery might result”, in another forced labour might prevent the “perpetuation of poverty through inertia”.⁴⁵ Here too, Benson saw the solution in the progressive participation of the populations concerned via their own democratically legitimated institutions. The success of the economic approach to development was dependent on a parallel programme of political and social action working from the ground up, and on a total rejection of colonial particularism.

The recognition in law and practice of trade union or similar rights, the effective disapproval of any measures, legal, administrative or traditional, by which colour, race or religion divides the people into *Herrenvolk* and *Sklavenvolk* and the positive application of these principles through collective bargaining and the creation of equal opportunities would be the foundations of a positive policy. The foundations would have to be broad and solid, stretching beyond purely labour questions.⁴⁶ If the new approach could be anchored in an official document at a future Conference, and if at the same time the abolition of forced labour remained the long-term policy

goal, Benson was not categorically opposed to limiting the application of existing Conventions. In view of the fact that many of the colonial powers deemed it necessary to continue to adapt the Conventions to local conditions, Benson felt that inflexibility on this issue would only provoke unnecessary controversies that could overshadow more important discussions.

Pious hopes?

The closer the time drew for planning a major ILO Conference, the more important issues of diplomacy became. The official bodies to which Benson had sent his memorandum reacted, for the most part, sceptically. The CO's adviser on labour affairs, Orde-Brown, with whom Benson was not on particularly good terms anyway, commented in a meeting with Benson that he did not see the ideas contained in the memo as a sustainable foundation for future colonial policy.⁴⁷ The Belgians and the Dutch were equally dismissive. Count de Briey, an officer in the Belgian colonial ministry, paid what in Benson's eyes was merely lip-service to his country's future cooperation with the ILO on colonial issues, and refused to be convinced by the details of the paper, ruling that trade unions were out of the question for "primitive regions", as he quite clearly considered Belgium's colonial possessions to be.⁴⁸ Benson's two Dutch interlocutors, Blom and van Mook, did not have much time for theoretical debates on colonial issues anyway, as long as Indonesia was still being occupied by the Japanese.⁴⁹ And as for the Free French, Benson failed to find anyone prepared to meet him who would have been in a position to reveal France's take on the memo.

Much of the draft must still have sounded pretty revolutionary to the ears of most colonial politicians. Although cracks had appeared in the dogma of national sovereignty, in the minds of the majority of colonial politicians it continued to be non-negotiable. Furthermore, doubts about the sagacity of increasing the financial commitment of the metropolises were far from having been assuaged. Benson's ideas were still shared only by a minority in the metropolises, even if this minority was growing. Within the British colonial establishment and the relevant Belgian, Dutch and French circles, he could not rely on the support of an established majority for the views he held. Benson knew that not even the dynamics of war would be enough to guarantee that his convictions would ultimately prevail. Yet the good will of the colonial powers was indispensable for the ILO if it was to secure a place in the post-war order. What was particularly important was to avoid provoking the British. The only way forward was to pitch Benson's path of reform in a positive way that would make it palatable to the colonial powers. Benson was convinced that the ILO's offer to the colonial powers really did have to be an attractive one. He reasoned that, as the Organization was primarily concerned with "technical issues", it offered the colonial powers the chance to lend new legitimacy to political claims to power in an "apolitical" framework. However, their fear of an "internationalization" of colonial

rule was still going to be a problem. Benson knew that the colonial reform programme would not come about effortlessly. The Governing Body's acceptance in December 1943 of a colonial agenda item for the Conference took his concept an important step further, but it did not mean that the colonial powers would automatically accept the new colonial programme. On the contrary, he was well aware that they were going to take a lot of convincing.

As plans for the Conference progressed, Wilfrid Benson received an unexpected blow. Phelan believed that the time had now come for the issue of "social policy in dependent territories" to be dealt with at the highest levels in the Office, and Montreal decided that Benson's rank as a section head did not make him senior enough. It had already rejected his request to attend the London meeting as an adviser on colonial matters,⁵⁰ and from now on, Benson was told, his duties were to be solely of an editorial nature. From the beginning of 1944 he worked on the draft of and commentary to "Minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories". Shortly before the Conference, in March 1944, Benson viewed the chances of the Recommendation being adopted in the form he had suggested with deep pessimism.⁵¹



Wilfrid Benson (*centre*) at the Philadelphia Conference in 1944 talking to Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, British Government adviser (*left*), and Robert Watt, American Workers' delegate (*right*)

The ideology of victory: the colonial reforms of Philadelphia

As it turned out, however, the Conference held many surprises, both for the advocates and for the opponents of the ILO's new colonial programme. The gathering, which took place from 20 April to 12 May 1944 at Temple University in the centre of Philadelphia,⁵² was an unexpected triumph for the ILO. The atmosphere of euphoria and dynamism which prevailed extended to the debate on colonial social policy. The discourse surrounding what was possible and desirable in terms of colonial policy was much broader and deeper than it had been before the war. The ardour of the now famous Declaration of Philadelphia was as perceptible in those passages which dealt with the dependent territories, as they were now commonly called, as it was with regard to the future of the independent States.⁵³ Looking back to the discussions of a colonial reform programme, G.A. Johnston, a member of the British Government delegation in Philadelphia and later the Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Office, described what came out of Philadelphia as a "new orientation" for the Organization, and as a "charter for the dependent peoples".⁵⁴

The "social conscience of mankind"

The Philadelphia Conference had begun under rather unfavourable auspices. The ILO's efforts to persuade the Soviet Union to participate had failed definitively shortly before the beginning of the meeting. Not even the United States, which set great store by strengthening the ILO and realized that this would be difficult without the membership of one of the main pillars of the planned post-war order, had been successful in its attempts to bring the Soviets round. Another reason the United States wanted to secure the Soviet Union's participation was that an international trade union movement acting independently, such as Moscow had been striving to establish in the form of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), would give the Soviet Union more influence than it would possess as a member of the ILO, a prospect which neither the Government in Washington nor the strictly anti-communist trade union federation, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), relished.⁵⁵ However, the significance which some parts of the American Government, at least, attached to the ILO at this time was not just a result of the US interest in ensuring that the Soviet Union's role in the post-war order remain as insignificant as possible. Frances Perkins explained at a conference in Montreal in early 1943 that US membership of the ILO was advantageous to both sides. It was to the advantage of the Americans that the ILO was, as the Americans had proposed, working to engage the organized workforce in labour legislation and attempting to limit them to union action alone; in turn, the membership of the United States widened the ILO's previously European perspective and made it more broadly international. In addition, the experiences of the New Deal had broadened the ILO's scope by making it more open to general issues of economic policy;

the ILO had been an invaluable aid to the United States when the latter was drafting its own social legislation in the 1930s, and had also shown US trade unions new forms of action. It would be in US interests for the ILO to put its experience and capabilities to good use in the new international system.⁵⁶

The American Government tried everything, right up until the Conference began in April 1944, to secure the Soviet Union's participation, but even Roosevelt's personal request to Stalin failed to move him,⁵⁷ and the Soviet Union observed the Conference from a critical distance. The Soviet periodical *Izvestia* described the ILO in a report on the meeting as a "leftover appendage of the now extinct League of Nations", "without any real authority".⁵⁸

But authority was precisely that quality which the ILO regained through the Conference in Philadelphia. The Organization actually managed to initiate its organizational and programmatic rebirth. The delegates from 41 participating nations embraced its "global vision",⁵⁹ and established the ILO as the "social conscience of mankind" for the post-war period, as the president of the Conference, the New Zealand Labour politician Walter Nash, put it.⁶⁰ The Declaration of Philadelphia, adopted at the end of the gathering, gave the Philadelphia Conference a lasting place in the history of the ILO and made the occasion feel almost like a second foundation of the Organization.⁶¹

One important outcome of Philadelphia was that, for the first time in the history of international relations, a ratified document spoke of social human rights. The Declaration gave the endorsement of the old principles of the Organization⁶² an entirely new rationale:

- (a) all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity;
- (b) the attainment of the conditions in which this shall be possible must constitute the central aim of national and international policy.⁶³

The social objective which all policy was to serve was, therefore, based on a claim in law which was fundamentally anterior to the State and which, furthermore, was elevated from the sphere of state responsibility into that of international policy. As a result, the ILO saw it as its duty "to examine and consider all international economic and financial policies and measures in the light of this fundamental objective".⁶⁴

The Declaration defined a series of social policy aims, ranging from full employment and housing to the right of workers to a "just share of the fruits of progress".⁶⁵ Another section laid down the cornerstones of the economic policy that would be necessary to attain these goals. In this passage, the ILO departed definitively from its labour protection focus of the pre-war period

and called instead for state intervention in the form of active employment policy and economic planning. The Declaration held the expansion of productivity and consumption to be the key to increasing living standards. What was equally new and far-reaching was the fact that the Declaration also regarded these measures as capable of bringing about the “economic and social advancement of the less developed regions of the world”, as it stated in the same passage. In this connection, the Declaration called for international agreements to stabilize the world market prices of primary products and promote international trade for the “well-being of all peoples” – including the underdeveloped regions of the world. The Declaration of Philadelphia was thus also the first official document that defined development as an obligation incumbent upon the whole world community.⁶⁶

The ILO's determination to set down a social objective that would apply all over the world, and in doing so to venture far into the field of economic policy, was one of the distinguishing features of the Philadelphia Conference. The wealth of other resolutions and Recommendations which the Conference also adopted reinforced this sense of purpose. The Declaration's incorporation into the ILO Constitution lent it additional force. The Declaration gave the principles of the Atlantic Charter a legally binding form, and became a forerunner in the field of international human rights documents such as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶⁷

“Make sure that they too will taste the sweet fruit of victory”: colonial reforms in Philadelphia

A hopeful signal to the inhabitants of the colonies and other observers critical of colonialism was the strikingly universalistic language in which the Declaration of Philadelphia was formulated. The Conference affirmed “that the principles set forth in this Declaration are fully applicable to all peoples everywhere” and that “while the manner of their application must be determined with due regard to the stage of social and economic development reached by each people, their progressive application to peoples who are still dependent, as well as to those who have already achieved self-government, is a matter of concern to the whole civilized world”. Despite the qualification regarding the stage of development, which left the colonial powers a significant amount of latitude, this was a far-reaching affirmation. The colonies were described as territories that were “still dependent”, and the way was opened for an internationalization of colonial policy. That the principles of the Declaration were “fully applicable” even to colonial peoples was the symbolic expression of the final consignment to the past of the particularistic discourse which had characterized the creation of the NLC.

Another indication of the paradigm change that was taking place was the simultaneous adoption of the Recommendation concerning Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories.⁶⁸ The Preamble to the

Recommendation acknowledged that the “economic advancement and social progress of the peoples of dependent territories have become increasingly a matter of close and urgent concern to the States responsible for their administration”; the body of the text contained some basic tenets of colonial social policy and listed those international labour standards which members were advised to apply in their territories. According to the text, the Conference’s reason for creating the document was the ILO’s endorsement of the principles of the Atlantic Charter, which in turn was a tacit admission that these principles were indeed applicable to the colonies. The basic policy tenets laid down in the Recommendation bore the mark of the principles Benson had worked out since “A people’s peace in the colonies”. They formulated a universal social objective which all policy had to serve; they called for extensive financial commitment by the metropolises to the economic and social development of their territories and, finally, they demanded that members take “all possible steps ... effectively to associate the peoples of the dependent territories in the framing and execution of measures of social progress”. The desirability of the internationalization of colonial matters was also hinted at. The document emphasized the co-responsibility of ILO members without colonial responsibility for economic and social development in the dependent territories. In several places it spoke of the necessity of dealing with the problems in question on “international, regional, national and territorial” levels. The list of target areas for social policy in Article 3 also had a strongly universalizing effect and was similar in many points to the areas identified in Section III of the Declaration of Philadelphia. Eight further sections of the Recommendation then laid down standards on topics ranging from the employment of children and young people to the promotion of cooperative organizations.⁶⁹

The document signalled a new beginning in one other respect too: it expanded the administrative powers’ obligations with regard to its application. Governments in the metropolises now had to increase efforts to ensure that the provisions of the Recommendation were made known to the local populations, and had to report regularly to the Office on the progress made in implementing it – a requirement that had previously been attached only to Conventions.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that Philadelphia left the colonial powers’ fundamental sovereignty over their dependent territories intact, a dramatic paradigm change was nevertheless evident.

Anyone listening to the speeches given by the representatives of the colonial powers during the plenary sessions in Philadelphia must surely have been persuaded that they fully shared the ILO’s view that its draft Recommendation reflected the “ideology of victory” and was inspired by the belief that “the present war will be won by the United Nations over forces and false doctrines of race supremacy”.⁷¹ One after another, the speakers endorsed the words of an American Government representative who had pointed out that thousands of young men from the colonies were risking

their lives “as willing participants in a war against enslavement” and called for the Conference to send them a signal “that they too will taste the sweet fruit of victory”.⁷² In the same spirit, the Belgian Reporter of the Committee on Social Policy in Dependent Territories convened in Philadelphia to work on the Office’s draft Recommendation told delegates that their approval of it would show the world that the democracies retained a moral advantage over their opponents in the war. “We must not let the legend that the democracies cannot act quickly and promptly go any further. Let us act well and act quickly!”⁷³

All the colonial powers voted in favour of the colonial passages in the Declaration and the Recommendation, although not all of them went quite as far as the Free France representative, Delélee-Desloges, who invoked a ten-year line of continuity, interrupted only by Vichy, which had reached its provisional climax in Brazzaville, and who, before the vote on the Recommendation, embraced its principles wholeheartedly in the name of his country and claimed in his speech: “I should rather have said that we were in fact fully attached to them even before they were formulated.”⁷⁴ The tone of the British, Belgian and Dutch Government representatives was more restrained, but left equally little room for doubt about their approval of the documents.⁷⁵

**“Nothing can be done about it of course”:
the colonial powers in Philadelphia**

From the outside, then, the colonial powers appeared to be possessed by the spirit of reform that had presided over Philadelphia. On closer inspection, however, it became clear that their positive and cooperative attitude was the result of more sober considerations. Wilfrid Benson’s scepticism a month before Philadelphia about the viability of the reforms in the light of debates in official British circles had been entirely justified. When a draft of the Recommendation, submitted together with a detailed commentary listing once again the arguments contained in “A people’s peace in the colonies”, arrived in the CO, it was rejected unanimously.⁷⁶ Major Orde-Brown, who was once again moved to make derogatory remarks about its author, “Mr. Wilfrid Benson, who had had no practical experience in the labour field”, called it a “collection of pious hopes” with no prospect of becoming reality, thereby echoing the tone of most other commentators.⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Orde-Brown bemoaned the document’s total “lack of practical outlook” and criticized its attempts to force industrially advanced colonies such as the West Indies and “tribally structured areas” in Africa into the same bracket. Nor could he see the sense in provisions aimed at abolishing established recruitment practices or the use of penal sanctions in breaches of employment contracts, both of which he still regarded as necessary.⁷⁸ Commentators from the CO and Ministry of Labour found the text of the Recommendation “too visionary”, “too like a convention in its language”, “ignorant of local

conditions" and, not least, "too expensive". A section head from the CO found it downright "dangerous to package such objectives in such a grandiose manner, in view of the fact that it will be entirely impossible to achieve them in the foreseeable future".⁷⁹ Even those members of the CO who were most open to a resolute approach to development and who supported the document's basic objectives could not quite swallow the "underlying universalism" of the draft.⁸⁰ Sydney Caine believed it would be more honest "to make clear that there is really no prospect in the near future of introducing universal holidays with pay or maternity benefits throughout the colonies".⁸¹

The transformation of this broad negativity into ostentatious approval by the day of the vote was partly down to lobbying by liberal-minded circles for Britain to take a positive position on the Recommendation,⁸² but in larger part a result of foreign policy considerations. In March 1944 a memorandum from the British Ministry of Information and Political Warfare described Britain's basic goal at the Philadelphia Conference as being to demonstrate itself to be a "socially minded country" in its treatment of the Commonwealth and Empire, willing to cooperate with other nations in all areas.⁸³ By the time the Conference itself came around, it had been decided that the meeting offered the perfect international forum for Britain to show itself as a progressive colonial power.

Another important factor was trepidation about the potential conduct of the colonial powers' American ally. It was presidential election year, and Whitehall feared that the American Government might try to appease anti-colonial sentiment among the American people by taking a particularly tough line in negotiations concerning the Recommendation on colonial social policy. Frederick Leggett, one of the CO's two designated delegates to the Conference, had already attributed those passages in the draft concerning international cooperation and the economic opening of the colonies to the influence of the United States. He saw in them an attempt to undermine British sovereignty in general, and promised to be highly vigilant towards "any attempt to interfere with British responsibility for our own territories". At the same time, however, he realized that ultimately "nothing can be done about it of course".⁸⁴ This was precisely the opinion of the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, who in an argument with the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, about the right tactics for the Conference remarked that, for better or worse, Britain would have to show in Philadelphia that it really was pursuing the progressive policy it had announced in so many official statements. The CO thus argued that Britain should participate in the formulation of the Recommendation, and simply do its best to shape elementary parts of it in the British interest.⁸⁵ Bevin, on the other hand, wanted to wait and not adopt any Recommendations until a later Conference. With regard to the colonial policy Recommendation in particular, he felt it would be wrong for Britain to commit itself to something that it would

not be able to put into action. Stanley, though, felt that hesitation would be politically unwise. "Playing for time – for that is how, at best, it would be represented by critics –" would be pounced upon all too gleefully by the Americans in particular as proof of the failure of the British to follow up manifold promises with concrete deeds. Furthermore, he feared that the other colonial powers might dictate a Conference strategy to their delegations which would lead to positive public statements being followed by fights over detail in the committees. In the event, Stanley's feeling would turn out to be prophetic in that it would take a lot of tact to avoid giving the impression that the British Government was hesitant about, if not dismissive of, a "Colonial Charter" whose principles it claimed underlay its official policy.

Bevin's strategy, which the War Cabinet eventually voted to adopt in Philadelphia (Churchill himself having decided the dispute in favour of his Labour Minister),⁸⁶ proved at the Conference to be impracticable. The British were quickly accused of obstructionism, with the result that the second British Government delegate in Philadelphia, George Tomlinson, soon asked for, and received, Bevin's permission to accept the Recommendation with "one or two limitations".⁸⁷ What made Britain's original position so difficult to sustain was mainly the fact that the overwhelming majority of Conference delegates were tending towards accepting the Recommendation. Significantly, all the other representatives of colonial powers signalled their approval from the beginning – which was hardly surprising in view of the much more precarious position they were in. The French and the Dutch knew that the reacquisition of their post-war possessions depended to an increasing extent on the good will of the Americans. Before post-war planning in this respect entered its crucial phase, Philadelphia was an opportunity to placate the United States which they could not afford to let pass. The same applied more or less to the Belgian Government-in-exile, although it did still have some influence over its possessions in Central Africa.⁸⁸ For all these countries, though, responding positively to the ILO's offers and threats was a question of survival, and they needed to use the Conference as a forum to improve their standing in world opinion.

The British and the Dutch also used the Conference to speak directly to the populations in the areas under Japanese occupation, and although George Tomlinson was aware of the risk of creating the impression that British approval of the Recommendation was given mainly for reasons of psychological warfare, he could not bear to let the opportunity go entirely to waste.

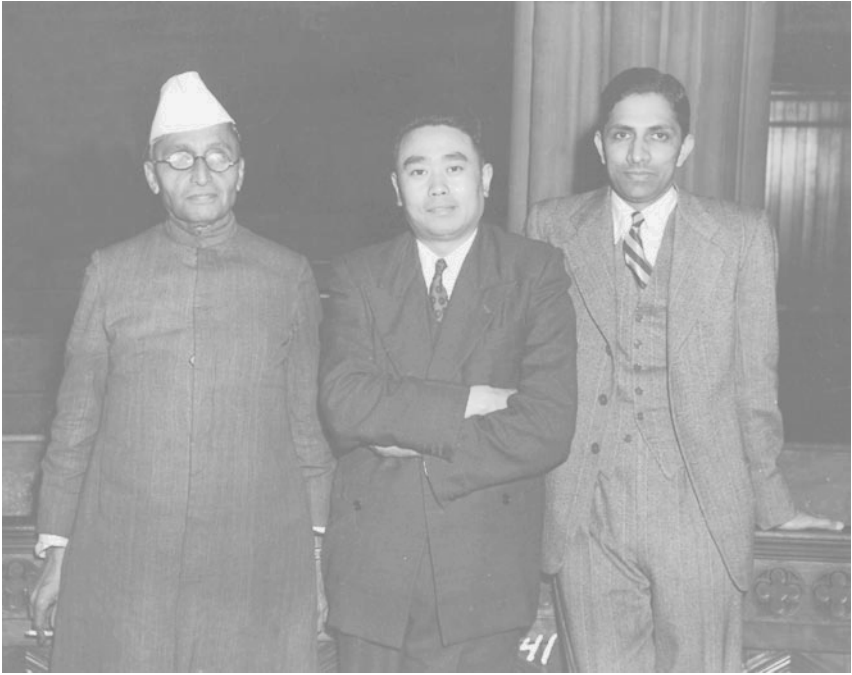
It [the Recommendation] should be taken as a broad directive – a charter, if you wish – on colonial policy, affecting all dependent territories everywhere. ... We hope of course, that news of this charter will reach our peoples now under Japanese oppression, and will be a great encouragement

to them in its clear indication of the lines of labour and social policy that we intend to follow when we resume administration in those countries. But that is only an incidental advantage and should not be regarded as part of our purpose.⁸⁹

Colonial charter or imperialistic stereotype?

The colonial powers' fears of what the United States might have up its sleeve turned out to be unfounded. The line on the colonial reform agenda they had taken in the run-up to the Conference turned out to have been harder than the one they followed in Philadelphia itself. Before the Conference, Carter Goodrich had recommended that "the influence of the US delegation should be exerted on the side of the broadest practicable advance in standards for dependent territories",⁹⁰ and would even have liked to see measures that went beyond the Office's proposal, but there was no mention of this in Philadelphia. The American delegation was also only half-hearted about promoting Goodrich's suggestion that a permanent body should be set up parallel to the Recommendation to oversee the application of the document. One reason for this lack of zeal may well have been that the fire of American anti-colonialism had begun to die down in the second half of the war in some parts of the Government, especially in the State Department.⁹¹ Washington feared that too confrontational an attitude might easily be turned round and used against the United States itself, given the passages in the texts in question that banned all types of discrimination on the grounds of race. An adviser to the American Workers' delegation, the Reverend E. Haas, made reference to this in his speech regarding the Recommendation, commenting on the "inner colonialism" that existed in the United States where the non-white population was concerned.⁹² Another reason for the American Government delegation's unexpected reserve, however, was simply that Washington had other priorities for the Conference and was happy to leave the initiative to others when it came to colonial social policy.⁹³

As it turned out though, even America's less aggressive anti-colonialism was enough to convince the colonial politicians that they would be well advised to accept the Office's colonial reform programme. Particularly enthusiastic support for the colonial reform document came in Philadelphia from the Latin American countries, which were in favour of it both ideologically and, perhaps more importantly, for economic reasons. The colonies competed extensively on the world market with countries in Central and South America, and their low social standards gave them an important competitive advantage. Countries such as Chile, Argentina and Mexico, which had taken their own first steps towards a welfare state in the 1930s, were particularly interested in seeing workers' rights strengthened in the colonies.⁹⁴ Support came too from the Chinese delegation, whose goal in



Chinese and Indian Workers' delegates in Philadelphia, 1944

Philadelphia was to establish China as the Asian leader in the international arena,⁹⁵ and from the Workers' group.

In the almost total absence of representatives from the colonial territories themselves,⁹⁶ very little criticism of the reform draft surfaced. The most controversial comments came from the Indian delegation. The Congress Party, which was without doubt the strongest political force in the country, was not represented, excluded by Britain because of its anti-colonial activities, but the Indian Workers' representative, Mehta, still raised a counter-argument in the debate – perhaps the only voice of “dissent” that was actually heard. One of the reasons he did so was that, as a member of a relatively small association of trade unions overshadowed by the bigger organizations with links to the Congress Party, he felt he had to take a particularly firm anti-colonial stand. Mehta welcomed the Recommendation, but pointed out the paradox of postulating universal standards while adopting a separate Recommendation just for the colonies, which in his view was in itself “a stereotyping of imperialism”. He took the opportunity to warn the colonial powers not to underestimate the expectations of the colonial populations, cautioning them that India, for example, was “today not strongly against

the Nazis". The reason, he said, was that the colonial populations felt they had nothing to gain or to lose from the war, and the crusade that was the Second World War was not going to end in lasting victory through empty rhetoric alone.⁹⁷

However, very little criticism was directed explicitly at the reform itself. South African representatives, whose government was against the Recommendation on the grounds of its race policy, withheld their comments when they realized in the committee that they were fighting a losing battle. What little criticism there was of the reform programme generally came from the ranks of the Employers. The British Employers' adviser, Murray, a representative of the European entrepreneurs active in the colonies, tried to delay the adoption of the Recommendation by claiming that it was unbalanced and did not involve the colonial administrations enough. Like other business representatives, faced with certain defeat, he eventually abstained from voting.⁹⁸

The overwhelming majority of observers at and participants in the Conference, however, came away with the impression that they had witnessed a real turning point in colonial policy. The universalistic language of the Declaration of Philadelphia was to have an enormous effect on social and political movements in the dependent territories. For all its deficits, it was still a new beginning. It formulated new objectives and, moreover, promised new methods for implementing the decisions arrived at more effectively.

The seriousness of the intent embodied in the Declaration and the Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories Recommendation remained to be seen. The language and content, however, suggested that at this "first meeting of the peace conference",⁹⁹ as Edward Phelan described Philadelphia, the colonies had been made part of the general course of reform. Philadelphia set the standard for progressive social policy in the colonies, lending new legitimacy to the colonial powers' claims to control, but also giving the colonial populations a whole range of new claims of their own. The tools for reform adopted in Philadelphia, moreover, represented a milestone in the history of international cooperation. After a phase of internal existential insecurity, the ILO had registered its claim to be involved in Allied post-war planning with force. In the words of President Roosevelt, who at the end of the Conference invited the delegates to the White House, thus underlining the significance which the American Government attached to the event, the Declaration of Philadelphia was a "landmark in world thinking".¹⁰⁰

The Declaration of Philadelphia laid down the first guidelines for action before concrete plans for the organization of the post-war order took form. It preceded the attempts of colonial peoples and reform-oriented forces the world over to secure far-reaching policy changes. The document provided a significant impulse to the innumerable non-governmental organizations,

and the dozens of official and unofficial planning groups, working on concepts for a post-war order. The trade unions, which had played such a significant role in pushing through the reforms in Philadelphia, now struck out on their own, strengthened by the resolutions of the Conference. The historic act of February 1945, whereby the remnants of the old IFTU merged with the Soviet trade unions to become the WFTU,¹⁰¹ represented a break with the relative indifference towards colonial matters that had characterized their work in the period between the wars. The founding manifesto of the WFTU called for the colonial reform proposals put forward in Philadelphia to be the starting point of post-war policy. It even went as far, invoking the Atlantic Charter, as to recognize the right of all peoples to self-determination. The WFTU now began to open up to non-European associations from Latin America, Africa and Asia. At its first conference in London and its second in October 1945 in Paris, representatives from a whole range of colonial trade union associations demanded rapid progress in the reform process on every level. During the early days of the WFTU in particular, the Declaration of Philadelphia gave the colonial critics in the Federation a powerful tool to help them assert their calls for action against the continuing reservations of the metropolitan trade union associations.¹⁰²

The Declaration of Philadelphia thus represented a huge stride forward for reform-oriented forces and was a source of inspiration to all who were committed to the emancipation of the colonial populations. However, it was yet to face its first real test, which would come when the war was finally over and it was time to turn the promises into actions.

3

A New World with New Ideas: The ILO and the Quest for a Colonial Post-War Order, 1945–48

As the post-war era dawned, the climate looked favourable for the implementation of the principles set out in Philadelphia. The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 created a framework which gave the ILO's basic principles a new, solid footing. Both the UN Charter and the UDHR set out a new generation of "social" rights for which the Declaration of Philadelphia had paved the way and which now, in turn, conferred new legitimacy on the Declaration. The strikingly universalistic language of the UN Charter and the UDHR both inspired reformers in the metropolises nationalist movements in the colonies.¹

The end of the war hailed an unprecedented era of social reform. The British Labour Party's election victory over the war hero Churchill even before hostilities had completely ceased was just one signal that war-torn societies now expected action on wartime promises.² Immediately Britain, like other countries in Europe, began to build out of the rubble a welfare state designed to take care of its citizens' needs to an extent never before attempted. This policy was driven by a spirit which led the British sociologist Thomas H. Marshall to speak some years later of the breakthrough of a new generation of rights – "social rights of citizenship" – which complemented the political and civil rights already in place.³

Colonial policy, too, was in the grip of the spirit of reform. The metropolises were putting more resources than would previously have been imaginable into the economic and social development of their overseas possessions. Economic considerations and the desire to retain political control were soon once again the driving factors behind this, but the first years after the war still marked a real shift in colonial thinking. The particularism of the pre-war period had been replaced almost everywhere by a more universalistic spirit which made it easier for the colonial powers to agree to the ILO's new colonial principles and, in 1947, to support the incorporation of these

principles into a whole range of Conventions. At the post-war sessions of the ILC in Seattle and Montreal (1946) and Geneva (1947), an extensive package of legislation was adopted which helped to elevate the colonial goals of Philadelphia to the binding level of national law.

Despite all this, however, from the point of view of some of its members the ILO did not go far enough. Its attempt to latch the colonial reform programme on to the general one taking shape at the same time, in order to “turn new labor policies into a labor discourse”, was flawed.⁴ The Conventions were unable to break out of the particularistic framework of the 1944 Recommendation, and in some points of detail the colonial powers still inevitably managed to impose a restrictive approach. Even after 1945, the colonies initially remained an area to which different rules applied.

The Office’s failure to obtain more major concessions from the colonial powers was largely a result of the rapid deterioration of the atmosphere between the wartime Allies after 1945. In the light of the Soviet Union’s continuing hostility towards the ILO, which also hampered the Organization’s entry into the emerging UN system, the ILO soon found itself dependent on the good will of the West. And as even the United States’ anti-colonial zeal began to wane perceptibly as the East–West conflict loomed larger, it was difficult to exert pressure on the colonial powers.

The countries of Asia were the most vocal critics of what they saw as the ILO’s excessively cautious attitude to colonial issues. Discussions of colonial topics became more controversial than previously. The further decolonization in Asia progressed, the greater the claims that were articulated. For the first time, the ILO was confronted with “post-colonial” problems. Newly independent nations such as India made vehement demands for a structural and programmatic reform of the Organization. It was called upon to abandon its Eurocentric position and to dedicate more of its resources to “Asian” problems. It became clear that what the decolonized nations expected of the ILO was much less standards than concrete assistance with the development of their national economies.

“This is 1945!” The colonial principles of Philadelphia and the new international order

When the ILO’s members assembled in Paris in October 1945 for the first post-war session of the ILC, almost a year and a half had passed since the Philadelphia Conference. In the meantime the idea of universal human rights had made significant progress, and hopes were running high that the Paris Conference would continue the process of reform. What was more, by the time the Conference came around, the advocates of the human rights idea had at their disposal a document which confirmed on an international level the universality of certain basic rights. The Charter of the United Nations, the organization which had come into being in June 1945 in San

Francisco, reflected the will of the victors in the Second World War to fill the promises of a “peoples’ peace” with action. The Charter, which came into effect on 24 October 1945, right in the middle of the Paris Conference, reaffirmed “faith in fundamental human rights [and] in the dignity and worth of the human person”, and obliged its signatories among other things to “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”. To enable them to do so, the authors of the Charter laid out a catalogue of social and economic rights based on the principles of Philadelphia.⁵

Unsurprisingly, the founding deed of the newly structured world community was an important source of inspiration to colonial reformers. Although the principle of national sovereignty had prevailed once again in San Francisco – Article 2 (7) of the Charter promised the colonial powers that “nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter”, making the obligations laid down by the Charter nothing more, essentially, than declarations of intent that were not legally binding⁶ – other parts of the document moved in quite a different direction. Chapters XI and XII, for example, contained declarations regarding “non-self-governing territories” (another circumlocution for colonies) and the establishment of an “international trusteeship system”. The trusteeship system was intended to replace the League of Nations’ largely ineffectual mandate system, and imposed much wider-ranging obligations on the governing powers than in the period between the wars. Although such obligations did not yet apply to the colonial territories in the narrow sense, Chapter XI of the Charter stipulated that all members of the UN “which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government” had to report to the Secretary-General on progress in the development of the territories in question.⁷ The establishment of the trusteeship system and the provisions of the relevant passages in the Charter were a major victory for those forces that, in the run-up to the San Francisco Conference, had demanded tangible political progress for the colonies, and they were largely the result of tireless efforts by a number of smaller countries.⁸

Another hopeful signal was the recurring notion in the Charter of the universal validity of the rights anchored within it and their explicit extension to the colonies. The document linked the unqualified applicability to the colonial peoples of the rights it contained with the duty to create the conditions under which these rights could be enjoyed to their full extent. The Charter urged the colonial powers to “develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions”, and called on them “to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political, economic, social, and educational advancement, their just

treatment, and their protection against abuses". Article 73, echoing the Declaration of Philadelphia, stated that the interests of the inhabitants of dependent territories were "paramount". The administrative powers were given the "hallowed task" of furthering the development of these areas.⁹ It was passages such as these which made the Charter such good ammunition for all those in the period after the war who refused to be content with promises and who pushed for concrete reforms.

At the Fifth Congress of the Pan-African Movement, which took place in Manchester and coincided with the ILC, this new sense of purpose was clearly felt. The Congress adopted a manifesto which called for the rapid and consistent economic, cultural and social development of Africa which the metropolises were to help – on an international level – supervise, plan and carry out. The manifesto also demanded the participation of Africans at all levels of society, and steps to facilitate full political sovereignty within a set period.¹⁰ Those passages in particular which emphasized the role of trade unions in Africa's social development clearly showed the influence of the Declaration of Philadelphia.¹¹

The ILC in Paris, 1945

At the opening of the ILC in Paris, John Carter Goodrich, now the Chairman of the Governing Body, called upon the delegates and the UN representatives present to continue and take further the good work they had begun in Philadelphia in the field of colonial social policy. The progressive application of labour standards and social policy to dependent peoples remained a "matter of concern to the whole civilized world". Goodrich emphasized that the Organization's contribution so far had been of great significance, and that the continued success of its efforts would be an "indispensable factor in the success of the trusteeship system of the United Nations".¹²

The atmosphere of the meeting in the French capital was deeply coloured by the events of the immediate past. The horrors of war and the monstrous crimes that had been committed under Nazi rule were still fresh in people's minds. The liberation of the concentration camps had revealed the full scale of these atrocities to the entire world. The Conference location in the heart of war-torn Europe and the participation of numerous delegates who had been part of Resistance movements against the German occupation – such as the French Employment Minister and Conference President Alexandre Parodi – guaranteed that the notion of universal human rights would carry especial weight.¹³ Many speakers emphasized that only if the reform opus begun in Philadelphia was carried on in the spirit of universal human rights would it be clear that the lessons of the crises and wars of the past had really been learned. The Reporter of the Committee on Social Policy in the Non-Metropolitan Territories (NMTs),¹⁴ the Belgian Government adviser William van Remoortel, called for delegates to approve the reforms that were due to be voted on in Paris on the grounds that, according to the resolutions of San

Francisco, everyone present endorsed the principle that all people should be treated equally, wherever in the world they lived and whatever the colour of their skin. He referred to the experience of many French and Belgians and people of other countries who had become “victims of the theory of the master race”, concluding that “we are now delivered from these horrors, and it is now our duty to deliver the dependent peoples from them too”.¹⁵ The Chilean Workers’ representative, Vargas Puebla, seconded his words and cautioned that creating a lasting peace depended on the permanent abolition of all types of discrimination on the basis of race, religion or skin colour. Now that the most horrific of all wars had finally crushed the fascist theory of superior and inferior races, he urged the UN to do everything in its power to secure equal rights for all.¹⁶ The Cuban Government representative, Silio, supported this demand and called for the “Nazi conception” of racial discrimination to be done away with once and for all.

Other speakers, such as Ralph Bunche, part of the American delegation in Paris, emphasized the huge sacrifices which the colonies had made in bringing about victory and the huge debt of thanks the peace-loving world now owed them. In his view the colonial peoples had earned themselves the right to be involved as equals in post-war planning.¹⁷ Joseph Hallsworth, the British Chairman of the Workers’ group, agreed, saying, “They have helped us and it is our duty to help them to stand on their own feet and



Edward Phelan and General de Gaulle on the fringes of the ILC in Paris, 1945 (*left foreground*: Justin Godard, French Government delegate)

win the way to salvation through their associated power joined with that of the advanced countries." As many of the colonial peoples had taken part in the struggle against fascism and Nazism and so had seen for themselves the rights their metropolitan comrades in arms already enjoyed, failing to continue with the policy of reform could, he warned, result in a potentially very explosive situation.¹⁸

**Universalism put to the test: the Social Policy in
Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions)
Recommendation, 1945**

Paris provided ample opportunity to transform the new spirit of universalism into concrete action. The Recommendation adopted in Philadelphia concerning minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories needed to be extended to include the points there had not been time to discuss the previous year or which had at the time been considered too controversial. These issues had threatened to jeopardize the whole Recommendation in Philadelphia, and their treatment had thus been postponed until the next Conference. The basic positions in the dispute over the universality of labour standards, which would characterize the debate in the three years to come until work on the "social policy in dependent territories" reform documents finally reached its conclusion, were clearly evident in Paris. On the one hand there was a reform coalition made up of the Workers' group, acting unanimously, and the governments of India, China, Australia and New Zealand, the United States and most of the Latin American countries. In the first meeting of the Conference committee set up to look at the dependent territories, the Indian, Chilean and Australian Workers' representatives and the only two representatives actually from the colonies, Assalé from French Cameroon, who was an adviser to the Workers' delegation, and his Nigerian counterpart Esua, took to the floor to question the way the ILO was approaching reform. They argued that even just dealing with the dependent territories separately from the metropolises was a breach of the anti-discrimination provision in the UN Charter. Wilfrid Benson, as the author of the first draft of the addendum to the Recommendation, explained with difficulty that the standards for dependent territories were in no way standards for "inferior peoples", but should rather be understood as an acknowledgement of the "special responsibilities of the States for advancing the well-being of certain peoples".¹⁹ The Indian Workers' representative Sharma, however, denounced this in the plenary session as a "double standard for humanity" and again described the ILO's dual approach as in itself "a stereotyping of imperialism" to which it was possible to agree only under protest.²⁰ Although most of the Workers' representatives had fewer problems with the separate treatment of the issue of the "dependent territories", it made them all the more insistent in their demands for a universalist approach within this separate framework. In general, the Workers' group was much more in

favour of colonial reform at the sessions of the Conference in the immediate post-war period than it had been before the war. The manifesto of the Second Congress of the WFTU, which had taken place in Paris just a month before the ILO gathering, had emphatically reinforced calls for colonial reform based on universal rights. As a result, even the British, French, Dutch and Belgian trade unions were more critical at the ILC than they tended to be in domestic debate, where their position on colonial issues was usually much more moderate.²¹

On the other hand, and diametrically opposed to the first group, there was a faction made up of almost all the Employers' representatives, except the Indian and Chinese delegates, which featured in particular the representatives of colonial economic interests within the French, British, Belgian and South African Union delegations. Their response to the universalistic implications of the reform document was a consistent strategy of obstruction and procrastination.²²

The conduct of the Government delegates sent by the colonial powers was ambiguous if not duplicitous. During the sittings of the Conference Committee on Social Policy in Dependent Territories they haggled tirelessly on single points,²³ and questioned or attempted to relativize all the Office's universalistic suggestions. In the plenary sessions, though, all the colonial powers avoided expressing negative sentiments about the results the Committee had reached, even if they had fought hard against the proposals during negotiations. Their two main priorities were, first, to show off to the international public the colonial reform initiatives they had already initiated, and, second, to avoid entering too "hastily" into obligations that could potentially lead to claims against them they would not be able to evade. It was no coincidence that the master of this strategy was France. In 1945 the "French Union" had been created – an act by which Paris hoped to emphasize the solidarity between the colonial empire and the metropole. Plans for a common code of labour legislation, the Code du Travail, applicable to both the home country and the colonies, were well under way, and the French Parliament was currently consulting on an overhaul of the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social (FIDES), which had been set up in 1938 and which was now to be endowed with much more capital than its predecessor from the Popular Front era. In relative terms, the FIDES exceeded even the second Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945, the British Government's signal of its willingness to make a fresh start on development policy.²⁴ Henri Hauck, Government adviser to the French delegation in Paris, praised the ILO for its suggestions, but assured the gathering that French policy had already moved well beyond the Philadelphia recommendations on all fronts.²⁵ The other powers were less categorical in their statements, but still attempted to use the rostrum to draw attention to reforms already under way. The British speaker invoked the new spirit the Labour Government had brought to British colonial thinking,

a spirit which, he said, was going to make the principles of Philadelphia the “very basis of my Government’s colonial policy”.²⁶ Although their positions did not coincide in every detail, the colonial powers shared the need to use the forum offered by the ILO to portray themselves as progressive and receptive to new ideas. In this the European Government representatives differed fundamentally from their Employers’ delegations, whose opposition to the reforms was unrelenting even in plenary sessions and who maintained their anti-universalistic agenda even when it was clear they would be outvoted.

These, then, were the auspices under which a series of additional social policy objectives were adopted in Paris under the heading “Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions)”.²⁷ Two of the issues in particular, paid holiday and wage policy, which were dealt with essentially as matters of trade union freedom, sparked representative debates about the universalistic content of the ILO’s colonial reform documents and divided both the plenary sessions and the Conference Committee meetings more starkly than ever into the camps described above.

Paid holiday for the colonies

On the issue of paid holiday, the Employers’ representatives from the colonial powers, supported by their American and Mexican counterparts, argued from the beginning that the proposal hammered out in the Committee laying down minimum holiday of “at least twelve working days” should be altered to stipulate only a week (six days). Although six days was all the ILO Convention of 1936 prescribed for independent countries,²⁸ many nations had since passed legislation which provided for much more generous holiday allowances, which was ultimately what had prompted the Committee to double the 1936 standard.²⁹ The Employers’ representatives, however, came up with a whole range of counter-arguments, including that an extension would discriminate against the workers in industrialized countries to whom the 1936 Convention continued to apply (a point made by a British adviser to the Employers’ delegation).³⁰ There was also no shortage of comments such as those by the Belgian van Lint, who feared that Congolese workers “would probably not make good use of so long a holiday”.³¹ His French colleague Bernard went even further and questioned the sagacity of any provision which placed workers in industrialized countries and those in the colonies on the same level. He argued that there was absolutely no evidence to show that a system which demanded European-style discipline from indigenous workers and rewarded this with the corresponding incentives was actually the best system for them, adding “indeed I have good reasons to believe the contrary”. Bernard held that a system of migratory labour in which workers moved seasonally between the industrial workplace and the village community was better suited to the nature of indigenous workers and thus ideal for the French colonies.³² Comments such as these exposed the Employers to the collective fury of the Workers’ representatives. “This is 1945” cried

Joseph Hallsworth in outrage at the Employers' group, reminding them that they had to accept that they now lived "in a new world with new ideas of progress".³³ The Cameroonian Assalé appealed to the French Government, calling it "the champion of freedom" and praising its enlightened policies, not to give in to the demands of the Employers. Otherwise, he warned, it would be making the same mistakes which had led to the disasters of recent years, the consequences of which could only be "the return of Fascism".³⁴

Along with the Workers' delegation, the main opponents of the Employers' group were the Latin American Government delegates, whose position on this issue had already begun to emerge in Philadelphia. They too argued in terms of the human rights idea and the lessons of the immediate past, but emphasized at the same time their vital economic interest in ending the discriminatory treatment of colonial territories. The Mexican representative, Mesa, pointed to the progressive holiday regulations that had been introduced in recent years in Latin America and condemned the unfair competition that resulted from the exploitation of colonial labour. Mexico and other export-oriented countries in South America which wanted to introduce social policy reforms that would benefit their populations would simply not be able to compete with the dependent territories in Africa if standards and the cost of labour were kept low. "So it is not only from an idealistic standpoint that Mexico supports this Recommendation, but also from a very realistic view point."³⁵

Only a few of the colonial governments actually spoke on the issue, but when it came to the vote on the motion brought by the Employers, all the Governments voted for the provision to be kept in the form recommended by the Committee.

Wage policy

The debate on universal standards in the controversial area of wage policy was much less influenced by the colonial powers' considerations of their external image. In the draft put forward by the Office, Benson had attempted, by incorporating the right to collective bargaining into the wage policy complex of issues, to breathe some life into the principle adopted in Philadelphia regarding the development and promotion of trade unions in the dependent territories. According to Article 1, Section 1 of the draft Recommendation, it was to be an "aim of policy to encourage the development of machinery of collective bargaining whereby minimum rates of wages may be fixed through negotiations between employers' and workers' organizations".³⁶ This proposal met with massive resistance both from the ranks of the Employers and from some of the Governments. The Employers initially flocked to back a proposal from the South African Government representative, who wanted to add the proviso "as far as practical and with due regard to the stage of social and economic standard of development of the people concerned".³⁷ South Africa and many of the Employers' delegations,

including those from Belgium, Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, argued in particular that in many places the “native populations” had simply not reached the necessary level of development, that they had no tradition of trade unions and that such institutions would abet political abuses. The Committee should be guided by these “facts”, warned the South African delegate, “and not endeavour to force a change for which the people [are] not ready”.³⁸

The Workers’ delegation, on the other hand, argued that the formulation “where possible” already appeared too often in texts on colonial social policy and was nothing other than an attempt to put effective reforms off until some nebulous point in the future.³⁹ It accused the Employers’ group of suggesting that the colonial populations were innately unfit for trade union freedoms, and of trying to promote the idea that dependent peoples must be treated differently from the populations of independent countries. It argued that building trade unions from the bottom up and giving them real opportunities for action had to be accepted as a method of development in the dependent territories, rather than maintaining that development had to be a precondition for the establishment of trade unions. When it came to the vote, most of the colonial Governments, too, indicated that they were against placing the establishment of collective bargaining at the discretion of the colonial administration, and the South African petition was rejected by a majority of 40 to 26.⁴⁰ Then, however, the Belgian Government representative proposed an amendment of his own which would give the colonial administrations, wherever they had reason to believe that the workers’ organizations had not yet reached the “stage of development necessary to enable them to negotiate on a footing of equality with the employers’ organizations”, the right to nominate “specially qualified persons” to “assist the workers by giving them information and advice, and, if need be, to act in their name”.⁴¹ The French and the British supported this suggestion, and even after sharp criticism from the Indian Workers’ representative, who saw in the formulation an attempt to place the development of trade unions under a paternalistic caveat, would deign to make only cosmetic amendments. Although they were anxious to avoid conveying the impression that these additions justified “indefinite governmental tutelage over unions”,⁴² this was precisely the feeling that prevailed, among Workers’ representatives in particular, about the intentions of the colonial powers.

Despite the differences in their general attitude to colonial trade unions – the French, British and Dutch were much more open to the idea than the Belgians – the colonial powers were all keen to safeguard themselves against “irresponsible elements” and “agitators”. What became particularly clear during the debates was the colonial rulers’ fundamental uncertainty about whether colonial trade unions, once established, really would prove to be the controllable and stabilizing elements they were designed to be in the minds of the colonial reformers in the metropolises. The Office’s

universalistic approach of extending metropolitan institutions and standards to the colonies could not simply be rejected in the atmosphere of 1945, but to embrace it wholeheartedly was just too risky for the colonial powers. This ambivalence, the constant swinging between the desire for “reliable partners” like the metropolitan unions and the fear of “agitators” in union clothing, which always expressed itself as the question of whether colonial populations were “mature” enough for metropolitan institutions, was a feature of the thinking of all the colonial powers right through the process of political decolonization.

From the perspective of the colonial liberation movements and some of the more universalistically inclined members of the Office, however, the development of political institutions and the improvement of social conditions were two sides of the same coin. The issue at stake was that of overcoming the colonial phenomenon of separate spheres of law, and thus of overcoming colonialism itself. Union rights were civil rights. The critical question was whether rights should come at the beginning or the end of a process of emancipation which by 1945 all the ILO’s members (except South Africa) had, in principle, endorsed – admittedly with varying degrees of enthusiasm. In this phase of unprecedented affirmation of the human rights idea, the notion that they should come first had greater salience than ever before. Yet when it came to actually discussing the matter, the advocates of the opposite position, which was rooted in the particularistic tradition of the pre-war period, were still able to engineer concession after concession for themselves.

Growing impatience

The contradictory tendencies that had emerged in the debates of the Paris Conference persisted over the two years that preceded the conclusion of the ILO’s colonial reform opus. The breakthrough of the human rights idea on an international level was severely hampered by the colonial powers’ attempts to assert political control over their possessions. As the poles moved further apart between 1945 and 1947, the atmosphere within the bodies of the ILO became even tenser. Fewer and fewer people shared the Belgian van Remoortel’s confidence that the steps already undertaken guaranteed that “colonization, in the sense in which we have known it so far – that is a colonization of exploitation – has had its day and is now at an end”.⁴³ Most of all, however, there was much doubt about whether a solution based on social reform alone, without adequate progress on the political level, made sense at all. Criticism became more and more fundamental and increasingly targeted the system of colonialism as a whole.

Outside the confines of the ILO, this tendency was most evident in the emerging structure of the UN system. Right from the start, representatives of non-European nations used the forum of the General Assembly to launch biting attacks on the colonial powers. As early as 1946, for example,

Egypt proposed an attention-grabbing resolution directed against all types of discrimination on the grounds of race or religion. India soon began to use the same forum to pillory the South African Government for its policy of racial discrimination. All these actions were directed first and foremost against the strategy used by many countries, especially the colonial powers, of invoking the principle of non-interference and trying to define the issues under discussion as strictly internal affairs.⁴⁴

The establishment of the Trusteeship Council (TC) in 1946 was a major triumph for anti-colonial forces. Unlike the League of Nations' Mandate Commission, the Council comprised countries which did not themselves have colonial possessions, making it accessible even to States which were known for their anti-colonial positions, such as Mexico, the Soviet Union, Iraq and China. The Trusteeship Council's mandates were issued only on the basis of agreements which imposed significant obligations on the administering powers. Furthermore, the head of the trusteeship department in the UN secretariat was the African American Ralph Bunche, an avowed opponent of all forms of racial discrimination and a critic of colonialism. Parallel to the TC, a committee was set up under the aegis of the General Assembly to study the reports from the trusteeship territories (the "Fourth Committee"), and in February 1946 the General Assembly established an ad hoc committee which was to have the same function for dependent territories without trusteeship status, that is, for all the remaining colonies. Both committees, whose existence was based on the only real obligation the colonial powers had assumed in the Charter, the duty to provide information, became a constant thorn in the sides of these States. The Special Committee, as the ad hoc committee was known as after 1947, was a particular trial for London and Paris because the members which the General Assembly had elected to it had no qualms about voicing their anti-colonial sentiments loud and clear. Right from the start, the Special Committee was more than just a body for analysing information, and it quickly developed into an anti-colonial tribunal.⁴⁵

Another source from which the critics of colonialism and the advocates of universal human rights drew strength was provided by the war crimes tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo, which called into question the very foundations of the dogma of national sovereignty and non-interference.⁴⁶ The recognition that, in the light of the monstrous crimes ordered and committed by the State, elementary rights of the individual had to be superordinate to governmental claims to national sovereignty formed the starting point for preparations within the UN for a major universal human rights declaration. The UN Charter had always been intended not as the culmination but as the beginning of the process of institutionalizing an international human rights regime. Even while it was being passed, discussions were going on as to how the principles contained in the Charter could be given a more concrete form in the shape of a kind of "bill of rights". A commission headed

by Eleanor Roosevelt, the former US First Lady, and made up of eminent representatives of different countries and continents, cultures and religions, worked from 1946 to 1948 on a declaration which “for the first time in all of history agreed on a universal vision of human rights”.⁴⁷ The Declaration created a point of reference that could be called upon by any individual, regardless of the political status of the area in which he or she found him- or herself. The discussion process surrounding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was eventually adopted by the UN General Assembly with 40 votes in favour, none against and 8 abstentions, was a source of new inspiration for both colonial reformers and anti-colonial movements.⁴⁸

Another phenomenon of immense importance for the political confidence of nationalist elites in the colonies was the rapid decolonization seen in South and South-East Asia after 1945. Indian independence, which was obtained in 1947 after a two-year process of negotiation with Britain’s Labour Government, was particularly significant. The long struggle of the Congress Party for *swaraj* (self-determination) was finally over. Although the price was high – the division of the country and hundreds of thousands of deaths and displacements – it did not dull the light of inspiration which India radiated to other parts of the remaining colonial world. While negotiations for India’s liberation were still going on, the ground was prepared to allow Burma and Ceylon to follow suit. In 1946 the United States, leading by example, granted the Philippines the independence promised before the war and the Japanese occupation. Indian independence was also significant for the simple reason that Prime Minister Nehru made no secret of the fact that India found the entire notion of colonial rule outdated – a view he never tired of representing to the UN and the ILO.⁴⁹

On the other hand, it soon became clear that, although Britain had deigned to give India its independence, the colonial powers on the whole were far from ready to give up their remaining colonial positions without a fight. Indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, the end of the war brought a phase amounting to a “second colonial occupation”, this time in the guise of economic and social development policy.⁵⁰ The colonies played a central role in the reconstruction plans of the European powers in the first few years after the war. In the minds of many, they were the key to recovery in the face of a catastrophic economic situation and extensive dependence on American capital that was no longer available as war aid.⁵¹ The idea that the colonies could generate the all-important dollars needed to rebuild the metropolitan economies and, not least, finance the establishment of welfare states was a tempting one to many planners.⁵² It was not until the introduction of the Marshall Plan and a reorientation towards the European and transatlantic markets that the colonial powers admitted, in the early 1950s, that empire-oriented economic policy was not bringing the desired results. In the first few years after the war the desire to exploit the economic potential of the colonies for metropolitan reconstruction was a major factor

behind both the willingness of colonial governments to introduce social reforms (as an incentive to increase productivity) and their simultaneous reluctance to permit real progress on a political level. As well as being driven by economic considerations, however, the retention or reacquisition of pre-war possessions was also a matter of prestige, particularly for those powers such as France and the Netherlands which were only just celebrating their rebirth as free nations after the period of occupation.

Only in the rarest of cases were the colonial powers prepared to listen to calls for major political concessions. Wherever their positions really seemed to be in danger, wherever their claim to continued rule was opposed by active demands for self-determination, it was not unusual after the war for the colonial powers to respond with excessive violence.⁵³ Immediately after taking possession of their old territories in South-East Asia, both the French and the Dutch fought what amounted to colonial wars in Indochina and Indonesia against national movements that had gained strength under the Japanese occupation. Britain, for its part, soon found itself involved in a war-like conflict in Malaya with a guerrilla army dominated by ethnic Chinese that had evolved as a resistance movement against the Japanese. Other parts of the colonial world, from the Near East to Africa, also saw extensive use of violence by the colonial powers.⁵⁴

The fury sparked by actions such as these, paired with disappointment about the pace of reform, soon made itself felt in the conference halls of the ILO. Strengthened by the recent prominent manifestations of the human rights idea, critical voices were raised and were listened to. A particular stir was caused by a speech made at the ILC in 1947 by a representative from French Cameroon, Assalé, who, as two years previously, was taking part in the Conference as a member of the Workers' delegation. The tone Assalé took vis-à-vis the representatives of the colonial powers was unprecedented in the forum of the ILO. The same man who, two years earlier in Paris, had praised France's good will to the skies now delivered a breathtaking philippic. First he reminded the gathering of the spirit that had reigned over the Paris Conference, where "all men of good will felt themselves to be brothers in the common struggle" against enemies of freedom and civilization. Back then, the world recognized that the colonial system, "which was a system of oppression and exploitation of non-self-governing populations", had reached the end of its days. But what had become of these ideals? Assalé made clear to the assembled delegates that "the reign of violence and arbitrary action is not over". On the contrary, he spoke of the "disillusionment and the growing anxiety of the colonial world", of an ongoing "war of extermination" and of a series of atrocities and acts of repression "in all points similar to those used by the Nazis". He criticized the denial of workers' rights in the Belgian Congo and the forced labour camps in South Africa, believing them to be "in a condition which yield[ed] in no way to the conditions under the German SS of unhappy memory". He concluded

with an admonition from the Director-General's report to the Conference to the effect that "the political, the economic and the social cannot be compartmented", reminding delegates that the economic situation of colonial workers could not be improved "without a basic change in the political and social system".⁵⁵

The response of the French Government delegate, Justin Godart, can only have served to confirm the view Assalé had presented of the colonial powers, with their stubborn lack of understanding and incapacity for new thinking. As a direct reaction to the Cameroonian's speech, Godart actually praised France's colonial reforms and hailed its acceptance of ILO standards as a milestone of emancipation, even holding up Assalé himself as testimony to the success of French policy. He was pleased, he said, to have Assalé at the Conference, because his presence was "living evidence of what France has done for him and his people". Assalé had been a pupil at a French school "and he was thus able to express clearly what I believe to have been his true thought in a form which does great honour to the teaching which France and her civilisation have given him".⁵⁶

Needless to say, Godart's intervention did not succeed in silencing Assalé and his calls to sweep away the artificial separation of political and social reform. Other speakers made the same demands, and just as categorically. The Indian Worker's adviser Mukherjee, on the eve of her own country's independence, put the question to the Conference even more clearly: "Can any policy which has not freedom as its declared objective secure the well-being and happiness of dependent peoples?"⁵⁷ Translated to the ILO's agenda for 1947, the demands which those forces critical of colonialism made with regard to the continuation of the colonial reform programme amounted to an insistence on overcoming the gap between the "colonial" framework and the universal content of the instruments to be drawn up.

The ILO on the side of the West and the completion of the colonial reform programme of 1947

The call for a parallel approach to social and political progress was also directed at the International Labour Office. Since 1945, Montreal had been working on draft Conventions that incorporated the Recommendations of Philadelphia and Paris and which were intended to complete the colonial reform opus. However, the ILO was still reluctant to give in to the demands voiced by the critics of colonialism. Although the passage in the UN Charter which stated that the powers should "co-operate with one another and, when and where appropriate, with specialized international bodies with a view to the practical achievement of the social, economic, and scientific purposes set forth in this Article" had provided the ILO with the ideal springboard for a new approach,⁵⁸ the Office was hesitant about making the leap. The reason was that despite all the moral and intellectual backing the ILO had

in the form of the international human rights documents, the Organization found increasingly, after the war, that it could not afford to displease the colonial powers. As the Soviet Union continued to view the ILO with hostility, the survival of the Organization within the new order depended on the good will of the Western camp. And this, it soon became clear, was easiest to obtain when the Office distanced itself slightly from the UN and cast the ILO as the “apolitical” reform alternative.

Finding a place in the new order

After the euphoria of Philadelphia, the International Labour Office was not expecting the ILO's existence in the post-war order to be called into question yet again so soon after its triumphant rebirth; so for the Organization to be excluded from the Bretton Woods Conference, where in July 1944 matters relevant to the financial and economic policy of the post-war order were discussed, was a grave blow – especially as the Declaration of Philadelphia had called for the ILO to be given more responsibility in precisely those areas under discussion. The only representative the Office was able to send, as an observer, was its Director, and he alone was hardly able to make an impact.⁵⁹ The same happened in August 1944 in Dumbarton Oaks, where the negotiations on the structure of the future world organization took place. This was where the establishment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was decided, the body which in the future would coordinate all the UN's specialized agencies, and the fact that the ILO was not even mentioned in the official minutes of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference was particularly shattering for the Organization. This outcome was attributable in large part to the influence of the Soviet Union, and neither the British nor the Americans were prepared to confront their wartime ally on the ILO's behalf when their top priority was to see the Soviet Union involved in a future system of collective security.⁶⁰

The ILO's lowest point finally came in San Francisco. Phelan had attempted with growing desperation to obtain an invitation to the gathering at which the UN Organization was to be founded. The closer the Conference came, however, the clearer it became that the American State Department did not wish the ILO to participate directly, out of consideration for the Soviet Union. Following intervention from various sources, in particular the British, the Office was eventually able to send an unofficial five-man delegation to the Conference for the purposes of informal consultation. Phelan was not present.⁶¹

What finally brought the ILO from the sidelines of negotiations about the new system of international organizations into the desired relationship with the UN was the progressive deterioration of the atmosphere between the wartime allies after San Francisco, which was already perceptible at the first General Assembly of the UN in January 1946 in London. The United States and Britain played a key role in ensuring that, in June 1946, the ILO was

the first of five specialized agencies to sign an agreement with the United Nations Economic and Social Council,⁶² making it a largely autonomous part of the UN system with powers of initiative in ECOSOC.

The Soviet Government had fought to the end to establish the WFTU as a countervailing power within the UN system, but the brewing East–West conflict had prevented the ILO from being pushed out to the fringes of the new international order. However, inclusion came at a price. The ILO’s position was unstable; the Office had little room for manoeuvre and the Organization could not do much more than “vegetate” under the protection of the Western camp. It was more difficult, too, under these circumstances, to go on any kind of colonial offensive, especially as the United States was now more sympathetically disposed to European colonial rule than in earlier years. Military–strategic considerations and the developing global front against communism had neutralized a good part of the anti-colonial feeling in American foreign policy.⁶³

One of the Office’s reactions to this change in circumstances was to drag its feet in response to the requests for collaboration with the ILO it received from the Trusteeship Council and the new colonial commissions in ECOSOC. The Office wanted as little involvement as possible in the “political” work of the UN, in order not to expose itself to attacks from any side. It tried to show the colonial powers that it had no intention whatever of attempting to pursue independent colonial reforms over and above what was “sensible”. It helped that the Soviet Union had no stage within the ILO for the anti-colonial rhetoric it was increasingly employing on an international level. This meant that confrontations as major as those witnessed by the UN General Assembly were not likely to occur at the ILC.⁶⁴ Both of these facts increased the willingness of the colonial powers to continue working with the ILO on the reform opus. A memorandum of 1947 from the British CO to Britain’s delegation on the Trusteeship Council, which specified that “considerable use might be made of specialised agencies, but less of the ECOSOC and very little of Commissions of the Council”, reflected these considerations. The reason for this order of preference was given as the “strong political emphasis” of the motions brought by the Soviet Union, India and China in particular, and the “lack of appreciation by these and similar delegations of the importance of economic and social factors in the development of non-self-governing peoples”. The ILO, on the other hand, the memorandum noted approvingly, emphasized precisely these economic and social factors.⁶⁵

The fact that the ILO had taken an extremely pragmatic approach in the draft of the 1947 reform documents, making it easier for the colonial powers to agree to them, was a decisive factor in their willingness to cooperate. Incidentally, the proposed minimum standards of social policy presented to the Conference Committee on Social Policy in Dependent Territories at the ILC in Montreal in 1946 were the last contribution Wilfrid Benson made to

the colonial reform oeuvre under the auspices of the ILO. In January 1947 Benson took up the post of Director of the Dependent Territories Section in the UN secretariat.⁶⁶

The proposals which the Conference Committee made to the ILC were threefold. First, it suggested that the ILC vote in the coming year on a Convention on "social policy in non-self-governing territories",⁶⁷ which would essentially contain the various sub-items of the Recommendations concerning social policy in dependent territories.⁶⁸ Second, a Convention by means of which existing international labour standards would be extended to the NMTs was proposed. Third, it suggested that a Convention concerning the maximum length of contracts of employment of indigenous workers be drafted as an addition to the NLC – an instrument of this nature had already been planned before the war but had not taken concrete shape before fighting broke out. These very cautiously formulated proposals tackled the dilemma of the Philadelphia Recommendations, which had packaged universalistic language in a particularistic framework, in three ways. First, by defining a particular problem, long-term employment contracts, as colonial they upheld the status of the NLC as a document of separate law. Second, the general "colonial" framework of an instrument which was otherwise universalistic in content remained unchanged. Third, however, the colonial framework was breached by the incorporation of regular standards into a colonial Convention. However, even on this last point the Office's draft was evidence of its concessions to the colonial powers, as it listed only those standards already implemented by at least one of the colonial powers in the areas under their control.⁶⁹ The list had been drawn up by Benson's department in close collaboration with the British Government.⁷⁰

The ILO's policy of carefully avoiding confrontation with the colonial powers manifested itself in other ways too. Once again, for example, the Office commissioned, as it had when drafting the NLC in the period between the wars, an independent committee – the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories (COESP) – to assist with the drafting process and to advise the Governing Body before the first vote. Wilfrid Benson had suggested setting up such a committee before the Philadelphia Conference,⁷¹ but for reasons of time and organization it had not been possible, and he had not received the green light until immediately afterwards.⁷² Benson's criteria for selecting the members of the COESP were subject from the beginning to two premises. First, the Committee really did need to provide expertise. Its members, therefore, had to be proven experts on colonial matters. Second, the COESP was intended to increase the colonial powers' commitment to the work of the Office, and for this reason alone its members had to be appointed in close collaboration with the powers themselves. Representatives of the United States also needed to be included to provide a due counterbalance. These notions were important from the beginning, in putting together the Committee,⁷³ and became even more so after 1945. As

a result, critics were quick to point out that the Committee, like its predecessor, did not contain any representatives from the colonial populations. The British magazine *Catholic Citizen*, for instance, complained “that it seems to us that the Committee is grossly overweighted on the administrative and employers side; moreover they are all white people”.⁷⁴ The Workers’ group in the Governing Body also criticized the composition of the Committee when it first met in March 1947.⁷⁵ For Benson, however, the question of whether “native” experts were involved or not was largely irrelevant.⁷⁶ It was much more important to him to put together a group of progressive thinkers whose views were as similar to his own as possible, and he used what little diplomatic latitude he had to try to prevent old-school colonialists, such as his sworn enemy Orde-Brown, or Lord Hailey, from becoming members (in the case of the former, unsuccessfully).⁷⁷ The problem (for Benson’s strategy) was the procedure used to select the officially “independent” experts. Not only did the colonial powers have the last word about who should sit on the Committee, they were also the ones to make the nominations. This gave them considerable influence over the Committee’s findings, which in turn played a major role in the ultimate form taken by the draft Conventions.

The pragmatism of the ILO did not meet with unanimous approval. The fact that, once again, only a hand-picked selection of standards was deemed to be transferable to the colonies embittered many, including the Indian Workers’ adviser Banerjee. Through gritted teeth he agreed to the proposed plan of action, pointing out, however, that he was only doing so “to bypass the inertia and opposition of metropolitan States, another name for imperialist States, and try to get something done – half a loaf being better than no bread”. He was fully aware, he said, that the move might in practice do nothing more than codify permanently two different standards of living, one for the colonies and the other for independent territories, so even after the documents had been accepted, pressure had to be maintained on the Organization “to see that the two standards are rapidly made to converge to one by the process of levelling up”.⁷⁸

As such extensive account had been taken of the interests of the colonial powers, it was hardly surprising that the Conventions met with little resistance. A few Employers’ representatives criticized the conversion of Recommendations to Conventions as “unrealistic” and warned that the ILO could damage its reputation by allowing itself to be guided by “false idealism”. These delegates believed that colonial Conventions in general violated the principle of national sovereignty over colonial possessions – but in the climate that prevailed, this attitude was never going to get them very far. All the colonial powers, with the exception of Portugal, which had renewed its membership, dormant during the war, in 1946, and which was now the ILO’s only non-democratic member with colonial possessions, actively supported the Office’s plan of action. The Belgian representative on the Conference Committee, van Remoortel, challenged his compatriot in the

Employers' delegation energetically and affirmed that the ILO would be in serious danger "if [it] allowed itself to be bypassed by the current of modern social ideas which should find expression in non-self-governing territories as well as in other countries". The Netherlands, Britain and France agreed. Work on the Conventions could start.

The Conventions of 1947

Five Conventions with specific relevance to colonial policy were eventually to be voted on at the ILC of 1947, the first session of the Conference to take place in Geneva since 1939. The first, the Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 82), defined general principles of colonial social policy based on the Recommendations of 1944 and 1945. Once again, the colonial powers agreed that "all policies designed to apply to non-metropolitan territories shall be primarily directed to the well-being and development of the peoples of such territories and to the promotion of the desire on their part for social progress" and promised to make "every effort to secure...financial and technical assistance...to further the economic development of non-metropolitan territories". More precisely than in Philadelphia and Paris, the Convention set out a list of areas, from public health to conditions of production, in which immediate steps towards improvement were to be taken. The principle pertaining to the greatest possible participation by the populations concerned was also carried over from the Recommendations to the Convention, which prescribed that "all possible steps shall be taken effectively to interest and associate the peoples of non-metropolitan territories in the framing and execution of measures of social progress, preferably through their own elected representatives where appropriate and possible".⁷⁹ The four other Conventions were concerned with the extension of general labour standards to the colonies, freedom of association, labour inspectorates and, finally, the maximum duration of contracts of employment in NMTs.⁸⁰

As, on the one hand, the colonial powers had been closely involved in preparing the colonial reform documents before the Conference and, on the other, potential critics saw no chance of pushing through significant amendments anyway, the Conventions were largely accepted without a fight by the ILC. The colonial powers used the stage to emphasize the value they attached to the documents: for example, the British delegate Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans deemed them to correspond precisely to British policy, both in spirit and in practice.⁸¹ William van Remoortel for Belgium and Justin Godart for France said the same of their respective governments and their colonial policies.⁸² Despite this, however, there was some dissonance. Assalé's speech was just one of the flaws in the picture of enlightened colonial rule which the British, French, Dutch and Belgians attempted to paint. What most disturbed the harmony of the Conference were the minor and therefore all the more bitterly fought points of detail within the individual

Conventions. On the issues of migrant labour, racial discrimination and trade union freedom, glimpses were caught of the other, less public, face of the colonial powers' universalistic avowals.

Migrant labour

The discussions surrounding the topic of migrant labour were a good indicator in the period immediately after the war of the stage the debate on colonial social policy reform had reached. They also illustrated how far the discursive weight had actually shifted from particularistic to universalistic thinking. The question of how the systems of migrant labour that were widespread in the colonies should be treated – as a social ill that needed to be combated, in the medium term with a policy of “stabilization” (the deliberate settling of workers at the place of work), or as a permanent state that needed to be monitored and managed – had been the subject of intense debate within the colonial bureaucracies since the beginning of the 1940s, particularly with regard to colonial practice in Africa. The discussion was a matter of much more than differences of opinion about the right way to organize the workforce; what it boiled down to was a question of colonial hierarchies and basic anthropological assumptions. While the advocates of stabilization recognized Africans as potential “industrial beings” who in a “more modern” social environment would behave “like Europeans”, the opponents rejected this hypothesis, claiming that the “natural” place for an African was the countryside, his “otherness” making him unsuitable for city life and for a work regime based on the European model. Controlled systems of migratory labour were, according to this latter view – as expressed in Lugard’s “dual mandate” – a compromise between the needs of the (European) colonial economy and the desire to protect the colonial population and its “natural living environment”. In the context of the ILO debates of the post-war years, the dispute surrounding the pros and cons of systems of migratory labour was always linked to questions about the suitability of colonial peoples for trade unions and other institutions of “modern life”, and about the practicability of systems of social security.⁸³

Migrant labour was one of the sections of Convention No. 82, and the discussion surrounding it at the Conference illustrated the ambivalence of many colonial politicians towards the new development approach. Although the advocates of stabilization were just beginning to gain the upper hand in 1947, the fundamental debate was far from decided one way or the other. One of the clearest signs of this came from the meetings of the COESP, which consulted at length, at the Office’s request, on the issue of migrant labour and the protection of migrant workers. The ILO had presented the Committee with a paper giving the topic of migrant labour top priority. Although the paper conceded that recourse to migrant labour would be unavoidable for a transitional period, the Office held that the primary goal of policy had to be stabilization.⁸⁴ For some members of the COESP, this went

far too far. Hard-core resistance was put up by the South African Employers' representative Gemmill, one of three participants the Governing Body had sent to the Committee, and Blom, a Dutch representative of colonial employers.⁸⁵ Gemmill, who made no secret of his particularistic convictions,⁸⁶ found the system of migratory labour to be one "exceedingly well suited to the circumstances of the African Native".⁸⁷ These views were hardly surprising from a representative of the Witwatersrand gold mines, which profited greatly from migrant labour both from within South Africa itself and from the neighbouring Portuguese and British territories. What was surprising, however, was the fact that they met with virtually no opposition. Many Committee members emphasized the necessity of controlling and limiting migrant labour, and the social harm it caused, but no one was prepared to actively endorse stabilization or the idea of family wages that was being discussed in the same connection.⁸⁸ One member was against family wages for the reason that, in the past, "high wages frequently resulted in encouraging the Native to cease work". Wilfrid Jackson, the former Governor of Tanganyika, and his French colleague Marcel de Coppet, former Governor of French West Africa, seriously doubted whether stabilization was a good solution. Jackson believed there was a strong justification "for imposing on immature and unsophisticated peoples limitations and restrictions in the way of migration to urban areas which would be regarded as unjustifiable and intolerable in the case of a more mature people".⁸⁹

The doubts of the experts initially resulted in the draft Convention that was presented to the Conference being much more moderate, with regard to stabilization, than the ILO's original paper. The draft was then revised again by the Conference Committee, where the colonial powers succeeded in hammering out a document that deviated even more from the Office's proposal. The final Convention spoke only of improved protection for migrant labourers, and no longer formulated any positive goals with regard to stabilization.⁹⁰

Non-discrimination

Another section of Convention No. 82 which gave rise to controversy was the thorny issue of racial discrimination.⁹¹ Britain in particular feared it would be politically embarrassed by the "colour bars" that existed de jure or at least de facto in several of its African settler colonies. When the colonial powers in the Conference Committee succeeded in weakening a paragraph on non-discrimination that was already formulated in very non-binding terms, there was uproar. The adviser to the Indian Government, Lall, spoke of a Convention mixed up with a Recommendation.⁹² What angered him most was the fact that the very first Article contained a provision which more or less provided a get-out clause from the principle of equal pay for equal work that the Convention was supposed to lay down, by enabling "workers in one territory engaged for employment in another territory" to

be granted "in addition to their wages benefits in cash or in kind to meet any reasonable personal or family expenses resulting from employment away from their homes".⁹³ Lall, who declared that his Government's interest in colonial issues stemmed both from "ideological" considerations and from its loyalty to the Indian communities in many colonies, saw this as a covert attempt by the colonial governments to uphold the colour bars by continuing to recruit European workers for qualified jobs which they wanted to keep closed to the indigenous population. To this extent the issue in question for Lall was the standard's lack of universality. In his eyes the weakening of this provision of the Convention suggested it was not possible to find suitable workers locally everywhere.⁹⁴

For Britain, the entire debate was a deeply uncomfortable matter. An overly explicit anti-discrimination clause would have gone against their interests not only with regard to the colonies, for Britain did not even have legislation in place in the home country which awarded men and women equal pay for equal work. The point illustrated, however, just how seriously Britain took the opportunity which the ILO offered to cast itself in a positive light. In an exchange of opinion organized by the Ministry of Labour between the ministries concerned, it was discussed that although it would be impossible to accept standards for the colonies that went beyond those in place in the home country, it was also essential to avoid being seen as obstructionist "in regard to the adoption of enlightened standards in the colonies". If this were to happen, as a representative of the Ministry of Labour pointed out, "we should be represented ..., however wrongly, as supporting discrimination on all sorts of questions in the colonial territories".⁹⁵ In the end, however, Britain decided to remain firm on the matter. Lall's appeal to the Conference not to let the ILO Conventions become a "laughing stock" was in vain.⁹⁶ Because of the resistance of the majority of the colonial powers, his amendment did not find the necessary quorum and was defeated.

Freedom of association

The conflicts at the Conference reached their climax when the issue of freedom of association made its way on to the agenda. This was one of those areas in which the metropolises felt it would be politically dangerous to proceed too fast. In principle, the colonial powers, with the exception of Belgium and Portugal, held the establishment of trade unions to be a perfectly suitable means of obtaining reliable and controllable partners within the colonial workforce. At the same time, they were all determined that trade unions should not be given too much freedom, fearing that they might "abuse" this liberty and turn into hotbeds of organized political resistance. This concern was not entirely unfounded, in view of the very limited opportunities for action the colonial State generally awarded political associations, and the strategic power which unions held in regions whose undifferentiated infrastructure could easily be paralysed by port or transport strikes. More

to the point, though, this mistrust of African or Asian trade unions also stemmed from the doubts of many colonial politicians about whether the peoples under their tutelage were “mature” enough for European models of social organization. While workers in French territories were relatively free to organize themselves under the auspices of the *Confédération Général du Travail* (CGT), the unions in the British territories, to which London had already sent representatives of the TUC in an advisory capacity, were kept on a very short lead and were constantly suspected of drifting off into “political” waters. Wilfrid Benson’s successor as head of the ILO’s colonial affairs department, the Briton David Belloch, reported after a visit to Asia in 1946 on the restrictions colonial unions faced. Although, because of their longer tradition, the Asian unions had greater leeway than those in Africa, the colonial administrations in Asia too were anxious at all costs to ensure they developed “along sound lines”.⁹⁷ In South-East Asia, trepidation about politically active unions was already closely linked to the fear of communist activities. In other parts of the colonial empires this aspect was (as yet) secondary. In Africa, Britain and France had other problems to deal with. A virtually uninterrupted chain of strikes and urban unrest in West Africa between 1945 and 1947 showed that the fledgling trade unions already knew how to make full use of their elbow room and their strategic power.

For obvious reasons, the issue of freedom of association was particularly important to the Workers’ group within the ILO. Three months before the Conference, in April 1947, the WFTU had convened in Dakar, where the European delegates were able to experience for themselves the ambitious young African trade union movement and build up a picture of the difficulties it faced. One of the resolutions adopted at the Dakar Conference called for equal workers’ rights in all colonial territories.⁹⁸ Shortly before the 1947 session of the ILC began, Joseph Hallsworth, then Chairman of the Workers’ group, proposed in the Governing Body that the Conference force an increase in trade union freedom in the colonies by means of an unequivocally formulated Convention. He called for a stop to be put to the colonial authorities’ practice of themselves entering into negotiations in the name of the workers, pleading the latter’s backwardness or political unreliability, without really representing the interests of those concerned. Hallsworth made a connection between the political progress promised by countless documents and statements, and the promotion of trade union rights: “The ultimate aim should be self-government in all these territories and freedom of association for the workers to combine in trade unions and to have an effective voice in the determination of their living and working conditions.”⁹⁹

What became of these demands at the end of the negotiations was a compromise which, according to the Australian Government representative Ward, a Labor politician and a great advocate of colonial reform, was formulated in such elusive and ambiguous language “that in many respects it means nothing more than a mass of words and will not do a great deal

for the peoples in the non-metropolitan territories".¹⁰⁰ Although the Indian Workers' representative had managed to force through a motion in the Conference Committee to remove the passage which gave colonial governments the right to take part in collective bargaining in the name of the indigenous workers, a defence front made up of Employers, the British and other colonial powers (with the consistent exception of the French) had prevented an explicit clause banning discrimination on the grounds of membership of a trade union from being included in the text.¹⁰¹ Myrddin-Evans, who was forced to defend the policy of his Government, did so in the face of furious protests by Hallsworth and other speakers. Eventually the Employers at the Conference threatened that if such a passage were incorporated, they would ensure that the entire Convention failed to get off the ground, which was probably their ultimate goal all along.¹⁰²

Manoeuvres such as these left many delegates feeling disillusioned, despite the successful completion of the reform opus. It was just one more indication that the universalistic avowals of the colonial powers were all too often subject to elementary limitations. Although much had been achieved that would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier, the colonial powers continued to make it obvious that they were unwilling to let their privileges be questioned. Nowhere was this made clearer to the critics of colonialism than in the question of colonial representatives at the International Labour Conference. It had been pointed out to the colonial powers back when they received their invitations to the Philadelphia Conference that "it would be most desirable that States with colonial responsibilities should, wherever possible, make provision for the inclusion among their Government, employers' and workers' delegates or advisers of representatives of dependent territories",¹⁰³ but even in 1947, when the gathering was dedicated to developing and adopting standards designed exclusively for the NMTs, there were no more representatives from these areas in the delegations of the colonial powers than there had been at the Conference in 1939 (the Cameroonian Assalé being the only one). The repeated calls of the ILO for this number to be increased were ignored by all the colonial powers except France, and even Paris agreed to have colonial representatives only in its Workers' delegation – Government advisers from its overseas possessions were never invited. Belgium, Portugal and the Netherlands were not prepared to accept any colonial delegates whatsoever. In the case of Britain, the two advisers' seats to which every country was entitled on each agenda item were also always reserved for representatives of the CO. What is more, after the 1945 ILC in Paris, London refused to admit colonial advisers to its Workers' delegation either, after the Nigerian trade union representative Esua, who had been invited as a consultant from the ranks of the TUC, had given the CO cause for concern. In the Committee on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, both Esua and his colleague Assalé had been treated by many participants not primarily as workers, but as representatives of the

colonies in general – something which the CO was keen to avoid in the future.¹⁰⁴

The notion that anyone other than themselves could represent the interests of the colonial populations still seemed absurd to the colonial powers. The fact that their Employers' delegations at this time also consisted exclusively of representatives of European businesses operating in the colonies was a reflection of the same thinking. Although there was no shortage of initiatives to change the situation, the idea that NMTs, or at least "advanced" territories such as Burma, Ceylon and Vietnam, should be directly represented by their own delegations with full voting rights, as suggested by the adviser to the Indian Workers' delegation, Banerjee, at the ILC in 1946,¹⁰⁵ was doomed to failure from the start, thanks to the majority situation in the Conference and the dogged resistance of the colonial powers. The proposal at the same ILC from the Chinese Government representative, Li Ping-heng, to make it obligatory for the colonial powers to include advisers from the dependent territories, at least on issues which directly affected the inhabitants of those areas, was also shot down.¹⁰⁶ For Mukherjee and other critics of the colonial powers, their conduct on the question of representation was final proof of the fact that they were neither willing nor able to make real change.¹⁰⁷

Thus the colonial reform phase ended on a somewhat discordant note. The ILO itself did not escape criticism: some felt that it had sold itself short by clearing the stage so willingly for the colonial powers to portray themselves as the torchbearers of progress. Admittedly, this was partly because the Office's hands were still tied in many ways. The ILO was too dependent on the Western camp to be able to risk coming to blows with the colonial powers. Ultimately, though, the Office simply attached too little significance to the colonies in comparison to the other areas of the Organization's work for it to risk upsetting its most powerful members. When Edward Phelan stepped down as Director-General at the ILC in San Francisco in 1948 and looked back on the difficulties overcome and successes achieved during his time in office, the colonial work of the ILO did not even get a mention.¹⁰⁸

Towards a different ILO: Indian independence and the start of the post-colonial era

The fact that India attained its independence in precisely the year that the ILO concluded its chapter on colonial standard-setting had a certain symbolic value. The year that British rule over the Indian subcontinent ended was also the year which, in many respects, marked the beginning of the post-colonial era for the ILO. When it joined the community of States as a free country, India was the first of a large number of new members which would change the face of the Organization beyond recognition. India's size, its economic potential and the confidence of its government, which

intended to establish the country as the leading power in Asia, immediately brought pressure to bear on the ILO to change.

India's position was exceptional in that by the time it obtained independence it already had long experience of the ILO (its unique standing as the only "colony" which was also a full member of the League of Nations system is discussed elsewhere).¹⁰⁹ Since the 1930s, India had increasingly used its position to establish itself as the mouthpiece of the colonial world within the international arena. At the same time, its special standing had allowed its representatives to gain a wealth of diplomatic experience before independence and to profit directly from the ILO's expertise in drafting legislation and political guidelines. Philadelphia had provided the planners of India's post-colonial future with new arguments for and approaches to the final confrontation with its British master. But this was not enough for the newly independent India. What it wanted now was to leave behind its niche existence in the ILO and to shift the focus of the Organization's work to the problems and needs of the Asian continent. India wanted to "decolonize" the ILO.

Representation and regionalization

Partly as a result of their special status, India's representatives saw the deficits of the ILO particularly clearly. They had criticized the Organization's Eurocentrism and concentration on the problems of industrialized nations at an early stage, and now that independence had been attained, they wanted to change this focus. They demanded an organization which met the needs of all its members, in terms of both its programme of work and its internal structures. This latter point was one of the ILO's main shortcomings in the eyes of the Indian Government. Shri Shamal Lall, at this point still Secretary of State in the Indian Labour Ministry, had warned the ILO at the ILC in 1946 not to think it could escape adaptation to the changes ahead. He told the Office in no uncertain terms "that all is not well between India and the International Labour Organization", cautioning even that "we are in danger of drifting apart". India had no problem with the principles of the ILO – indeed, it supported them wholeheartedly – "but we cannot persuade ourselves that these principles are being applied fairly or equitably, so far as Asiatic and African countries are concerned".¹¹⁰ In a post-independence memorandum from the Indian Council on World Affairs, an academic institution which advised the Government in Delhi, India was advised to put pressure on the ILO to pay more attention to Asia in its future work. The current Eurocentric perspective of the ILO made the non-European world question the "real value of the ILO as presently operating", the memo warned.¹¹¹ Furthermore, India's demand that more notice be taken of it was only reasonable and fair in view of its financial standing within the ILO. Even before independence it was the ILO's third largest contributor, after the United States and Britain, providing 8 per cent of the budget.¹¹²

India and other non-European members decided that the most important first steps were to decentralize the ILO's structure geographically and to make it more representative. First and foremost, the number of seats in the Governing Body allocated to Asia and Africa had to be raised significantly. India was able to buttress this demand by pointing out the simple fact that in the 32-strong Governing Body, Europe had 12 seats and North and South America 11, while Asia had 5 and Africa none at all. It called for Asia's and Africa's allocation of seats to be at least doubled – a demand which met, predictably, with massive resistance. The countries which had dominated the ILO's political structures until this point were unenthusiastic, to say the least, about the idea of giving up their accustomed position.¹¹³

The post-colonial nations' attempts to change the outdated structures within the Office in their favour would prove to be equally laborious. The protracted battle they faced is best illustrated by their quest to ensure that the staffing structure of the Office represented a more balanced geographical cross-section of the world's peoples. Even before the war, Indian representatives had criticized what in their view were glaring geographical asymmetries in the ILO's employment practices. Indeed, during the entire period between the wars, only one representative of a non-Western nation had reached a management-level post in any of the subdivisions of the League of Nations system.¹¹⁴ Even in the lower echelons of the Office the 200-strong staff only included a maximum of four Indians.¹¹⁵ As well as demanding that this number be increased significantly on all levels, China and India together had begun, during the war, to insist that the symbolically charged post of Assistant Director-General be filled by an Asian. It took almost four years from Phelan's first sounding out of Asian representatives at the Philadelphia Conference for Raghunath Rao finally to be able to take up this position in March 1948. India's official representatives had warned the ILO early on not to try the patience of a loyal member, because "more than ever before, perhaps, opinion in India is sensitive now to the recognition of the country's claim to active participation".¹¹⁶ In the years that followed, however, the promised appointment of an Indian Assistant Director-General was deferred time after time, and it soon became clear that behind the scenes Britain, eagerly "helping" in the search for a suitable candidate, was doing so with the blatant intention of spinning out the process.¹¹⁷ India rightly interpreted the Office's lack of transparency on this matter as a concession to the British, who were extremely anxious about the prospect of an Assistant Director-General with potentially anti-colonial leanings. India observed this foot-dragging exercise, in which Phelan continued to promise he would examine the country's request sympathetically while ultimately rejecting all the candidates presented, with growing impatience. In 1947, Lall warned the Office again that up to now "on no basis do we consider that we have received adequate or appropriate representation".¹¹⁸ Britain continued to be obstructive on this point even after Indian independence, and

eventually it took all Phelan had to convince London that it was time to give in to India's demands. Myrddin-Evans made it clear that he still thought very little of filling positions according to geographical criteria, but he did finally agree to accept the unavoidable.¹¹⁹

On another level, one issue on which India and, initially, China too called loudly for change was the regional focus of ILO work. In the view of the Asian countries, the Organization should strengthen its "local" structures to reflect in practice the (desired) shift away from its Eurocentric perspective. In the period between the wars, the ILO's links to branches outside its Geneva headquarters were indeed underdeveloped. The Organization had only two contact bureaus in Asia, one in Delhi and one in Nanking, both of which consisted of a director and some secretaries. During the Second World War and immediately afterwards, the only branches that remained anything more than just contact addresses were London and Washington. What the Asian countries now wanted was to make sure that the Organization did not revert to a tighter network of branch offices, but instead built up a comprehensive regional structure. If the ILO was to dedicate itself more in the future to the specific problems of Asia, it needed in the first place a system of regional bases which could convey information about these problems to ILO headquarters. Second, Regional Conferences based on the model of the ILC should be introduced to serve the same purpose.

As the Office was relatively open to the idea of increased regionalization, the Asian countries were, to some extent, preaching to the converted on both points. The idea of an Asian Regional Conference had already been welcomed by Harold Butler,¹²⁰ Albert Thomas's successor as Director of the Office, at the end of the 1930s. The first Regional Conference for the American member States had been held in Santiago de Chile under Butler's leadership, and only the war had prevented an Asian Regional Conference from following in its wake. The Office had actually started making preparations for a post-war conference specifically for the ILO's Asian members as early as 1942. Both this proposal and the idea of regional bases were, unlike the issue of the Assistant Director-General, matters of budget rather than matters of principle, and in both cases the colonial powers could be persuaded of the benefits of moderate change. Soon after the war, then, hasty preparations got under way for the first meeting of Asian States.

From the colonial economy to underdevelopment: new demands on the ILO

The new nations' calls for representation and regionalization were just complementary aspects of their core demand that the ILO adjust its programme of work to meet the needs of the non-European countries. What these countries were essentially asking for was assistance in overcoming underdevelopment. Their main criticism of the ILO was that it continued to focus predominantly on the problems of the industrialized countries in

Europe and North America. What the Asian countries wanted was for the Organization to concentrate its future work on helping them to build up their national economies, supporting their efforts towards industrialization, and directing more attention to the rural areas in which the majority of their populations earned their living. In this way, the demands of the colonial territories for minimum standards turned into the demands of developing countries for practical assistance.

In this respect, too, India was something of a trail-blazer. It was more industrialized than any of the other countries in the region, and also had unique intellectual and institutional resources at its disposal. Nowhere else in the colonial world were conditions so favourable for a policy of national economic development. The concept of "national development" had found its institutional expression in India well before "colonialism under siege" used it in other parts of the world as an argument to justify the continuation of colonial rule.¹²¹ As early as 1938, before the first British CDWA had been drawn up, the Congress Party had set up a national planning committee to lay down the cornerstones of national development after independence. In 1944 the leaders of Congress and the main Indian business figures had drawn up the "Bombay Plan", which provided for a centralized, economically active state and the simultaneous preservation of a "mixed economy".¹²² In addition, British efforts during the war effectively to turn the Indian economy over to the Allied war effort had given Indian politicians a range of planning tools that they could now use in putting their development ideas into practice. India took over the institutions of colonial development in the firm belief it would be able to turn them, freed from their political ties and with the support of the world community, into instruments of "national development".¹²³

At the ILO's first "preparatory" Asian Regional Conference in the Indian capital Delhi in 1947, issues of post-colonial development were already high on the agenda, although the reality of continuing colonial rule was still palpable in many places in Asia. As the Conference had no decision-making powers and could only adopt resolutions, the metropolises allowed tripartite delegations from various Asian possessions to take part on an equal footing.¹²⁴ As the Soviet Union, still not a member of the ILO, was not represented, the colonial administrations knew they need not fear anti-colonial onslaughts from this direction either. What did disturb the harmony somewhat was the fact that the Netherlands sent representatives for Indonesia only from the areas under their control, while delegates from the Republic of Indonesia, against which the Dutch colonial army was fighting an undeclared war, were not present. The same applied to the delegations from Indochina put together by France. The Portuguese, on the other hand, did not send a single indigenous representative from their territories. This led the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to refer in his welcoming speech to a "certain ill-will and ill-feeling" born of the fact that "some



The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru opening the first Asian Regional Conference in Delhi, 1947 (*left: Jef Rens, Assistant Director-General of the International Labour Office*)

dominating power or metropolitan power considers itself the representative of those peoples and is not prepared to give proper representation to others”, and prompted him to express the hope “that the time will come soon when every form of colonialism will disappear from Asia”.¹²⁵

However, Nehru dedicated most of his speech to the new demands that extended beyond the day of independence. He formulated clear ideas of development and of the assistance he expected to receive towards it from the world community in general and the ILO in particular. His speech embodied a new discourse of moral claims addressed not just to the colonial powers but to the whole industrialized world. As the Asian continent had been neglected for too long, it was now the responsibility of the entire world to help Asia. It was high time that Europe saw Asian problems as akin to those of the rest of the globe. The hunger and suffering tormenting Europe as a consequence of war must not, insisted Nehru, obscure the fact that, far away from the interested eyes of the Western world, these miseries were normality in large parts of Asia. Above all, the world community had to help to change the economic conditions at the root of the “trail of blood, sweat and tears” running through the continent.¹²⁶ For Nehru, this was not a question

“of rich and powerful countries being generous”, but rather one of whether existing interdependencies in the new post-colonial world would be recognized.¹²⁷ Addressing the members of the Office who were present, Nehru called for the ILO to abandon its Eurocentric standpoint and to embrace the problems faced by Asia. He called for greater activity in all areas of agricultural labour, and above all demanded assistance with industrialization. For Nehru, as for many leaders of national liberation movements, shedding the role of primary producer was synonymous with escaping from colonial economic dependency. In Nehru’s view of things it was essential, even from a rural perspective, to develop industries: “We want the development of industry – big industries, small industries, cottage industries, in fact, every kind of industry.”¹²⁸ Industrialization was at the centre of the development ideas held by the Congress Party,¹²⁹ and it was on this project in particular that the Indian premier wanted the support of the International Labour Organization. The ILO should, as it had been empowered to do by the Philadelphia mandate, help to galvanize the will of the world community and generate the funds that would aid development. Through its standard-setting activities it should contribute to injecting social justice into an accelerated process of industrialization. These activities from the “classic” catalogue of ILO work, however, were by no means to be the Organization’s only contribution to the development efforts of its un- or underdeveloped members: on this Nehru and most of the speakers who followed him were unanimous. According to the independent Asian States, the ILO now needed to roll its sleeves up and deliver more practical help, to provide technical expertise and to advise the new nations in a variety of areas, from methods for increasing productivity to social security to occupational health and safety.¹³⁰

One question inextricably connected to these demands was what value lay in the ILO’s previous, predominantly standard-setting, activities for the economically and socially underdeveloped regions of the world. Several speakers emphasized the need for “regional” Conventions more closely tailored to the real situation in Asian countries, and for the opportunity to modify existing Conventions so as to adapt them to local conditions. Although Nehru, too, had branded the ILO’s catalogue of Conventions an expression of its Eurocentrism and its fixation on the industrialized nations, in Delhi he endorsed the idea of universally valid standards and promised that India “shall try to abide by the decisions of the International Labour Conferences to the utmost of our ability”, although he did call for more flexibility in interpreting them.¹³¹ The Conference eventually adopted a programme of action for the ILC which expressed the hope that future ARCs and studies carried out by the Office would work towards ensuring that as many Asian nations as possible would sign Conventions in their present or a properly modified form.¹³²

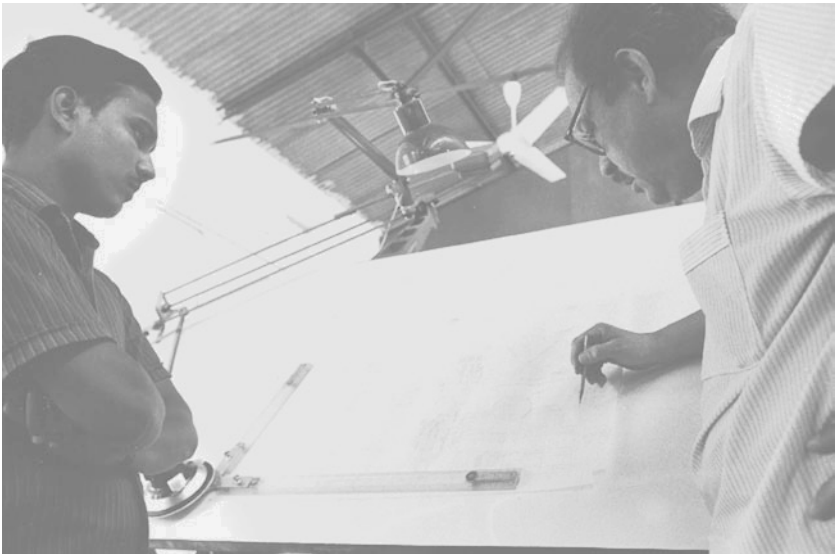
Asian demands for the ILO to change the focus of its programme of work did not arouse much enthusiasm in the members of the Office present at the

Conference. Discussions held on the fringes made it clear that the majority feared that extending the ILO's activities into the practical sphere would entail entirely unrealistic budgetary and personnel increases.¹³³ The idea of "regional Conventions" was equally difficult for most officials to accept, partly because it so blatantly went against efforts being made in the colonial sphere towards the progressive "universalization" of standards.

The direct effects of the meeting in Delhi were limited. At best, the Conference had had "educational value", in the eyes of an American observer, for Asian countries. Although the same observer estimated that the confidence exuded by the Indians in particular might prove a "tonic to the millions of undernourished, ill-clothed and ill-housed peoples of Asia", he predicted that no concrete changes would come of the meeting.¹³⁴ And yet, in retrospect at least, the call for the ILO to engage in more practical activities and the doubts about the universal value of international labour standards actually did mark the beginning of a post-colonial paradigm change for the ILO. In some respects, the preparatory Asian Regional Conference took place on the threshold between two phases in the history of the International Labour Organization. At the end of 1947 the Office was still undecided on how to approach the challenges that were looming, but less than a year later this uncertainty would have disappeared entirely.

Part II

The Tools of Progress: The ILO, 1948–60



Vocational training project in South-East Asia at the end of the 1950s

4

Principled Development: The Beginnings of the Technical Assistance Programme (TAP)

In 1948 a new era began for the ILO. The Organization had come through the first years of the post-war period and the beginning of the East–West conflict more or less unscathed. Its survival, under the wing of the West, was guaranteed and its integration into the UN system had been fairly smooth. However, the renewed and expanded mandate that the ILO had been given by delegates in Philadelphia had not yet filtered down into any concrete course of action. This was to change when the American David Morse took over the post of Director-General of the Office. Under his leadership, rapid and sweeping changes began to alter the profile of the ILO. His successful drive to transform it from a predominantly standard-setting body into an operationally active organization providing technical assistance in economically and socially “underdeveloped areas” of the world changed the face of the ILO “beyond recognition”,¹ according to one political scientist and ILO insider in the 1960s.

The ILO’s reorientation towards operational activities took place with the Cold War looming and the first wave of decolonization in Asia in full swing. Morse saw the Organization’s new focus, embodied by the TAP, both as a chance to win new “clients” in the form of post-colonial States and as means of enabling the ILO, on the side of the West, to play an important role, particularly in Asia, in the global fight against communism. Morse was not interested only in providing economic aid. In combination with the original standard-setting activities of the ILO, the TAP represented a specific model of democratic modernization that was to become the main feature of the ILO’s contribution, under Morse’s leadership, to the development debate of the 1950s.

David Morse and the origins of the TAP

Too much in a groove

In 1948 the International Labour Office underwent a leadership change. Although Edward Phelan, who had guided the Organization through some

difficult times, was generally recognized to have achieved much as Director and Director-General, many of those in a position to exert influence on the ILO saw the Irishman as being too bound to the apparatus of the Office and perhaps not visionary enough to provide the impetus that now appeared to be called for in view of the tense international situation. Moreover, at 65, Phelan had already reached the age limit for the post. On the question of who should succeed him, the US Government was determined to have the decisive say. In 1948 the Governing Body, where the Europeans still called the tune, cleared the way for the post at the head of the Office to be given for the second time – counting John Winant's two-year stint from 1939 to 1941 – to an American.

The vote of the Truman Administration went to David Abner Morse, who at the time of his candidature for the post was the American Under Secretary of Labor.² Morse had already worked in the area of labour relations in the bureaucracy of the New Deal. During and after the war he had held high positions in the American military, where he played an important role in planning and overseeing the dissolution of fascist and Nazi labour organizations and the restoration of a democratic system of labour relations in Italy and Germany. After leaving the army and returning to the United States, Morse was appointed to Truman's Department of Labor. All these credentials made him eminently qualified to take on the leadership of the ILO, although from Washington's perspective in the international political climate of 1948, it was his work in the Department of Labor in particular that made Morse the ideal candidate for the post.³

As Under Secretary of Labor, Morse's main task had been to build up and head a section of the Department devoted to international relations. In this capacity Morse had played a leading role in extending the scope of American post-war foreign policy to include labour unions. Aided by the experience he had gained during the war, he was instrumental in creating the new position of labour attaché at American embassies abroad. The idea had arisen during the war and was the brainchild of Isador Lubin, Roosevelt's adviser on labour issues and one of Morse's mentors. The basic idea was to use these posts to gather information on developments in foreign trade unions and thus build up a realistic picture of social trends in any particular country, in order to be able to exert effective influence on them.⁴ Morse had also played a decisive part in winning the support of the American trade union movement for the implementation of the Truman Doctrine and the European Recovery Programme (ERP).⁵ Thus he had been centrally responsible in two areas for expanding the scope and the capacity for action of American foreign policy, at what, with the Cold War looming, was a critical time. The American Government undoubtedly expected him to put his new position in Geneva to immediate use to win the support of European governments, trade unions and workers for the Marshall Plan as he had done on a national level in Washington.⁶

When he took up his duties as Director-General of the Office in San Francisco in the summer of 1948,⁷ Morse was already familiar with the way the Organization worked. Since 1946 he had represented the American Government at two sessions of the ILC and attended various meetings of the Governing Body. This had convinced him of the positive role the ILO could play in the post-war world, and in his capacity as Under Secretary of Labor he had worked towards a greater institutionalization of America's contacts with the Organization.⁸ At the same time, however, he was sceptical about its capacity, in its current state, to meet the challenges which he believed it was facing. His first few months in office irrefutably confirmed these doubts. He found ILO staff "in low spirits", content to enjoy the protection of the West but reluctant to take the initiative to explore new directions or attempt anything that would go beyond the ambit of their old activities.⁹

His first report to the Conference in 1949 was accordingly critical. It was the result of almost a whole year of soundings-out and discussions which Morse had used to develop his ideas for the future of the ILO.¹⁰ In his view, the Organization had not sufficiently exploited the chances it had been given by the expansion of its mandate in Philadelphia. He concluded that the ILO was in danger of getting "into a groove", and was in urgent need of a shake-up if it was to maintain an influential position in the field of labour and social policy. He believed the only way out of this "groove" to be "a new emphasis... in ILO policy".¹¹ The magic formula would take the form of "technical assistance". The ILO was to relinquish its exclusively standard-setting role to become an operational organization, placing its huge wealth of experience at the disposal of its "less developed" members by providing direct assistance with the modernization of their societies. Morse saw the change of focus in terms of a power already latent within the ILO "which the Organization must now unloose with vigour".¹²

Section IV of the Declaration of Philadelphia had indeed given the ILO a mandate of a kind, however vague, to play a part in the development efforts of its members. It stated that the ILO should become involved in measures "to expand production and consumption, to avoid severe economic fluctuations to promote the economic and social advancement of the less developed regions of the world, to assure greater stability in world prices of primary products, and to promote a high and steady volume of international trade". Nevertheless, when Morse took up office in 1948 the Organization's operational profile had barely changed. The ILO was a still predominantly a standard-setting institution, offering on the side the kind of "technical assistance" it had been providing, without using that term, since the 1930s. This consisted mainly of sending small teams of advisers to support governments in the introduction of labour legislation and social security programmes.

The first ILO mission in this latter field had been to Romania and Greece in 1930. Between then and the beginning of the war, teams of experts were

sent to various countries, including China, Egypt and Morocco, to advise governments on protection in the workplace, the setting up of labour administrations and the creation of agricultural and handicraft cooperatives.¹³ During the war, which placed restrictions on what the ILO could do in the field of standard-setting, this type of practical help increased. The Organization was particularly active in North and South America (Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Haiti, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela), helping with the preparation and expansion of social security systems, but it also played a key role in Britain, where ILO experts provided assistance in formulating the Beveridge Plan, and Algiers, where they helped the provisional French Government to draw up similar packages of measures.¹⁴ After Philadelphia this kind of work simply continued, without any significant changes being made in the Office's coordination of such activities, and without any major budgetary restructuring. In no sense, then, were the first missions after the war (to Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Greece, India and Iran) to be seen as any kind of new beginning.¹⁵

Morse believed that, through this lack of innovation, the Office risked missing an important opportunity for the long-term expansion of its activities as provided for by the Philadelphia agenda. One particularly suitable area in which to begin this expansion was, in Morse's opinion, that of "manpower". This was the heading under which the Office had been trying since 1947, with limited success, to latch on to the discussion on European reconstruction within the context of the ERP and to carve out for itself a central role as the point of reference for all matters of employment policy, vocational training and the control of labour migration.¹⁶ Morse convinced the Governing Body as early as 1948 that the work which had been started in this area must be consolidated into a single large-scale programme which the ILO should develop on its own initiative, rather than solely responding, as previously, to the requests of individual governments.¹⁷ The Manpower Programme, which Morse described to the ILC of 1949 as the experimentation field and "laboratory" of technical assistance,¹⁸ could be used as a concrete starting point for the launch of the ILO's operational agenda. His long-term goal was for the ILO to develop a general programme of technical assistance for every area within its sphere of responsibility.¹⁹

Although circumstances conspired to make European reconstruction the most convenient starting point for his plan, Morse always saw the real target groups for a Technical Assistance Programme as being outside Europe. The operational changes he set in motion were inextricably linked with the objective of strengthening the ILO's international character. Morse recognized the potential which the decolonization process in Asia represented for the Organization. He was very aware of the discontent of its non-European members, who had repeatedly criticized the ILO for failing to pay enough attention to their particular problems, and saw the growing group of "developing countries" among the membership as a source of unexploited

potential. If the countries of Latin America and the Middle and Far East could be “won over” for the ILO’s aims, the Organization would find itself with a whole new clientele which, in the long term, would enable it substantially to increase its influence and scope of activity. Morse also feared that continuing to neglect these countries would lead to the inevitable isolation of the ILO.

“Available for maximum cooperation”: the ILO and Truman’s Point IV Program

Unsurprisingly, Morse’s plans to transform the ILO into an operational development agency were received with suspicion by the communist camp. The mere fact of his appointment had been greeted with open hostility, causing the Soviet trade union periodical *Trud* to comment caustically: “On the initiative of the Americans, Phelan, the man of Great Britain, was deprived of his post and replaced by Morse, a puppet of Wall Street.”²⁰ The only two members of the Governing Body to vote against Morse’s appointment both held Soviet sympathies: the Polish representative Stajin and the Mexican socialist trade union leader Lombardo Toledano.²¹ Morse’s first few months in office emphatically confirmed their reservations. Eager to prove his usefulness to the interests of American foreign policy,²² Morse even managed, at the beginning of 1949, to persuade the sceptical French Government to take part in the ERP.²³ Moscow also took it as a clear sign of Morse’s sympathies that one of the first countries to profit from the Manpower Programme after it was extended beyond those States taking part in the ERP was Tito’s dissident Yugoslavia.²⁴

There is no question that one of David Morse’s intentions for the TAP was to use it to make the ILO into a more effective tool for the Western camp in the global struggle between the capitalist and communist systems. His strategy was clearly directed at putting the Organization’s pro-Western activities, particularly in Asia, on the front line of the Cold War. The emergence of a Technical Assistance Programme for the underdeveloped regions of the world coincided with the strategy change in America’s extra-European foreign policy towards an active policy of development. In his speech on 20 January 1949 to mark the start of his second term, President Truman bade farewell to the old notion of development, which was predominantly concerned with the opening of markets and the expansion of world trade, and, in the light of the worldwide threat which communism was perceived to pose to American interests, made the case for a kind of expansion of the Marshall Plan to include the non-European world. In the fourth part of the speech, Truman promised the “peace loving peoples of the world” a “program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing”. The Point IV Program, as it came to be known, was to form the starting point for an institutionalization of the notion of development aid.²⁵



David Morse, 1950

The programme was based less on the idea of direct financial assistance than on the promise to provide the underdeveloped regions of the world with technological resources and expert know-how to help them increase productivity. As in the Marshall Plan, productivity, which US politicians saw as the “key to prosperity and peace”, was still at the centre of the American concept of development. And the key to increased production lay in a “wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge”. This was exactly where Morse’s TAP came in – particularly as, elsewhere in the speech, Truman had expressly proposed the UN system as a channel for the distribution of such technical support.

In the immediate wake of the President’s address, Morse took pains to make clear to the American Government that the ILO could be an exceptionally useful instrument in the implementation of the Point IV Program. Of particular advantage to the United States would be the fact that, coming from the ILO, even a strategy whose undisguised aim was the worldwide containment of communist influence would meet with comparatively little resistance, which would certainly not be the case if it came from other subdivisions of the UN system. Morse found it logical that the US Government should seek to cooperate with the ILO on the implementation of the Point IV Program. He had spoken to Secretary of State George

Marshall about plans for an imminent trip to Asia as early as the autumn of 1948. Marshall had confirmed that Washington's eyes were firmly on the mission and said he believed the region to have been neglected in the past, which could make it "a breeding ground for discontent and political instability". He had also assured Morse that the Government rated very highly the ILO's potential contribution to "aggressive social and economic action" in the interests of the worldwide struggle against communism.²⁶ And in a State Department memorandum which appeared shortly afterwards, it was noted that it was in the country's interests to use multilateral agencies to deliver the expert assistance planned by the United States as this would allow the financial burden to be shared, avoid creating too much of a dent in the recipient countries' national pride and leave less room for political criticism in the recipient country than if the money were handed out directly by Washington. Along with other international institutions, the ILO with its Manpower Programme was listed as a possible agency for distribution.²⁷

Following Truman's speech, then, Morse was eager to do everything he could to integrate the ILO into the American Government's new strategy. He instructed the ILO liaison office in Washington to lobby intensively for the Organization, and personally contacted leading representatives in the State Department, the Department of Labor and the AFL and CIO trade union federations.²⁸

Finally, Morse went so far as to contact Dean Acheson, the new Secretary of State, with whom he had collaborated in the past on the drawing up of the labour attaché programme. Morse told Acheson about a trip to Poland and Czechoslovakia from which he had just returned, and warned the minister of the "strength, efficiency and completeness of communist control" he had observed there. He reported that what he had seen in the two countries had only served to strengthen his view that the ILO could make a real contribution to the defensive battle against communism by providing help to underdeveloped regions of the world along the lines laid down in Truman's speech. Progressive measures such as those prescribed by the Point IV Program were "essential if this strong tide is to be checked and democracy to survive in the long run". By engaging with socially and economically backward areas, the President would be targeting problems "which if neglected could undermine the whole democratic effort". Morse pointed out that the TAP, which enjoyed the support of all 60 members of the ILO, fitted "completely into the policy laid down by the president",²⁹ and assured Acheson that the Organization was "available for maximum cooperation".³⁰

Acheson responded positively and asked Willard Thorp, a State Department official and US ECOSOC representative responsible for the interdepartmental coordination of efforts to implement the Point IV Program, to discuss the details with Morse.³¹ Morse and Thorp conferred with each other several times in the run-up to the session of the ILC scheduled for later that

year, mainly on the subject of financing. It became evident that the funds which the Governing Body had earmarked for the Manpower Programme as part of the regular budget would not be enough to carry out the more ambitious plans now on the table. It was agreed that the ILO should initially receive \$1 million from the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the body responsible for the distribution of funds under the Marshall Plan, for a model project in the field of vocational training.

This procedure caused some uneasiness within the ILO, both among representatives of the labour unions and among European governments. Léon Jouhaux, for example, the Chairman of the Workers' group in the Governing Body, expressed concern that the TAP could cause the ILO to fall under the control of the United States.³² In addition, the representatives of the federations of European trade unions feared that the act could further advance the death throes of the WFTU, which was already reeling from the dispute between its members over its agreement to the Marshall Plan.³³ After Morse had assured them that the Governing Body would always maintain ultimate control over the use of TAP monies, they eventually granted their approval. Thus, in the autumn of 1949, the ILO officially became an operationally active organization and a multilateral agency of development aid.³⁴

The ILO was, of course, not alone in its forays into technical assistance during this period. There had been repeated attempts to fulfil the implicit demands of the Charter of the UN with regard to development since the UN's foundation. These had normally taken the form of smaller initiatives, however. Only the previous year, for example, an ECOSOC resolution had created a series of regional commissions devoted to the economic and social problems of developing countries.³⁵ Plans for a coordinated approach to development by the whole UN system had existed in the General Assembly and in ECOSOC even before Truman's initiative, but the American President's campaign spurred them along significantly. In March 1949 ECOSOC passed a resolution put forward by America calling upon the Secretary-General to come up with a coordinated programme for the provision of technical assistance to underdeveloped nations.³⁶ Negotiations within the UN on the design of such a programme, in which the ILO took part, carried on for the whole of 1949.³⁷ In 1950 the ILO eventually became one of the executive organs of the new UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA), out of which the majority of TAP projects were subsequently financed.³⁸ Morse and the heads of the other institutions involved in the EPTA (FAO, WHO and six other UN specialized agencies) now met on the Technical Assistance Board (TAB) to discuss the allocation of funds. The TAP was thus now part of the broader field of UN development activities. This move had two decided advantages for Morse's plans. First, it increased the funds available to the TAP; and, second, it removed any visible connection between the TAP and American foreign policy. Concerns within the ILO that technical assistance would be synonymous

with the American Government gaining influence over the Organization's policies thus began to recede.

Acting on poverty's cry: technical assistance for underdeveloped countries

In parallel to developments on the organizational level, the Office had been hard at work since Morse's arrival to signal the change in direction to the potential recipients of technical assistance. The new Director-General had studied with care the accusations of Eurocentricity levelled at the ILO in the past. His goal was now to make the critics aware of the new consciousness within the Office and to try to get all the groups represented at the Conference actively involved in the redesign of the ILO agenda. Discussions in the course of 1949 with various ILO correspondents and with representatives of Latin American and Asian countries in particular gave Morse an idea of the extent of existing need and pointed to the huge potential for success of a technical assistance programme tailored to the needs of underdeveloped nations.³⁹

The necessity for urgent action was confirmed for Morse by events in the Far East, where the Chinese Communist Party, under Mao's leadership, had emerged victorious from the civil war that had been raging since the end of Japanese dominance. The nationalist guerrillas fighting the colonial powers in Indochina and Malaya were also inspired to some extent by communist ideas. On top of that, a similar conflict was brewing in Korea in which the United States was even more directly involved. China's fall to the communists fanned the flames of these disputes. Morse felt it was high time to face the wave head on and to keep Asian societies in the democratic camp by arming them against the "communist temptation" using socio-economic means. The mood of Morse and his supporters in the Office is reflected in a letter to the Director-General at the beginning of 1949 from his Indian deputy Raghunath Rao in the communist-besieged city of Shanghai. The city reminded Rao of France in May 1940. Commenting on the seemingly unstoppable advance of anti-democratic forces, he predicted darkly that "night may descend on parts of Asia", which served further to convince him of the importance of the ILO's work in the region.⁴⁰

This was the backdrop against which Morse offered, at the ILC in 1949, to transform the ILO into a service agency catering to the specific demands of "underdeveloped nations". His remark that the Office favoured the change because it wanted "to continue to persist in ensuring that its work is of the utmost practical value to all States Members and not merely to certain groups among them" directly addressed the discontent that many nations had felt about the work of the ILO in the past. He declared that the Organization had understood the enormous demand for industrialization, increased production and improvements in the standard of living among wide swathes of the world's population and promised that the ILO would

organize a knowledge transfer which would help underdeveloped societies to modernize. He offered support and assistance in vocational training, increasing the productivity of labour, introducing modern methods of labour protection and organizing and regulating labour relations. The ILO had recognized the urgency, Morse claimed, of "getting the job done". He emphasized the Organization's will to change by promising a far-reaching reorganization of the budget and of Office staffing structures. Furthermore, he indicated that changes were also planned with regard to the long-called-for regionalization of the Organization.⁴¹

Morse's promises were welcomed by most of the Asian and Latin American representatives and by the small number of African members of the ILO. The Indian Employment Secretary Lall, who as Chairman of the Governing Body opened the Conference, remarked that so far Morse had fulfilled the high expectations that many people had had of his appointment in every possible respect.⁴² Morse and his colleagues were also well received at the first regular Regional Conference for Asia which took part at the turn of the year in Nuwara Eliya, Ceylon, and at the meeting of the Governing Body in Mysore, India, which preceded it.⁴³ In his report to the Regional Conference, the Director-General declared Asia to be the new focus for ILO activities.⁴⁴ This announcement was received with satisfaction by the Government delegates and Workers' and Employers' representatives alike of the nations gathered in Ceylon. A Ceylonian Workers' representative spoke for the majority of the continent's envoys when he praised the ILO's change of direction, saying that, for the first time in its history, the ILO was standing by its responsibilities in the face of the suffering of millions in Asia. He also assured the Director-General that "we in Asia would be only too pleased to respond to his call for co-operation, since we now feel that the ILO has at last realised its duties to this so far neglected continent".⁴⁵ The voices that had criticized the ILO's Eurocentricity so vehemently at the Delhi Conference only two years earlier had quietened significantly, even if they had not been completely stilled.⁴⁶ The fact that India's influential representatives seemed to be so pleased about the new Director-General's response to their demands was particularly encouraging with regard to the chances of success of the operational change in the ILO agenda. In a message of greeting to the Conference, Nehru praised the ILO for opening the way for the promises of the Declaration of Philadelphia finally to be followed by action. Lall assured Morse that "the entire Asian region eagerly looks forward to the operational activities of the ILO".⁴⁷

Moreover, no criticism was raised about the connection between the TAP and the objectives of American foreign policy, or about the role of the TAP in the battle of ideologies, despite the fact that these were aspects which participants in the Conference could hardly overlook in the light of the speech made by the American Government representative, Zempel, which drew a direct line of cause and effect between Truman's Point IV Program and the TAP.⁴⁸ However, as no socialist States were represented in Ceylon,⁴⁹

and as countries such as India, Burma and Indonesia, which were determined to remain neutral in the struggle of the systems, did not comment, the issue was raised only by those governments that were well within the Western camp anyway. They welcomed the TAP as a means of containing the advance of communism through Asia. The Workers' representative of the British Crown Colony Hong Kong, for example, told the meeting it was the duty of Asian countries "under the technical leadership of the ILO to prove to the Chinese and to the people in other Asian countries that democracy can offer a much more effective solution to the problem of poverty".⁵⁰ He agreed with the members of many of the other delegations that Asia's poverty was "the hotbed of communism" and that only by reducing it could a long-term victory in the fight against communism be secured. A Philippines representative called upon the industrialized nations of the West to "pour their resources into this part of the world", thus obtaining a security that "no force of arms" could acquire.⁵¹ In this way, the potential recipients exploited the programme's anti-communist thrust for their own ends, using their expressions of support for its political aims to make intensified demands on the donor countries.

The result of the Conference was a unanimous resolution welcoming the programme of technical assistance to Asia in the warmest of terms.⁵² The expectations which this enthusiastic response placed on the Organization were so great that the Director-General was forced in his closing speech to try to bring the delegates back down to earth somewhat. Morse, whose six-week trip to southern Asia had affected him greatly, and who was truly shocked by the poverty of the Indian subcontinent,⁵³ assured the meeting that the "cry of misery that rises from throats of the millions of people of Asia" had been heard in Geneva, and that the Organization would take up the fight against it. However, he was equally forceful in his insistence that Asian countries must commit to active involvement in the ILO's work ("The ILO is your organization, ... it is you"), pointing out that the ILO could bring about the necessary changes only if countries were not content to take a passive role as supplicants and consumers but played an active part in the implementation of the new goals.⁵⁴ At least judged by the approval he received, if it had been Morse's aim to strengthen support for the ILO's actions among the membership, gearing the TAP to the needs of the under-developed members had been a stroke of genius.

"Help them move the ILO way": the ILO's integrated approach to development

"Training, training, training"

The initial considerations of Office staff when it came to putting the TAP into action were pragmatic ones. While the EPTA was being set up, their main concern was to define and demarcate the areas of responsibility of

the various agencies in such a way as to ensure that the biggest possible slice of the pie went to the ILO. In view of the relatively short period of time between Truman's speech and the launch of the EPTA, there was no other real option than to use resources that were already in existence. It was hardly surprising, then, that the first step to be taken after the establishment of the TAP was a further expansion of the Manpower Programme, which was reconfigured to cater to the needs of the underdeveloped regions of Asia and Latin America and the countries of the Middle and Near East. Not long afterwards, the Office began to develop programmes for various other fields in which the ILO had previously been involved only on a normative or research level.⁵⁵ Viewed quantitatively, however, the Manpower Programme markedly dominated the TAP in the early 1950s. The lion's share of technical assistance, in terms of both resources and the number of projects, went into developing the manpower potential of developing countries, and especially to programmes providing vocational training with an industrial focus. Approximately half of all the money spent by the ILO in the 1950s was used on activities in this field.⁵⁶ The TAP of the 1950s consisted of "training, training, training", as Morse was later to put it.⁵⁷

In its first decade, the main aim of the TAP was to help developing countries in their efforts towards industrialization. The agricultural sector, which was where most of the inhabitants of developing nations earned their living, was more or less ignored. There were some practical reasons for the industrial slant. Partly it was to do with the fact that the original Manpower Programme, oriented as it was to the needs of war-torn Europe, had put the focus on industrial training. Furthermore, agricultural training lay within the competence of other executive EPTA organs such as the UN Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the FAO, which pointed the ILO towards its own specific area of responsibility.⁵⁸ The industrial focus also had its roots in prevailing thinking on development policy at the time – both in the desires and ideas of the potential recipients of technical assistance and in the basic assumptions about the best way to economic progress on the part of the Office-based architects of the TAP. Most of the first development theorists were convinced that the solution to the problems of underdeveloped societies lay in industrialization. In the "dualistic" development thinking of W. Arthur Lewis, the "father" of development economics, and his contemporaries, underdeveloped societies were divided into two clearly distinct sectors. The central dynamic of development was a movement from the "traditional" sector to the "modern" or industrial sector. Only the latter could lead to productivity and growth and thus to an improvement in the standard of living. A country could be said to be "developed" when the modern sector had soaked up all the cheap labour from the traditional sector.⁵⁹ It was upon these basic assumptions that the ideas of a new generation of economists who joined the Office once the TAP was under way were based.⁶⁰ The formulation and consolidation of this academic theory of development ran parallel to the

practical intervention of international organizations. The task of development agencies, both national and international, was seen as being to support and accelerate the modernization process by means of targeted action.⁶¹ This conviction was backed up by success stories such as the first Indian Five Year Plan, which with its strong focus on industrialization was regarded as a good example of the approach.⁶²

The TAP's focus on manpower fitted perfectly into the dualistic vision. It was generally accepted that, by training workers, the ILO was making available a key tool that represented the quickest route to industrialization and increased productivity.⁶³ The creation of a workforce which was sufficiently educated and sufficiently productive was, in David Morse's words, an "indispensable element in any strategy for economic development". If industrialization was to succeed, the "time-lag" in developing countries between the introduction of new technologies and the workforce being trained to use them had to be eliminated. "Manpower is wealth" was how David Morse summarized the significance of the ILO's contribution on a visit to Egypt in 1953 prior to the construction there of a centre for productivity and vocational training. In order for a country to generate wealth, he explained to a press conference in Cairo, "there must be production, in order to have production, people must be trained, people must be taught, in order to be taught people must be educated along certain lines and the net result of all of this is wealth. More production, more wealth."⁶⁴

The other side of the coin: technical assistance and standard-setting

Right from the beginning, the Office intended the TAP to do more than just provide support in the context of a wider economic project. The Office viewed its activities as measures taken at the beginning of a process of modernization whose core element was the growth achieved through increased productivity and industrialization, but David Morse was convinced that the ILO had far more to offer than mere help with economic development. He believed that the ILO's "classic" standard-setting work could have an important role to play.

As early as 1948–49, when Morse was attempting to convince the Organization of the necessity for change, he betrayed a glimpse of a vision of an integrated approach to development in which technical assistance and ILO standards were reconciled, had a catalytic effect on each other and worked hand in hand towards the modernization of societies. He was addressing himself in particular to European governments and trade union representatives, the groups within the Organization who had profited the most from its standard-setting activities in the past and who therefore viewed a change in its portfolio sceptically and with concern.⁶⁵ At the ILC in 1949 the new Director-General vehemently denied that technical assistance and standard-setting were necessarily irreconcilable, claiming on the contrary

that operational activity had to be seen as complementary to the legislative work of the Conference, “for it is, in fact, the other half of the same coin”. To provide technical assistance to the less economically developed members of the Organization was to do nothing other than to “hasten the practical implementation in all countries of the principles and standards laid down in the Constitution and in the Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the Conference”.⁶⁶ Technical assistance would make it possible to create the economic and institutional conditions necessary for standards to be applied. Development aid was thus to be seen as assistance with the enforcement of ILO standards, and the standards themselves elevated to the target and yardstick of development.

Morse went further. After the debate on his report, which with 95 speakers was the lengthiest to date on a single agenda item in the history of the ILC, he went on to respond to the numerous voices warning of an “economization” of the ILO through the TAP.⁶⁷ He assured members that the Organization would not fall prey to a reckless and indiscriminate productivity mania, but would continue to recognize its primary responsibility, which was to protect workers from the dangers of exploitation and the poor distribution of wealth that would be the consequences of an unbalanced policy geared solely towards productivity. Promoting a process of development which took into account the aims of the ILO Constitution was, in his view, “precisely the purpose of technical assistance”.⁶⁸ He reassured the Conference that the principles of the Constitution and of the International Labour Code were the intellectual guiding force behind the TAP, and that the Programme would “never lose sight of its moral and educational possibilities”.⁶⁹ Morse promised to translate the firm ideological basis on which the ILO stood as a result of its standard-setting activities into “increased production, social protection and benefits for working men and women”.⁷⁰ He thus made international labour standards not just a goal, but a method of development, claiming that they helped to ease the side-effects of the modernization process and paved the way for intelligent development.

In the first years of the TAP the Director-General was forced on numerous occasions to repeat his assurances that there was an independent, ILO-specific route to development based on the standards of the Organization. Persistent concerns about the Organization’s new course and mistrust from various quarters within its ranks caused the discussion to flare up again and again and led to Morse and his supporters repeatedly having to explain and specify the new strategy. For this reason, in the run-up to the 1951 Conference the Office was eager to emphasize its independence within the framework of wider UN development efforts. A memorandum from one of Morse’s most trusted colleagues advised the Director-General to point out to the meeting that, regardless of the frequent description by the UN system of social progress in developing countries as the basic goal of the “policy of assistance”, only the ILO was conscious of the absolute necessity

of social progress and had the means to take practical measures to achieve this goal. Morse was encouraged to emphasize the fact that the Declaration of Philadelphia called upon the ILO to work for the social objective to be embodied in all the policies of the UN development effort.⁷¹

Another reason for the scepticism of certain member groups with regard to the independence of the ILO's path was the initiative that Morse had been pushing since 1950 to make "productivity" the general focus and main heading of all the Office's future work.⁷² This was an idea that met with deep suspicion, especially from Workers' representatives but also from within the Office. Its opponents feared that focusing on productivity could distract the Organization from its original mandate, which was to protect workers. Here too, Morse attempted to emphasize the independence and the integrative character of the ILO approach. In a memorandum published in 1952 he explained that social progress as the ILO understood it could not be brought about by social reform and the redistribution of resources alone, and especially not in developing countries, where the material conditions necessary for such an approach were often entirely lacking. Increasing productivity, in all economic sectors, was the only practicable route. However, the ILO's approach to productivity, he underlined, differed from that of other development agencies by recognizing that increased productivity alone did not guarantee social progress.

Morse spoke in this connection of a three-pronged approach which took into account "the educational, the social and the technical sides" of the problem, promising that the ILO would provide both information about the purpose and consequences of higher productivity and technical assistance towards it, and would ensure that increased productivity did "lead rapidly to improvements in economic and social welfare for the community in general and in particular for those working in individual undertakings where productivity is raised". The Director-General emphasized the pioneering nature of the ILO's role in this enterprise and the unique opportunities which its body of standards and its tripartite structure opened up to it. Only the ILO, he said, was in a position to influence the direction which the social side of the development effort took, and only the ILO had the capacity to integrate employers and employees into the process at the same time. For this reason, the ILO must and would campaign ceaselessly for governments to consider good industrial relations and satisfactory wages and employment policies not merely as accessory measures but as "integral parts of programmes to raise productivity", because without such assurances employers could not be expected to provide the necessary support for the programmes. Morse countered the argument, raised by many, that ILO involvement in the field of productivity would simply lead to a duplication of the efforts of other international agencies by referring again to the uniqueness of the ILO's approach to development, an approach which was unmistakably based on the standards and structure of the Organization.⁷³

The democratic road to modernization

Morse's oft-repeated assurances that, despite – or precisely because of – its move towards technical assistance, the ILO would remain true to its old standard-setting activities were not solely or even primarily placatory formulas directed at worried members. They were based on the firm conviction that, in the prevailing ideological climate, the ILO had a key role to play in the organization of the social change which increased efforts towards economic development outside Europe would bring. In Morse's eyes, the ILO was on the front line of a global conflict between democratic and totalitarian forces. "Change and revolution are sweeping the world today," he wrote in a memorandum to Office heads of divisions late in 1950. The Organization was caught up in a "struggle for the hearts and minds of men and women the world over, on the outcome of which will depend peace or war and the survival...of civilisation or its destruction". The development efforts of many governments, which the Organization was supporting through the TAP, would shake traditional social structures and undermine "the basis of society hitherto widely accepted". Morse identified the uncertainty and fear which the speed of this transition to modernity could cause as the greatest danger faced by the democratic camp in tackling the communist challenge. He tried to bring home to his supporters that "the ILO can and must seize the initiative courageously and with vision. It must show where it stands today and that it is responsive to the new realities and faster rhythm of life."⁷⁴ He saw the values of the Declaration of Philadelphia, formulated as an intellectual response to the anti-democratic challenge of the Second World War, as the key which would enable the Organization to keep the process of modernization on a democratic course. It was simply necessary to bring the central points of the Declaration – the subordination of all national and international policies to the higher aim of social justice and the common welfare, and the involvement of all affected parties in the formulation and implementation of such policies – to bear in the development process.

Morse's beliefs were based on a "fundamental view of society, of morality and of the freedom and dignity of the individual" offered to him by the ILO Constitution. In its embodiment of the values affirmed in Philadelphia to be universal, the ILO made a valuable contribution to combating the fundamental insecurity which made human beings susceptible to "the gusts of any wind that may choose to blow upon them" and therefore countered a dangerous tendency towards undemocratic problem-solving. Underpinned by these principles, continued Morse, the development process would not just have the potential to lift people out of material poverty, it could also make them aware of their position as citizens of their societies.⁷⁵

These views were clearly based upon the concept of universal citizenship found in the Declaration of Philadelphia, and represented an early example of the specific contribution the Office was to make to

shaping the development and modernization discourse of the 1950s. If the Director-General and his staff believed that international labour standards could play a double role – as a method and as a goal – in the development process, it was because they were observing this process from the same dualistic premise as the development economists of the time, who considered that development meant the transition from the “traditional” to the modern. However, the integrated approach to development propagated by the ILO’s TAP went beyond mere economics. There were numerous parallels between it and the new academic trend known as modernization theory which was emerging in the social sciences of the 1950s, predominantly in the United States.⁷⁶ The integrated approach to development shared with this theory both its basic premises and its historical origins in early decolonization and the confrontation with communism. Modernization theory also saw itself as an extension of the dualistic thought of the development economists. In many respects it tried to overcome their narrow focus on economic processes and extended the dichotomous perspective to all levels of society. According to the theory’s most prominent proponents, men such as Edward Shils and Walt Whitman Rostow, modernization was a multifaceted transition process with political, social, cultural and psychological aspects. They held modernization to be a metahistorical process within which the transition from the traditional to the modern took place. The blueprint of modernization was the road to development that West European and North American societies had followed from an idealized past into modernity, modernity being deemed to be embodied by present-day America. As such, modernization theory could also be seen – and in the case of Rostow this was even made explicit – as an intellectual answer to the challenge which the attractions of the Soviet development model posed to the West in the battle for the hearts and minds of the developing world during the Cold War.⁷⁷

Various links can be drawn between the ILO’s integrated approach to development in the 1950s and the postulates of modernization theory, but the ILO’s model was undoubtedly most closely connected to that branch of it known as industrialism. For authors such as Wilbert Moore and Clark Kerr, industrialization was more than just the implementation of an organizational economic principle; it covered all areas of life and was a universal process which set universal imperatives. It posed a challenge to the nations and societies undergoing it, demanded rational decision-making processes, hierarchical structures and orderly political and social conditions and required the individual to be capable of adapting to new social environments. For Moore and Kerr, industrialization was an inevitable prerequisite for progress, which they too saw embodied in present-day America. The task of development agencies on the national and international levels alike was to organize the transition to industrialized societies and to facilitate the adjustment of the individual.⁷⁸

This was exactly the starting point for the thinking of the International Labour Office. Industrialization was seen as a process which followed the same inevitable natural laws in developing countries as it had in Europe and North America. Morse's thinking differed from that of the proponents of industrialism only in that he was not entirely convinced that there was a fundamental convergence of political systems within the universal process of industrialization. The ILO always maintained the pre-eminence of democratic development in the face of this claim. David Morse equated the history of social progress in the twentieth century, which he believed developing countries should take as a model and example, with the success first and foremost of the liberal democratic model. In his interpretation of the past, the starting points of progress were the creation of interventionist welfare states within a basic capitalist order and the simultaneous existence of free democratic institutions which made the organization and articulation of social interests possible. Only the Western model had been capable of coupling progress with freedom and social justice. It was necessary to underline, wrote Morse in a 1951 memorandum to his colleagues at the Office, that the real success story of the industrialized nations had been written primarily "by an enthusiastic and progressively minded people", and "in order to make the picture complete, emphasis should be laid on the fact that these achievements have in large measure taken place within the general framework of free democratic institutions".⁷⁹

The assumption that the past of the industrialized nations was being repeated in developing countries was a recurrent theme in the statements made by the Office in the 1950s. There is no clearer example of this than Morse's answer to the question posed by an Indian journalist at one of the later Asian Regional Conferences as to whether labour relations in India should, in principle, be treated differently from those in Western industrial nations: "There [is] nothing peculiar to this region. ... Asia and India [are] going through a process of economic expansion and development that western countries [were going] through long ago; when as a result of this process a new class ar[ises], new problems [are] created. These problems [are] new in Asia but old problems in other countries."⁸⁰

If one accepted the premise that Europe's and North America's past was being repeated in the transition from the traditional to the modern observed in developing countries, the ILO really did hold, in the set of standards laid down in the International Labour Code, and in the values of the Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, a powerful range of tools for the promotion of democratic modernization. These standards and values could be interpreted as a set of answers which the liberal democracies of Europe and North America had found to the political and economic crises, linked to the development of their own capitalist orders, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

At the beginning of the 1950s Morse set to work with almost missionary zeal to spread his understanding of an integrated approach to development.

By supporting developing countries in their quest for economic progress and making sure at the same time that the democratic ideals of the Organization were anchored in the process, he insisted, the ILO was taking part in a “crusade in the service of social progress for the benefit of all those who are still deprived of it”. The historic role of the Organization in this crusade was described in the following almost religious terms: “If it does this the ILO will light a beacon which will guide men and women through the uncertain times which lie ahead and give to those whose hearts and minds are troubled, confused and afraid a positive faith by which they can work and live and a belief in themselves and in their future which will be proof against attacks from any quarter.”⁸¹

The successes and limits of the TAP

The further the TAP progressed and the clearer the contours it began to take, the more confirmation Office representatives received of the importance of their task. Rapid and drastic action to support the economic efforts of their members and to steer the modernization process in the desired direction seemed to be needed everywhere. Deputy Director-General Wilfred Jenks complained that the resources at the Office’s disposal were hardly sufficient to tackle the political, social and economic situation of even just the Middle East, warning that there was no region of the world with a greater gap between rich and poor, “or where the social strains resulting therefrom are more acute or more likely to result in major social developments of incalculable political and strategic importance”.⁸² Social reformers were, he reported, except in a few isolated countries, “prophets crying in the wilderness”. The region was practically impervious to the social aspects of development. Apparently insurmountable hurdles “on account of traditional attitudes and the general political framework” stood in the way of the development of democratic institutions such as trade unions, which in Jenks’s view were nowhere more necessary than here. He concluded that the ILO had some colossal tasks ahead of it in the years to come.⁸³

Jef Rens came back with a similar impression after his visit to Egypt in 1953: “In Egypt I found further confirmation for my conviction that our operational and technical assistance work did not come a moment too soon.” The radical upheavals taking place there should spur the ILO on to move as quickly as possible in order to assert its approach in the rapidly advancing process of economic development. Rens was not sure that there was sufficient awareness of the opportunity the ILO was offering: “This part of the world and similar areas are moving – that’s certain. Let’s not miss the chance to help them move the ILO way.... Let’s make them conscious of it.”⁸⁴

The ways in which the Office went about promoting the “ILO way” of development were fairly indirect. The Organization provided information, advice and practical support in areas of direct significance for the implementation



Jef Rens, Wilfred Jenks and David Morse (*left to right*), c.1954

of international labour standards. ILO experts helped with matters of occupational health and safety. They dished out advice on how “healthy” labour relations could be organized and on the creation of workers’ and employers’ unions, and provided manuals dealing with how to write standard employment contracts or formulate reasonable wage policies.⁸⁵ Morse stressed that it was precisely this type of activity that would promote “adjustment to the new forms of society which are gradually emerging in the developing countries”. People who left their traditional environments “to live and work in a new industrial society” needed orientation, and this in turn required both the appropriate social policies and the appropriate social institutions to help them deal with the problems with which they were confronted.⁸⁶

The experts who were deployed to provide assistance naturally played an important role in the implementation of the programme. In most cases, the model of help took the form of knowledge transfers from North to South. Between 1950 and 1965 the ILO sent almost 2,000 experts from a total of 78 nations on 3,000 expert missions to around 100 countries.⁸⁷ The overwhelming majority did not come from the ranks of the Office itself but were recruited by the ILO on the basis of a long career in the required field. Short introductory seminars before their departure familiarized them with the ideology of the ILO, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which

these experts really internalized the integrated approach to development and attempted to put it into practice. The same can be said of the other method of knowledge transfer used in the early stages of the TAP, which was based on education. The ILO awarded study grants and arranged for a large number of people from developing countries, ranging from skilled workers to those who were to be qualified to work in labour administration, to visit industrialized countries for training or further education.⁸⁸ Both forms of knowledge transfer organized by the ILO represented an active and conscious attempt to play a part in an international standardization process within which the parameters of progress and modernity were clearly defined.

There were of course limits to what the TAP could do. The effectiveness and scope of the programme were restricted by, among other things, the meagre financial resources available to the TAP in the 1950s, which made very extensive projects unrealistic. The funds provided by the EPTA and the regular budget fell far short of enabling the ILO to meet all the requests it received for technical assistance. This was due partly to the modest volume of the EPTA itself, and partly to the proportionally small share of funds from it that went to the ILO. The setting up of the EPTA in 1949 and the progressive increases in its resources in the course of the 1950s could not hide the fact that only a very small proportion of development aid flowed via multilateral channels.⁸⁹ Most support by far during this period was provided bilaterally. In the case of Britain and France, legal stipulations confined a large proportion of their development aid to their former colonies, which made matters even more difficult. As a result, until the policy change which occurred at the end of the 1950s the UN was very limited in what it could do on this front.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the ILO's role in the EPTA was a minor one as far as the allocation of money for technical assistance went. In 1959 the ILO provided a mere 0.09 per cent of the total volume of world aid,⁹¹ and ranked only fourth in the list of the specialized agencies participating in the EPTA, behind the FAO, the WHO and UNESCO.⁹²

The limited funding available to the ILO in the 1950s necessarily impacted on the efficacy of the Organization's campaign. ILO projects tended to be small, isolated, selective and short-term. Experts would help to set up a vocational training centre, for example, train the staff and supervise the process of institutionalization of vocational training schemes in the ministries and authorities of the recipient country. A typical example was Libya, the former Italian colony and UN trust territory which gained independence in 1951, where in the mid-1950s, after sending several expert missions to Tripoli, the ILO set up a school for around 300 pupils, advised the Libyan Department of Social Services on maintaining it and trained local teaching and administration staff.⁹³

The lack of resources also limited the ILO's prospects of being able to use the TAP to spread its ideology in a systematic or comprehensive way.

When selecting the projects they wished to carry out with ILO assistance, host countries were forced to set priorities. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they would opt for those projects which would most clearly result in an increase in productivity. This goes some way to explaining why vocational training made up such a large part of the services offered by the TAP in the 1950s.

For a long time, the only exception to the generally small-scale way in which the TAP was implemented was the Andean (Indian) Programme. This project represented a concerted effort to improve the socio-economic conditions of the indigenous populations of the Andean highlands and consisted mainly of an attempt to relieve them from the miseries of a subsistence economy. It was the largest programme ever carried out by the ILO, and directly or indirectly touched the lives of around 8 million people by the time it was drawn to a close.⁹⁴ The Andean Programme, which was conducted with the help of other UN agencies, gave the ILO a real chance to put its integrated approach to development into practice. Not only did it carry out one of its largest vocational training projects here, it helped to set up cooperatives of producers and consumers, dealt with preliminary social security measures and provided advice on the creation of trade unions. For modernization practitioners from various international organizations keen to test out their particular approaches, the Andean project was a dream come true.

The region was also one of the first to experience the political implications of the TAP, for it was here that it became apparent that the goals of the integrated approach to development did not necessarily correspond to those of the host country government. The TAP came close to collapse in Bolivia and Peru in 1954 because the Governments feared that the ILO's activities there in the creation of cooperatives, for example, could raise politically explosive questions about the distribution of land. In other cases, governments reacted negatively to any measures designed to promote the formation or expansion of trade unions.⁹⁵

The TAP as a political success story

Despite these hitches, the TAP was judged to be a major political success. In its first stocktake of the Programme in 1954, the Office deemed the provision of technical assistance to underdeveloped regions to be a permanent task of the ILO from now on, and it was not contradicted.⁹⁶ The TAP increased loyalty to the Organization enormously, especially among developing countries. At the ILC in 1954, representatives from the developing world were generous in their praise for the new direction the Organization had taken over the past few years. Many speakers, such as the Government delegates from Burma, Libya, Egypt and Indonesia, praised Morse's commitment to transforming the Office into an agency of technical assistance.⁹⁷ Very little criticism was heard of the Office's approach to modernization or

of the design of the TAP. Some Workers' representatives, such as the Indian Tripathi, did question whether too much emphasis was being laid on productivity at the expense of genuine social considerations such as employment effects,⁹⁸ but most delegates agreed with the Lebanese chairman of the Governing Body, Charles Malik, when he praised precisely this focus on productivity for allowing underdeveloped nations to "be dynamic enough to rid themselves of the ages-old inertia and lethargy" by teaching them to produce more, and simultaneously to improve living standards for large sections of their societies.⁹⁹ Conflicts such as those that had arisen in the Andean Programme over specific elements of the ILO approach to development initially remained the exception to the rule. This had much to do with the fact that, from the start, the ILO formulated its integrated approach as a more or less unreserved offer to developing countries and did not, for instance, make help under the TAP conditional on the acceptance or application of international labour standards.

The developing countries also welcomed the TAP because it reflected the fact that the ILO was finally becoming an organization with a truly global profile. There was a better geographical balance of Office staff now, and the recruitment campaign it had been forced to run as part of the TAP had increased its level of development-related knowledge significantly in comparison to before the war. The ILO also enjoyed a much increased presence on the ground, and not just as a result of the deployment of experts: the early manpower activities had allowed it to gain an institutional foothold on almost every continent. In order to be effective in extending the Programme to Asia, Morse set up a field office in Bangalore, India, in the summer of 1949 from where all the vocational training activities for Asia were coordinated. By 1952 two other field offices had been set up, one in 1950 in São Paulo for Latin America and the other in 1952 in Istanbul for the Middle and Near East. The ILO headquarters in Geneva took over the role of a field office for Europe. Only Africa, initially, was left out.¹⁰⁰

Once established, the field offices soon took on a life of their own. The idea that they should concentrate exclusively on the coordination of vocational training, as originally intended, was soon jettisoned. The field offices helped to support and coordinate all the TAP activities in a particular region and served – following staff increases – as information points to which the Geneva headquarters could turn for intelligence on all the problems of that particular region. The heads of office, in turn, functioned as the point of contact for governments, unions and employers locally. Before the ILO was actually decentralized following an organizational reform in the mid-1960s, the field offices had already developed into provisional regional branch offices of the Geneva headquarters.¹⁰¹

The positive response of the developing world to the TAP and the speed with which the structure of the Organization adjusted to accommodate it played a large part in enabling the ILO to weather the turbulence caused by

the Soviet Union's accession to the Organization in the mid-1950s. In 1954, a year after Stalin's death, the Soviet Government abandoned its hostile stance towards the ILO and signalled that, having suspended its membership in 1939, it was willing to rejoin. This step was triggered by Moscow's realization that its previous strategy of trying to establish the WFTU as an alternative to the ILO had been a failure – partly, it must be said, owing to the success of the TAP. David Morse welcomed the Soviet Union's joining as a further step towards the universality of the ILO, but he did recognize that he had landed himself a difficult partner in the USSR.¹⁰² Moscow's presence brought the conflicts and tensions of the Cold War into the meetings of the Conference and the Governing Body. The TAP helped the ILO to assert its neutrality in the face of the increasing politicization of the discussions, for the Organization's technical activities, unlike its principles and standards, were relatively rarely used as fodder in the East–West conflict.¹⁰³

The Soviet Union outwardly supported the TAP, although Moscow was fully aware, of course, of the anti-communist ideological core of the Programme. However, it found it prudent to approve of the ILO's operational activities, seeing in this strategy a proven means of winning the sympathies of the new nations. Khrushchev's new policy after 1955 was to court the developing countries regardless of their political orientation. Declarations of support for the TAP and repeated demands for its funding to be increased were part of this new strategy, and were all part of the propagandist repertoire employed by the Eastern Bloc representatives on the committees of the ILO in the "struggle for the hearts" of the new nations.¹⁰⁴

The success of the TAP also had an integrative effect with regard to the United States, the ILO's largest donor, whose relationship with the Organization had become somewhat distant after the inauguration of Eisenhower at the beginning of 1953.¹⁰⁵ The prevailing attitude in the new administration, embodied by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who made it official policy not to commit the United States to any more international obligations regulating national affairs, lessened Washington's interest in the ILO in general and in its standard-setting in particular.¹⁰⁶ In talks with Dulles and Eisenhower, David Morse attempted to impress upon them the utility of the ILO in the pursuit of American foreign policy objectives, urging them to show the world through "active participation in, and support of, the ILO" the United States' true intentions "in questions of social and economic development". In view of the United States' negative attitude to international labour standards, he argued, the best way to do this would be by actively supporting the TAP. Eisenhower and Dulles were receptive to this argument.¹⁰⁷

In the years that followed, the TAP gave both the Office and the elements within the American Government who wanted to maintain good relations with the ILO a recurring opportunity to point out the lasting usefulness of the Organization to the United States. Phil Kaiser, Assistant Secretary of Labor, went so far at the beginning of the Eisenhower era

as to claim that the ILO should be seen as a “unique instrumentality available to the United States, through which it may effectively pursue some of its major foreign policy objectives”. The TAP helped to improve living conditions, increase productivity and strengthen consumer spending power in the developing world, open up new markets for the United States and thus reduce communism’s chances of success. As the ILO had been founded on capitalist premises and the TAP reflected the principles of “democratic capitalism”, the Organization was capable of exercising “moral leadership” along American lines.¹⁰⁸ This line of argument reappeared time after time in US policy documents until the beginning of the Kennedy era in 1960.¹⁰⁹ The technical services provided by the ILO justified its existence in the eyes of the United States, even at the most sensitive of times, and the more the ILC became an arena for fierce political debate fuelled by the East–West conflict, the more important this basic acceptance became. The United States’ negative stance on the ILO’s standard-setting served only to strengthen the TAP. In 1959 the Department of Labor greeted a further move by the ILO towards an operational focus as a “most welcome sign”, and another memorandum the year after called for a strengthening of the “marked trend of the last years to emphasize operational activities”.¹¹⁰

In the end, through its decision to fulfil a predominantly technical function, the Office even managed to strengthen the tripartite structure of the ILO. In the early days of the TAP, Morse had faced deep scepticism from the Workers’ representatives – the Western trade union federations in particular – as this was the group most committed to the ILO’s classic standard-setting activities. As time went by though, the Office won their support, and by the middle of the 1950s there was hardly a critical voice to be heard. The Employers’ representatives, on the other hand, had been strongly in favour of a transition to a more operational outlook from the start. At the end of the 1940s, growing disgruntlement had set in among this group at what was seen as the one-sided, pro-union orientation of the ILO. Much criticism was levelled at the Organization’s “socialist tendencies”, criticism which was sparked in particular by the Office’s work in the area of labour standards.¹¹¹ As a result, the Employers welcomed a change of focus that would divert the ILO from these activities. That the Organization subsequently managed, little by little, to win back the Employers’ trust through its new programme of work, proved, especially in the case of the Western Europeans, to be particularly valuable when the Soviet Union joined the ILO. Their support was a stabilizing element in the face of an increasingly hostile stance towards the ILO on the part of the influential US Employers, who began to make the annual sessions of the Conference the battlegrounds of an unprecedented crusade against the Organization.¹¹² For the vast majority of the Employers’ representatives, however, the ILO’s shift away from being a purely standard-setting body made it considerably more trustworthy.

Thus the strategic objectives which Morse had been pursuing with his decision to expand operational activities at the end of the 1940s were, essentially, all achieved. The ILO had broadened its scope, generated more loyalty from its members, and become more global.

Between the past and the future: the post-colonial face of the TAP

The relationship between the new technical activities of the ILO and the remaining colonial territories was somewhat paradoxical. In principle, the ILO's approach to development in the 1950s was post-colonial in more ways than one. Together with other UN agencies, the Organization made an important contribution to "decolonizing" thinking on development after the Second World War. Even in Philadelphia, discussions on development had still taken place, in the main, within a colonial framework. Back then, development was a parallel discourse, if one built on similar premises, to the debates about the design of a socially just post-war order. The call for policies of economic and social development in the colonies was analogous to and had same the intellectual motivation as the call for democratic welfare states, but the distinction in the Declaration between "peoples who are still dependent and those who have already achieved self-government" showed that the two were not the same. Even in the standards for colonial social policy adopted after the Declaration, development was an issue limited to the colonies.

In contrast, the new, integrated approach to development sprang from a truly universalistic discourse which ruled out, in principle, the continued existence of a double standard. The ILO was propounding a universally applicable model of democratic modernization. In the new international state order which arose out of the beginnings of decolonization in Asia – largely through the work of international organizations – a new moral discourse on development sprang up whose focus was no longer the legitimacy of colonial rule, but far more complex questions regarding the foundations of the political and economic order of the post-colonial world. Through its annual sessions of the Conference, regional meetings and the transfer of expert knowledge, the ILO was one of the agencies which helped to integrate the new nations into this new, universal discourse.

Both the Office and the recipient countries explicitly propagated the TAP as a means of strengthening the political and economic independence of the new nations, which early on formed a significant proportion, and from the mid-1950s the majority, of the potential recipients of technical assistance.¹¹³ Participants in EPTA also made explicit their intention that technical assistance should strengthen and deepen the independence of the newly independent States.¹¹⁴ The corresponding ECOSOC resolution of 1949 reads: "A primary objective of the technical assistance programme is to help the

underdeveloped countries to strengthen their national economies, through the development of their industries and agriculture with a view to promoting their economic and political independence in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations."¹¹⁵

Because of the emphasis it placed on industrialization, the TAP was in a position to make a critical contribution to realizing this objective. Countries such as India viewed industrialization as the best way of getting away from the traditional economic structures that had been set up to serve the interests of the former colonial rulers. In this respect, industrialization was also a symbolically charged notion. On top of that, the memory of the worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s, which had hit both colonial territories and commodity-producing independent nations particularly hard, was still fresh in the mind in newly independent countries in Asia, as it was in many parts of Latin America. The slump was widely taken as a clear lesson that industrialization was the only way to avoid the fluctuations of the world market. The fact that state-controlled "import-substituting industrialization" (ISI) orientated towards the domestic market became the watchword for many Asian countries, including India and Indonesia, and a whole series of Latin American nations in their development efforts after the war was an indication of the type of conclusions that were being drawn from the past. The propagandists of industrialization in the developing world, then, saw it as a way of continuing the struggle for independence in the arena of world economic relations.

It must be borne in mind that the economic crisis of the 1930s and its consequences for the colonies also were the formative experiences of the first generation of development theorists. W. Arthur Lewis first argued for industrialization in the colonies as chair of the CO's Economic Advisory Committee during the First World War (and was thwarted by the resistance of colonial bureaucrats, who deemed the matter to be too politically sensitive). His theses, formulated as criticisms of British colonial economic policy, formed the basis of a comprehensive post-colonial and universal development theory.¹¹⁶

The ILO's development concept was post-colonial in another way too: in the theory behind the TAP, no distinction was made between colonial and independent States. The TAP was a universalistic offer directed at underdeveloped areas in general regardless of their current or past political status. The colonies were included in the intellectual concept from the beginning. At the suggestion of the Director-General, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) had been looking at this issue since 1949. According to the report of the UN observer (Wilfrid Benson), the Committee, which numbered several members with colonial experience among its ranks,¹¹⁷ held the view that "international programmes of technical assistance in connection with Mr. Truman's fourth point are of particular importance for Non-Metropolitan Territories".¹¹⁸ The report of

the CEACR itself also contained a passage which considered the extent to which technical assistance could play a role in facilitating the application of the ILO's colonial Conventions. Only one member of the Committee, the Belgian Paul Tschoffen, wanted the TAP to be limited to independent States and expressed objections to its extension to the colonies. The general tenor was that it was the duty of international institutions to take particular care of NMTs, precisely because they were not represented directly. This gave international organizations a particular responsibility for their progress, especially in the light of the fact that, over and over again, the reports by the colonial powers cited "backward conditions" to explain why Conventions had not been applied. It was precisely these conditions "which could only be overcome by international technical assistance".¹¹⁹

This view found direct expression in the Office's colonial work. From 1949 onwards the Non-Metropolitan Territories Department was increasingly involved in the Organization's programmatic fresh start. The department's predecessor, the Native Labour Section, had primarily been concerned with specifically colonial labour, which meant analysing information from the colonies and studying the reports which the colonial powers submitted on the application of the colonial Conventions they had signed. Its main duty now was to collect and analyse any information relevant to the TAP, with the aim of incorporating this knowledge into the Programme's various universally applicable projects. This change of focus illustrated that the distinction between colonial territories and independent developing countries was disappearing – in theory.¹²⁰ The problem faced by the Office was that this fundamental change in its approach to development had virtually no practical consequences, at least not at first. As the colonial powers categorically refused to accept the offer of technical assistance on behalf of their territories, the ILO's universalism remained theoretical.

Colonial barriers

Morse took over the position of Director-General of the International Labour Office at an unfavourable time to convince the colonial powers of the virtues of opening up their territories to multilateral assistance. Their main concern at the end of the 1940s was to prevent any more "internationalization" of colonial rule. The metropolises feared that introducing the TAP to the colonies would subject them to the increased scrutiny of a critical international public, and this they were keen to avoid, for several reasons.

One obvious explanation lay in the violent anti-colonial uprisings that Britain, France and the Netherlands were facing. In 1948 Britain gave its Palestine Mandate back to the UN under less than glorious circumstances. Local disturbances and strikes were daily occurrences in many parts of Asia, Africa and the West Indies.¹²¹ These events made the colonial powers eager to avoid the gaze of the international public. Their aversion to international interference was reinforced by the increasingly persistent anti-colonial noises

coming from the UN. Countries such as India and Mexico, supported by the Soviet Union and its allies, were using the forum provided by the UN for fierce attacks on the colonial rulers, who repeatedly ended up “in the dock” before the General Assembly and its newly formed subcommittees.¹²²

Although the ILO was at this time a much less “political” forum than the UN – mainly due to the absence of the Soviet Union until 1954 – the colonial powers had reason enough for wanting to keep conditions in the colonies out of the Organization’s spotlight. This was primarily because the development offensives on which the British, French and Dutch in particular had embarked in their territories after the war did not always correspond to the principles of the documents which the ILO had adopted in 1947, with their support, under the rubric of “social policy in non-metropolitan territories”.

Enthusiasm in the metropolises for social reform in the colonies had soon run dry after the war. In the light of the draining reconstruction efforts, the tight financial situation and the dollar shortages the colonial powers were facing, the moral arguments that had initially justified using metropolitan money for development under the FIDES or the CDWA from 1945 were soon overridden by domestic interests.¹²³ Rather than securing the social progress of colonial peoples, colonial development soon threatened to become a “tool of metropolitan welfare”. The British Labour Government of 1945–51, for example, openly tried to commandeer colonial resources for the creation of a welfare state at home.¹²⁴ This kind of consideration increased the reluctance of the colonial powers to expose themselves to the critical eyes of the world at large, as did early disappointments over the double goal – inextricably linked to the development strategy – of making the colonies more productive and at the same time more politically stable and thus easier to rule.

One consequence of this attitude was felt as early as the preparatory Asian Regional Conference in New Delhi in 1950. The ostentatious declarations from the French, Dutch and British representatives on the value of the TAP for development in Asia and their promise to provide material support for the programme contrasted starkly with their refusal to make use of it in their own colonial territories.¹²⁵ Statements such as that by British Employment Secretary Noel-Baker, who described “tube wells, bulldozers, chemical manures, industrial plants and tractors” as “the very armoury of freedom in our present age”, and emphasized the invaluable role of the ILO in this regard, were rejected by many speakers from independent Asian countries as plain hypocritical.¹²⁶ The critics assumed, rightly, that the colonial powers’ inhibitions about taking advantage of the TAP sprang from the exposure to external eyes that it would entail, and above all from the “double standards” which continued to exist with regard to social policy and the enforcement of ILO standards, as India’s Government representative Reddy pointed out.¹²⁷ Despite the criticism, however, the attitude of the metropolises remained unchanged throughout most of the 1950s. The colonial powers

viewed technical assistance delivered by international organizations as one means among others of securing prestige in Asia and maintaining a level of influence there after the end of colonial rule (although bilateral assistance was always preferable in their eyes),¹²⁸ but did not see any necessity to open their remaining territories to this kind of assistance.

Aversion to the TAP was strongest where Africa was concerned. At the end of the 1940s, the colonial powers began sounding out various possibilities for inter-colonial cooperation as an alternative to UN involvement in Africa. The one thing they all had in common was a desire to construct the strongest possible “barrier against UN interference in Africa”.¹²⁹ As differences in colonial doctrines and a deep-rooted suspicion of each other made political alliances between the colonial powers difficult, the first forms of inter-colonial cooperation were of a “technical” nature. As a result, the ILO was one of the first international agencies forced to stand by and watch as the colonial powers set up institutions in Africa with the obvious aim of making the ILO’s activities appear superfluous. In 1948 government representatives from Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, the South African Union and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland met in Jos, Nigeria, for the first in a series of Inter-African Labour Conferences (IALCs) which, starting the following year, took place under the auspices of the Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa (CCTA). The IALCs passed recommendations pertaining to labour and the social sector in the manner of the ILC, so that, in effect, the ILO was faced in Africa with a parallel structure that was also developing principles for and coordinating activities in the field of technical assistance.¹³⁰ Until well into the 1950s the Office attempted to sell the advantages of the TAP for Africa to the colonial powers, but to no avail. The attitude of the rulers of African colonies was summed up by the member of the CO who quipped: “We say: only if Member States cannot do it themselves, and we can!”¹³¹ Technical assistance – as offered by the ILO – was rejected by CCTA countries as undue interference in internal affairs. The one thing the ILO would be allowed to do, as another British official conceded, was “to supplement what we are already doing in our own territories”.¹³² As a consequence, the awarding of study grants was, for a long time, the only area in which the ILO even partly succeeded in putting TAP funds to work in the colonies.¹³³ Taking stock in 1956, the head of the Office’s NMT Department concluded soberly that “the extent to which ILO technical assistance in African non-metropolitan territories has been sought has been somewhat of a disappointment”.¹³⁴

One result of the African powers’ refusal to accept technical assistance from the ILO was a strong regional imbalance in the Organization’s operational activities. Between 1950 and 1959, a mere 8 per cent of total TAP expenditure went into Africa. The main beneficiaries of ILO projects during this period were countries in Asia, with 30 per cent of funds going to that

region, followed by Latin America and the Middle East with 25 per cent each.¹³⁵

Behind these figures, however, lurked a deeper discrepancy which more or less summed up the paradox of the ILO's relationship to the development projects of the African powers in the late colonial period. At the same time as the thinking behind the ILO's development concept demolished the barriers between colonies and independent territories, it reinforced them in other ways. As the colonial powers refused to allow the ILO to test its universalistic model of development in the colonies, the colonies became, to an even greater extent in some respects than they had been during the reform phase after the war, an area where separate laws and standards applied. Because the universalistic aspect of the integrated approach to development coloured the colonial work of the International Labour Office so strongly, but the hostility of the colonial powers prevented it from actually being put into practice, the ILO's colonial activities fell into a kind of vacuum. Although this did not mean that the colonial powers' own development efforts were not sometimes guided – voluntarily or as a result of gentle pressure from the ILO – by ILO principles, it did mean that an anti-universalistic principle, the determination of the colonial rulers to retain the right to decide the fate of the peoples under their power, unobserved by the rest of the world, probably triumphed over the universalism championed by the ILO. This fundamental tension between universalistic theory and the necessity of facing the realities of the late colonial period would run through the Office's colonial work until well into the 1950s. In this respect, the decade marked for the ILO a tough period of struggle for influence in the remaining colonial territories. It was a struggle which the Organization, given its exposed position in the global political conflict – first dependent on the Western camp and then, following the accession of the Soviet Union in 1954, a veritable battlefield in the clash of the systems – had to fight with great political skill. The problems it experienced in convincing the colonial powers of the benefits of the TAP for their territories were just one indicator of the stony road which the ILO would have to travel to gain acceptance for the universalistic character of its model.

5

At Arm's Length: The ILO and Late Colonial Social Policy

The resistance which the ILO's efforts to extend the blessings of the TAP to the remaining colonies met at the end of the 1950s was one of many indicators that the Organization's colonial work was heading for a cul-de-sac after the enthusiasm and activity of the reform period of 1944–48 and the successful introduction of the Programme. During the 1950s, the colonial powers generally preferred not to expose their development efforts to too much scrutiny from international organizations. Although the ILO had provided them, during the war and immediately afterwards, with concepts and legitimacy for the development projects which they hoped would strengthen their control over the colonies, by the 1950s their doors in Africa were firmly locked to the Organization. It was not until the tide began to turn against the continuation of colonial rule in Africa on the international, metropolitan and colonial levels that the colonial powers relaxed their defensive attitude towards ILO activities on the continent.

In the meantime, the Office battled valiantly to maintain a say in the way colonial social policy should progress. For political reasons, it tried to avoid direct confrontation with the colonial powers on the issue. Initiatives designed to increase the ILO's access to the colonies seldom came from the Office itself, but were the result of the changing balance of power at the level of the Organization. This awarded even greater significance to the reactivation in 1951 of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, which for years served as the Office's only means of taking part in the debates on the design of colonial social policy.

The lull after reform: the colonial work of the ILO in the first years under David Morse

The reform years of the war and its immediate aftermath having passed, interest in colonial issues had cooled somewhat by the time David Morse took up office. Unlike those previous years, when colonial matters had regularly made it on to the agendas of the ILC and Governing Body meetings,

and Recommendations and Conventions had been debated and adopted, now the NMTs had been nudged out of the spotlight. The initial phase of activity had tapered off and the work that followed occupied a much less visible position. Colonial issues were now primarily the responsibility of the CEACR which met separately from the ILC and behind closed doors, and whose reports formed only a minor part of the annual Conference discussions. Most of the Conventions and Recommendations dealt with and adopted by the Conference after 1947 were hardly relevant to the colonies anyway, as the “colonial clause” in the ILO Constitution had survived Philadelphia intact, with the result that the extension of regular norms to the colonies remained a matter for the colonial powers alone to decide.

Another factor which enabled the colonial powers to keep colonial debates to a minimum after 1947 was the fact that before the first meeting of the COESP that year they had managed, by asserting their influence in the Governing Body, to reduce its responsibilities to providing advice on the drafting of the Conventions of that year only, and successfully prevented it from being mandated to report at regular intervals on the application of these instruments.¹ One result of this very restrictive definition of the duties of the COESP was that it was not convened again until the end of 1951, five years after its first meeting. As a consequence, the colonial question was shrouded in relative silence after 1947, a silence interrupted only by the occasional anti-colonial onslaught from India or one of the slowly increasing number of other post-colonial members. The veil of silence hung most conspicuously over the African colonies. While the Asian, Middle Eastern and Oceanic colonial territories were, at least at a regional level, directly incorporated into the structure of the Organization via the field offices set up after 1949, Africa was, initially, out on a limb.

The absence in Morse’s first years of any real diplomatic efforts by the Office to change this situation and to breathe new life into the ILO’s colonial work was attributable not least to Morse himself. Attempts to increase ILO activities in Africa were not high on the list of priorities of the new Director-General, whose main interest was in getting the TAP established. For this he needed the support of the Governing Body, whose Chairman, Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, was British and on which France, Belgium and the Netherlands – three other colonial powers – had permanent seats. Morse could not and did not want to risk losing the support of these nations during the formative phase of the TAP. If necessary, colonial issues would just have to wait, especially in view of the fact that the colonial powers, Britain in particular, had made it clear to Morse when he took up office that they were not prepared to give the ILO much latitude in this particular field. A few weeks after his arrival in Geneva, for instance, under pressure from Myrddin-Evans, Morse postponed until further notice an ILO mission to West Africa which the Director of the NMT Department, David Belloch, had proposed for the purposes of a general investigation into the social situation there.² Belloch

tried to convince Morse that the Office urgently needed to pay more attention to the problems of the African continent, pointing out that all the indications were that Africa was undergoing a process of rapid socio-economic change, the adverse effects of which it was the ILO's duty to alleviate, as Morse had recently said of Asia. He could not help thinking, he wrote, that Morse's hesitancy in this regard stemmed from his placing above all else his desire for a problem-free relationship with the colonial powers. Although he acknowledged the "complexity of the political issues involved in this whole question", he asked Morse to treat the matter with the necessary urgency, arguing that the effects of the ILO's work in Africa needed to be felt by the living, not just by future generations.³ Morse let two months elapse before answering, and in his response merely confirmed his receipt of the letter and thanked his head of department in vague terms for the "healthy" attitude to his work that had been evident from his correspondence.⁴

In his first years in office in particular, Morse demonstrated on numerous occasions that he was willing to bow to the demands of the colonial powers – a good example being the two personnel matters which arose in 1949. In the first, Myrddin-Evans managed to dissuade Morse from recruiting an African member of staff to the NMT Department by arguing that the kind of approach to colonial affairs that an African would necessarily take could easily lead to the "politicisation" of the section.⁵ A few days later, Morse and Myrddin-Evans corresponded about an even more important staffing matter. David Blesloch, the head of the NMT Department, would reach retirement age that year, and Myrddin-Evans told Morse outright that the position had to be filled by a Briton, or at least by a representative of the colonial powers who fully appreciated "the practical implications" of the duties attached to the post. He openly warned the Director-General not to give in to pressure exerted on him to appoint, on "sentimental and perhaps even on psychological grounds...someone from a non-colonial power".⁶ Obediently, Morse appointed the candidate suggested to him by Myrddin-Evans and the British employers' association: Robert Gavin, a Scot.⁷

Unlike his predecessors Benson and Blesloch, Gavin was an external candidate and did not have a career in the Office behind him. At the time of his nomination he was Secretary-General of the West Indian Committee, a type of chamber of commerce for Britain's Caribbean possessions. The fact that Gavin came from an employers' background (his positions included membership of the administrative committee of the Colonial Employers Federation) was another clear sign of the direction in which Morse was moving.⁸ Effectively, the new head of the NMT Department had been selected from the very group which in previous years had been the most hostile to the extension of the ILO's involvement in colonial affairs. Gavin himself had taken part in the ILC sessions of 1945, 1946 and 1947, and in the Asian Regional Conference of 1947 as a colonial policy adviser to the British Employers' delegation, and had on various occasions defended the latter's

largely obstructionist position in plenary sessions. From Gavin, therefore, the colonial powers had little to fear. Unlike his predecessors and most of his colleagues in the UN secretariat, the Scot was a man entirely to their taste.

In his first years on the job, Gavin lived up to the expectations of his intercessors. He advised the Office to reject the invitation of a UN committee to take part in a fact-finding commission into the social unrest in Port Harcourt (Nigeria) in 1949,⁹ remarking to Morse that there was no reason to alienate the CO unnecessarily, or to give it cause for suspicion and alarm. Apart from anything else, he said, he believed the trouble in Nigeria to be more a dispute between rival trade unions than “real social unrest”, as Nigerian labour legislation could only be described as exemplary.¹⁰ Asked by Morse how he viewed the future role of the ILO in Africa in general, Gavin answered: “That we have a role to play I have no doubt, that we can do much to improve conditions there, I am certain; but I am equally sure that this is not the occasion upon which to try our fledgling wings.”¹¹

Morse and Gavin agreed, during their first years, that it was unwise to test the colonial powers’ willingness to cooperate. They both felt that extreme caution was called for and that the best thing to do was to question the circumstances under which they should offer their help.¹² As a result, the Office’s strategy was tacitly to involve the colonies in planning for the TAP, and thus to emphasize the “technical”, largely “apolitical” nature of the ILO’s colonial work. However, as already discussed, it did so without much success.

This attitude of caution also coloured the ILO’s relationship with the UN and that organization’s activities in the colonial sector. Morse did not want the ILO to get caught up in a UN agenda which the colonial powers classed as too “political”, particularly in the light of the Organization’s position within the Western camp and its resulting dependence on the good will of the colonial powers. As a result, the Office’s line on colonial matters was to act only in close coordination with the metropolises. This set the ILO very clearly apart from the other subdivisions of the UN that were concerned with colonial issues. In a letter to UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie at the end of 1948, for example, Morse responded with the utmost hesitation to the UN’s request for help in obtaining information to be used by its Special Committee.¹³ The Office’s lack of cooperation on colonial issues was a constant source of irritation to UN officials, especially at the beginning of Morse’s time in office. When Wilfrid Benson returned to New York after a trip to Geneva in 1949, he declared himself to be appalled at the state of the Office’s colonial work. He found it paradoxical that the only UN specialized agency to have its own “colonial section” could not generate better results. The assistance that the Office had offered to the Trusteeship Council and his department so far had been “of a very meagre character”. The ILO’s only apparent concern with regard to its relationship with the

UN seemed to be to maintain its autonomy. The impression he had received in Geneva was that putting into practice the principles of the UN Charter and the Declaration of Philadelphia was something the Office had pushed on to the back burner where the colonies were concerned. In particular, he accused the heads of the ILO of being so preoccupied with the problems of the developing countries that they had entirely lost sight of the continuing phenomenon of colonialism. Africa in particular, where there was no change in sight to this form of political rule, had all but disappeared from the Office's radar. Benson believed that the ILO risked losing the expertise it had built up on colonial issues, concluding scathingly that the help the Office was providing to ECOSOC in the colonial sector was hardly an illustration of the ILO's competence, "even in such matters as the application of its own Conventions".¹⁴

More and more often, representatives of the UN began to criticize openly what they saw as the ILO's excessive benevolence towards the colonial powers. The UN was particularly disapproving of the fact that the Organization clearly extended its policy of "appeasement" to States such as Portugal and South Africa, countries whose policies of racial discrimination had been condemned sharply within the UN.¹⁵ A speech by Benson's deputy, Arnold Kunst, at the ILO's ARC in 1950 eventually led to open conflict between the two organizations. Responding indirectly to the implications of the Office's position, Kunst had asked for the UN to be allowed to speak for the dependent territories at ILO conferences as representatives of their interests.¹⁶ Wilfred Jenks, to whom Morse had by now given sole responsibility within the Cabinet for both colonial issues and relations with the UN, responded to these "insults" in a furious letter to Martin Hill, the head of the division which dealt with political trusteeship matters in the UN secretariat. Jenks made it clear that he would not tolerate such initiatives "which do infinite damage to the interests both of the UN and the ILO" any more. He explicitly emphasized "that it is the policy of the ILO only to proceed with its work on non-self-governing territories with the full agreement of all powers concerned".¹⁷ For Benson, this served only to confirm that the UN and the ILO had a real "conflict in policy". He believed that the "gentle" approach to the colonial powers, including South Africa and Portugal, which the ILO was taking would inevitably lead, sooner or later, to the Organization's colonial policy being "dictated by the most reactionary nations". Jenks's sensitivity about the issue was probably a result, Benson guessed, of his "feeling of guilt on this very subject".¹⁸ Whether this was the case or not, the resulting animosity nipped working relations between the ILO and the UN in the field of colonial activities in the bud, and they would remain chilly for many years to come.

New initiatives

The UN was not the only critic of the Office's colonial work after 1948. The Governing Body, too, soon voiced its concern about the guarded course Morse

was steering on colonial issues. Along with India and the growing group of countries taking a critical stance on colonialism, the most vocal proponents of a more rigorous approach to the colonial realities of the post-war period, especially in Africa, were the members of the Workers' group. An important factor in this trend was the break-up of the WFTU in January 1949 and the foundation, immediately afterwards, of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).¹⁹

The (renewed) splitting of the international trade union movement into a Western-oriented, decidedly anti-communist camp on the one hand and the rest of the WFTU, which now looked exclusively to Moscow for guidance, on the other gave the work of both federations a much more clearly anti-colonial slant. Between 1945 and 1949 the voices in the united WFTU which had initially criticized the policies of the colonial powers had been almost completely neutralized by the brewing East–West conflict. The Cold War strengthened the tendency of the British, French, Dutch and Belgian trade union associations to stand up for the policies of their respective governments,²⁰ and the Soviet trade unions could not and did not attempt to form an effective counterweight to this as their main priority was to secure the unity of the WFTU. For this reason, right until the end of the WFTU, the Soviet trade unions refrained from engaging in any form of ostentatious anti-colonial propaganda. As for the non-European associations, they had hardly had a voice in the WFTU. The founding of the ICFTU, against the backdrop of the battle of the systems, triggered a contest between the new Confederation and the remnants of the WFTU, which comprised the state socialist associations and some communist-oriented Western European trade union federations (the most important being the French CGT), for the favour of the non-European trade unions.

If it were to have any chance against the WFTU in Asia and Africa, the ICFTU had to strengthen its anti-colonial profile. Another important factor pushing it in this direction was the influence of the powerful US trade union federation, the AFL. For the AFL, which had never been part of the WFTU and had been the driving force behind the creation of the ICFTU, international trade union cooperation was good for one thing: fighting communism.²¹ The increase in the severity of its criticism of colonialism at the beginning of the 1950s was primarily the result of this understanding of its role. The AFL disapproved strongly of the colonial involvement of the metropolitan umbrella organizations, especially that of the second pillar of the ICFTU, the British TUC, which worked closely with the CO and the colonial administrations in promoting the growth of the young trade union movement in the colonies.²² An informal alliance quickly sprang up within the ICFTU between the AFL and the trade union associations from the developing countries, which soon began to be reflected in its actions and statements.²³ The TUC and other metropolitan associations were forced to give in to some of these demands, which as time went by became more

and more insistent. As they had their hands full just trying to keep the influence of the AFL to a minimum in the colonies themselves, the ICFTU's criticism of colonialism in general was allowed to grow unchecked.²⁴

At the beginning of the 1950s, these developments increasingly began to be felt in the Workers' group within the Governing Body, most of whose members were drawn from the ICFTU.²⁵ The group launched initiative after initiative to breathe new life into the ILO's colonial work. The Workers, who had been relatively indifferent towards the issue after the end of the reform debates following the Philadelphia Conference, now returned to being the most vocal proponents of integrating the colonies more firmly into the ILO's work.

Their first proposal, in 1952, aimed at improving the way the colonies were represented within the Organization's political bodies. The Second World Congress of the ICFTU in Milan the previous year had adopted a resolution which called upon the ILO to "offer associate membership to non-self-governing countries and give them the opportunity to ratify ILO conventions in their own name".²⁶ Sir Alfred Roberts, the spokesman of the Workers' group in the Governing Body, took this resolution as an opportunity to inform David Morse at length of the Workers' dissatisfaction with the ILO's colonial work. Roberts criticized the fact that the Organization's attitude to the non-self-governing territories had so far been "much more conservative than [that of] the United Nations or other specialized agencies", and suggested that relations between the colonies and the ILO should be institutionalized. As the optional consultation of colonial advisers prescribed by the ILO Constitution was "a meagre substitute for true representation", the Organization should allow delegations from the colonies to take part in the Conference as "associate members" with no voting rights, as was the case with other UN agencies.²⁷

The Workers' group's second proposal was to increase the obligations of the colonial powers with regard to the implementation of ILO standards. The Workers wanted the metropolises' duty to report on the application of Conventions to be extended to Recommendations too, and called for politically advanced colonies to be given the right to decide for themselves on the ratification of ILO standards, so as, step by step, to make the Organization's Conventions truly universal.²⁸

The deep significance the Workers' group attached to these issues was made clear by ICFTU Secretary-General Oldenbroek when he called upon the individual member federations in 1953 to exert pressure on their governments and on the International Labour Office to secure the success of the proposals, asking them to emphasize that "the ILO will not have a really universal character as long as the non-self-governing territories are unable to participate directly in its activities". If the proposals were rejected, which Oldenbroek considered likely in the light of prevailing attitudes in the Office and the Governing Body, the ICFTU leader told his members to

make clear "that the workers group will not be able to accept such a solution which reinforces the status quo and which is in fact a refusal to meet a fundamental demand of the international free trade union movement".²⁹

Despite the importance attached to it by the ICFTU, however, the Workers' initiative failed.³⁰ Morse's statement on it to the Governing Body in November 1953 was full of concessions to the colonial powers, which feared that associate members from the colonies would turn the ILC into an anti-colonial tribunal, and also rejected point blank the prospect of any further increase in their own accountability. Morse countered the accusation that the ILO was backward in comparison to the UN by pointing out there was "nothing sacrosanct in the expression 'associate member' itself". The only thing he suggested was that more use than previously be made of existing provisions concerning the consultation of advisers from the NMTs. Morse's main argument was that all that ultimately mattered was the effectiveness of the methods used to bring the colonies more securely into the orbit of international cooperation, and he asked members to look beyond the constitutional side of the problem. All the objectives set out in the Workers' group's petition could also be achieved through a firm commitment to the TAP, in which the ILO made no distinction between underdeveloped independent countries and NMTs and which it offered equally to both. Morse argued that, under these circumstances, specifically "colonial" Conventions might even serve their purpose better than regular ILO standards and might well have a more universalizing effect, precisely because they could be applied progressively, thus making the road to progress a gentler and more considered one.³¹

Even those who accepted these premises could hardly fail to notice that Morse's arguments were rooted less in reality than in optimism. Most of the ILO's "colonial Conventions" were still awaiting ratification by the colonial powers, meaning that their universalizing effect was yet to be felt.³² Moreover, as discussed earlier, none of the colonial powers were prepared to let their colonial territories enjoy the benefits of the TAP. Morse's reference to the universalizing effects of the TAP was just as rhetorical, then, as his invocation of a "close liaison" between the ILO and regional inter-colonial bodies such as the CCTA, which at this point was little more than wishful thinking. Morse was also expressing hope rather than anything else when he claimed that "the role which further technical and other meetings in these areas, under the auspices of the ILO, can play in bringing internationally accepted principles to bear on the solution of local and regional problems and in canalising strongly felt desires for social progress is fully recognised".³³ The Office was only too well aware by now of the colonial powers' fundamental unwillingness to let the ILO become more involved in colonial issues. Relations with the CCTA were anything but good, and the arrangements that were in place had been born of nothing more than necessity and the ILO's powerlessness.

The long road to Africa

“Not the slightest indication of willingness”: the debate surrounding an African field office

Nowhere did the ILO face more barriers than in Africa. All the signals sent out by the colonial powers indicated that any “interference” in matters on the African continent by the ILO or other international organizations was entirely unwelcome. The ILO had to fight a whole series of difficult battles in the course of the 1950s before it managed to get even one foot in the door to Africa. The metropolises’ unwillingness to take advantage of the TAP for the African colonies was just one of many indicators, or symptoms, of a general aversion to international involvement.

This was illustrated particularly clearly in 1952 when the Office first began to try to convince the colonial powers of the idea of an African field office, which, like those in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, would be used mainly to coordinate technical assistance programmes on the African continent.

The original initiative came out of the second meeting of the COESP in Geneva in December 1951, where one of the points on the agenda was the creation of a future programme of work for the ILO in the colonial sector. The COESP recommended to the Governing Body that a field office be set up on the model of those already in existence “to enable a more direct approach to be made to problems on the spot and to provide a more direct link between the I.L.O. and the peoples of African territories”.³⁴ The proposal was welcomed by the Office, which saw a field office as a good opportunity, indeed an essential precondition, to extending the TAP to Africa. Wilfred Jenks also saw the initiative as an opportune chance to demonstrate “that we are acting effectively in respect of African questions at a time when the effectiveness of our action in non-metropolitan territories is being increasingly challenged”. Jenks was under no illusion, however, about the probable reaction of the colonial powers to any venture by the Office in this direction. He therefore suggested that the Office itself initially try to remain in the background, and that the Workers’ group be charged with raising the proposal in the Governing Body.³⁵ Once the Workers had done so, the Director-General was mandated by the Governing Body to begin an investigation into the possibilities for an African field office.³⁶

As expected, the initiative was not received with much enthusiasm by the colonial powers. Duncan Watson, the official responsible for social issues within the CO, confided to Gavin even before the meeting of the Governing Body that he was concerned about the COESP’s resolutions and the idea of an extension of the TAP to Africa, and asked the Office to proceed “very carefully”.³⁷ Watson let it be known that even if the British were to agree to the proposal – which he left open – there were still the other members of the CCTA to think about, who were all, in general, extremely apprehensive of

ILO activities in Africa.³⁸ As it turned out, this distinction between Britain and the other members of the CCTA was a valid one. The CO was, admittedly, angry enough about the COESP's claim that the CCTA and the Inter African Labour Bureau it planned to set up did not represent an alternative to the ILO as the former "had neither independence nor any real links with the people of the territories", which "only the ILO could appropriately provide".³⁹ Watson wrote to Myrddin-Evans that under no circumstances could the Government of the United Kingdom accept that "any machinery created by administering powers in Africa is ipso facto to be suspect as not designed to promote the progress and wellbeing of African peoples".⁴⁰ At the same time, however, the British position differed from that of the other CCTA members in that the CO saw its role as being to mediate "between any undue and ill-considered intervention by the ILO in Africa and any excessive 'exclusiveness' on the part of the other administering powers". Watson believed that rejecting the COESP's report outright would trigger reactions within the Governing Body "which will make it more difficult for us to ensure that the proposals are pursued in a practical and sensible way and that the outcome is acceptable to the administering powers in Africa". In 1952 the CO acknowledged that the ILO's interest in Africa was growing and that this was actually as much a result of necessity as of the misplaced ambition of its staff. Britain was aware of the "general atmosphere" in which Office staff were working and recognized that they were exposed both to the political influences inevitable in an organization with a tripartite structure and to pressure from the UN. However, it hoped that the ILO's energies could be directed into "proper, helpful and acceptable channels".⁴¹

While Britain thus pleaded for a firm but diplomatic approach, the other CCTA powers were more categorical in their rejection of the ILO's plans. The French, perhaps, were just sceptical, but the Belgians, Portuguese, Rhodesians and above all the South African Government simply would not hear of any direct involvement in Africa by international organizations in general.⁴² At the CCTA meeting in Cape Town at the beginning of 1952, South Africa suggested that the colonial powers form a united front in the Governing Body against an extension of the TAP to Africa, an idea which received general support. South Africa mistrusted the Office and believed, as a South African representative in London remarked, that the ILO should try "to let members of the CCTA and the IALI [Inter-African Labour Institute] manage their own affairs".⁴³

As a result, the responses Robert Gavin received regarding the outlook for an African field office were uniformly negative. London agreed to try to discourage the Office right from the start from pursuing the idea of forming a direct link between the ILO and the colonial populations:

The opportunity should be taken of indicating to Mr. Gavin our complete disapproval of the idea that the ILO or any other international body

can best serve the colonial peoples by setting itself up as an independent third party with the object of intervening in the relationship between the colonial territories and the metropolitan Government, or that the ILO can associate itself in some ill-defined way with the non-metropolitan territories outside the formal relationship that exists with the Member States responsible for those territories.⁴⁴

The only semblance of a concession to be obtained from London lay in vague expressions of a basic willingness to work more closely with the ILO in Africa. Gavin was told in no uncertain terms that the British saw no "practical need" for a field office, and all he could do was to try to warn them not to underestimate "the political forces behind this suggestion".⁴⁵

The hostility of the CCTA States towards "interference" by the ILO was so strong that it led on occasion to serious tensions between the colonial powers themselves.⁴⁶ In 1953, for instance, the British were reproached bitterly by the French for permitting an ILO mission to West Africa to investigate, among other things, the explosive issue of industrial relations and union freedoms.⁴⁷ France had been as good as forced to open its territories to the mission, and was so incensed by the Office's critical findings that Paris attempted to get the CCTA States to address a joint letter of protest to Geneva. It took all the effort and skill the British could muster to dissuade them from the idea.⁴⁸

Gavin's West Africa mission was just one more glaring illustration of the constraints under which the ILO laboured at this time in its activities in Africa.⁴⁹ When Gavin took stock at the end of the year, his conclusions were sober. He reported in a letter to Morse that "in no case has there been the slightest indication that any of them [Britain, France, Belgium] would give any support to the idea of establishing an ILO field office in Africa. In fact, it is certain that any proposal to do so would be strongly opposed by all three and by the South African and Portuguese governments as well."⁵⁰ And with that the issue was shelved, for the time being at least.⁵¹

Predictably, the Workers' group was not prepared to sit back and simply accept this result. In the run-up to the third meeting of the COESP at the end of 1953 in Lisbon, the Workers proposed to the Governing Body a whole new series of initiatives aimed at integrating the colonies institutionally into the ILO's work.⁵² Once again, the Office's policy of tiptoeing around the colonial powers became a target of the group's criticism. Observers from the international federations of trade unions were particularly irritated by the strategy the Office adopted in Lisbon, where it not only attempted, successfully, to dissuade members of the COESP from launching a new initiative on the subject of an African field office, but also took pains to defend the Portuguese hosts and the South African representatives on the COESP against criticism of their policies.

The Workers' group was quite right in thinking that the Office's basic line on how to treat the colonial powers had not changed much at all. The Office continued to insist that the ILO's work had to be coordinated with the wishes and desires of the colonial powers, and was determined to integrate into its activities all the powers represented in Africa. Wilfred Jenks's discussions with the Portuguese dictator Salazar on the fringes of the COESP meeting were a prime example of this approach. Jenks did everything he could to obtain Portugal's cooperation by attempting to convince Salazar of the benefits of a "positive policy of international action". If Portugal ratified the ILO's colonial Conventions and opened its African territories up to the technical assistance offered by the Organization, it would thereby strengthen not only Portugal's own position, but that of all the colonial powers against the anti-colonial tendencies now manifesting themselves in every international body. Jenks used the imminent accession of the Soviet Union to the ILO as another good reason for strengthening active cooperation between the Western countries, and tried to make the most of the fact that the ILO's entire approach up to this point, unlike that of the UN, had been "based essentially on an attempt to act with the fullest co-operation of the colonial powers". This last point at least was fully acknowledged by Salazar, who told Jenks to make sure to continue in future to defend the Organization's autonomy from the UN at all costs. Apart from this, however, Jenks failed to obtain any real concessions from the Portuguese dictator, and could only hope that the exchange had made a positive contribution to the long-term prospects of the ILO's plans.⁵³

At the same time, the Lisbon meeting made clear to the Office that it could not continue to ignore the criticism voiced by the Workers' group. The observers from the international trade union federations had caused a stir in the Portuguese capital by lodging an open protest during the meeting of the COESP against the ILO's lack of involvement in the African continent.⁵⁴ To prevent the Office from being put in such an unpleasant position again, Jenks believed it had to take the initiative itself so as at least to be able to point to some modest short-term success. With the authorization of the Director-General, Jenks travelled immediately after the Lisbon meeting to London, Paris and Brussels to campaign among colonial politicians for an agreement concerning the ILO's future policy on Africa, which was to be based essentially on the proposals put forward by the Workers' group in the Governing Body. Cautiously, Jenks tried to make clear to the British, French and Belgians that an agreement of this nature, which he argued would be in the colonial powers' own best interests with a view to avoiding future conflicts, could not be reached "unless the metropolitan powers felt able to make a substantial contribution towards securing it by offering a positive programme".⁵⁵ The cornerstones of this programme were the long-awaited ratification by France and Belgium of the colonial Conventions of 1947, the strengthening of colonial representation within the colonial powers'

Conference delegations and the acceptance that politically advanced territories would be allowed to send their own delegations of observers to the ILC. Finally, Jenks suggested that, as a gesture of good will, the next meeting of the COESP should be held on African territory.

After the consultations were over, Jenks declared himself to be cautiously optimistic about the initiative's chances of success, although he did admit that "the chickens are of course still very, very far from being hatched".⁵⁶ And indeed, the months that followed showed that the colonial powers were not, in fact, ready for a formal agreement. The only progress David Morse could speak of to the critical groups in the Governing Body took the form of an agreement between the CCTA and the ILO that the director of the planned Inter-African Labour Institute (ILI) in Bamako (French West Africa) would function officially as a correspondent of the ILO. In fact, although this was the arrangement,⁵⁷ the obvious desire of the CCTA States "to keep the ILO at arm's length", as Robert Gavin put it some years later, and the inability of the CCTA to implement the principles "which the ILO regards as basic and elementary" meant that this "collaboration" would never have a chance to bear fruit.⁵⁸ It simply became another indication of how slim the ILO's chances were in the first half of the 1950s of influencing development on the ground even through an emphatically apolitical, purely "technical" approach. In a report Morse wrote at the end of 1954 concerning the ILO's policy on Africa, he was forced to admit that the Office's hands were tied.⁵⁹ In the difficult and controversial debates which followed the Soviet Union's accession to the Organization, Morse was more dependent than ever on the support of the colonial powers. Britain and France in particular were invaluable mediators during a period in which the American Government seemed to be intent on confrontation.⁶⁰ It therefore made sense not to risk the support the Office received from London and Paris at this difficult time by being too belligerent when it came to colonial matters.

A new drive for change

The next year, 1955, however, marked a change in the Office's Africa policy in the course of which these political considerations were cast to the wind. Once again, the workers were the driving force behind events. The turning point came at the third meeting of the COESP, which took place at the end of the year in Dakar (French West Africa). In the run-up to the meeting the representatives of the ICFTU took the initiative in the Governing Body and demanded that the COESP be transformed from a committee of experts into a representative, tripartite body. Among the factors behind this demand were the disputes within the ICFTU regarding its position on colonial issues in Africa, which would reach a new climax in the middle of the decade. According to the AFL-CIO, the ICFTU was doing less and less justice to its role in tackling communism in Africa. This accusation was directed primarily at the TUC and its policy of separating itself off from the other unions,



Delegates are received by the French colonial administrators at the opening session of the COESP meeting in Dakar, 1955

which in the view of the AFL–CIO the ICFTU was not doing enough to counter. The Americans believed that Africa was where the battle of the systems would next be played out, in the very near future at that, and the AFL–CIO now began to use threats to strengthen its demands that the ICFTU develop a clearer anti-colonial profile. If need be, the AFL–CIO would take independent action in Africa rather than wait for the ICFTU to get its act together. This warning was taken very seriously at the ICFTU headquarters in Brussels, as it essentially threw the whole future of the Confederation's work into question, especially from a financial point of view. The secretariat of the ICFTU, the TUC and other associations from countries with colonial possessions again found themselves under pressure to give in to the AFL's demands for concessions.⁶¹

The ICFTU now attempted in the Governing Body to use the ILO to extend its own influence in Africa, and in doing so eventually dragged the Office in the same direction. When its proposal to turn the COESP into a tripartite body was defeated in the Governing Body, which went so far as to decide, in the light of experience in Lisbon, not to admit any observers whatsoever from the trade union associations in future, the Workers' group decided it was time for more drastic action.

The ICFTU threatened to organize protests outside the meetings of the COESP if its demands were not taken into consideration. This was a prospect the French were keen to avoid, especially as they were already worried enough about the gathering, given their problems in Algeria.⁶² Eventually, Paris weakened and asked the Office to mediate. Jenks's compromise solution was that although no observers would be admitted, two representatives each from the Workers' and Employers' sides could be nominated ad hoc who would then join the Committee as full members. This proposal eventually gained the support of all concerned,⁶³ altering the strictly "expert" character of the Committee for the first time. There was more to come, however. As soon as he arrived in Dakar, the Swiss representative of the Workers' group, Jean Mōri, made it clear that the ICFTU intended to treat the arrangement as nothing more than a stepping stone, and launched a series of initiatives aimed at seeking "methods of bringing about closer association of NMTs with the ILO".⁶⁴ At the top of his agenda was the demand that the more "representative" restructuring of the COESP that had taken place in Dakar on a provisional basis be made permanent. The ICFTU called for the Committee of Experts to be turned into an African equivalent of the tripartite Asian Advisory Committee (AAC) which had been set up at the beginning of the 1950s. This was an ingenious proposal as it had further-reaching implications than a mere change in the size and structure of the COESP: an African Advisory Committee (AFAC) would incorporate both the African colonial territories and the independent States of the region under the same auspices, and thus, in a roundabout way, effectively formally integrate the colonies into the Organization. The second demand brought the idea of an African field office back on to the agenda, and the third was for an African Regional Conference (AFRC) to be held as soon as possible.⁶⁵ Once again, the "inactivism" of the ILO in Africa was criticized sharply.⁶⁶ Not long afterwards, Alfred Roberts, spokesman of the Workers' group in the Governing Body, reminded Morse of the "long-standing claim for the establishment of an ILO Office in Africa". He warned the Director-General that the Workers' group regarded it as the Office's duty to extend the ILO to Africa, if necessary against the will of the colonial powers.⁶⁷

Observers such as Wilfrid Benson now believed that the position the Office was in made it all but impossible to defy the demands of the Workers' group any longer. The message Benson drew from the Dakar meeting was that "the ILO cannot afford to be outpaced in development of influence in Africa". He warned that the Organization must not underestimate the "world competition for the allegiance of the new trade unions by international forces" currently taking place, and predicted that if it did not make progress soon, the ILO would be at risk of going under.⁶⁸

The Office was temporarily overwhelmed by the new demands coming from the Workers' group and other anti-colonial elements within the ILO's membership. David Morse spoke of the challenging situation in Africa,

calling it a "slow, hard and delicate job".⁶⁹ At a Cabinet meeting, he complained about the lack of understanding shown by its critics of the difficulties the Office faced with regard to its policy on Africa. "The ILO," he stated, "cannot deal with African issues like a pressure group. It cannot overreach the realities of the political situation. There is a great need to make our constituents understand properly what the ILO is doing in Africa and this applies particularly to the workers group."⁷⁰

At the same time, the Office recognized that the approach to dealing with the colonial powers it had hitherto favoured had not brought the desired results. Robert Gavin admitted in a memorandum requested by Morse that although it had perhaps been the only "realistic" way of proceeding, on central issues such as the implementation of the TAP in Africa no real progress had actually been made. Gavin thus concluded that it would be advisable to give in to certain of the demands raised by the Workers' group and its allies, and to put pressure on the colonial powers for moderate change.⁷¹ Support for this view was provided by the meeting of the Governing Body in March 1956, at which the Government representatives of various Asian nations and the bloc of communist States declared that they too backed the Workers' demands.⁷² It was clear to all that in the medium term the Director-General had no real option other than to endorse the proposals made in Dakar. If the ILO had tried to argue against the extension of its own sphere of influence, it would have been tantamount to a public declaration of loyalty to the colonial powers. The Office decided to do whatever it had to do, but still to proceed as cautiously as possible in its treatment of the colonial powers.⁷³

Shortly afterwards, on the fringes of the ILC in 1956, Morse's envoys Wilfred Jenks and Robert Gavin held two confidential meetings with the CCTA powers. Jenks told the representatives present that the ILO was facing ever more frequent accusations that it was "the instrument of the colonial powers". In addition, the Workers' group was "increasingly restless and liable at any time to suggest far-reaching proposals", which had made the Office decide to go on the offensive before "less responsible quarters" took it upon themselves to do so. Gavin and Jenks did not try to obtain many concessions from the CCTA powers, except to ask them to agree, not immediately but in the long term, to the permanent transformation of the COESP into a tripartite African Advisory Committee (AFAC). This would be the least it would take "to convince the Governing Body that things are not static". Jenks confided that, in his personal view, none of the "radical proposals would be wise" at this stage in the game, and confirmed when asked by a French representative that by "radical proposals" he meant the immediate establishment not only of the AFAC and the Regional Conference, but also of the field office. If the powers complied with the Office's more moderate suggestions, the Office would continue to do everything it could in the future to ensure that discussions about Africa within the ILO did not turn into the "sport of political forces" but remained the preserve of those players

“which have a real stake in Africa”. None of the more far-reaching measures would be implemented until “governments themselves considered the proposals realistic”.⁷⁴

This caution was well founded in the light of the mood within the CCTA. Even after the discussions with Jenks and Gavin, the majority of the CCTA powers remained disinclined to give any ground whatsoever, on any of the issues mentioned.⁷⁵ At the same time, the view began to take hold, starting in London, that some concessions would be unavoidable. One of the British delegates in the Governing Body, Lloyd Davies, now felt “far from certain that it is practicable to keep the ILO out of Africa”.⁷⁶ Together with a small majority of the members of the Governing Body, the British voted in favour of the long-term conversion of the COESP into a tripartite body with three representatives each from the Employers’ and Workers’ groups, thus paving the way for its transformation into an African Advisory Committee.⁷⁷

The ILO’s arrival in Africa

The decision to turn the COESP into a tripartite committee marked the beginning of a process which would end in the ILO finally managing to establish itself in Africa. The COESP issue had revealed the first cracks in the united front which the colonial powers had been presenting against the ILO’s involvement there. Needless to say, the increased pressure from the international trade union movement was not the only factor behind this change. More fundamentally significant was the fact that in the early years of the decade the very foundations of colonial rule, renewed so determinedly after the war, began to crumble. The wave of nationalism sweeping the colonies shook colonial confidence in the metropolises badly. War-like conflicts such as those in Algeria and Kenya, coupled with the disappointing economic results of the colonial powers’ development offensives after the war, triggered discussions in the metropolises regarding the wisdom of continued imperial rule. Even if relinquishing their territories entirely was far from the minds of those in Paris and London – and even further from the minds of those in Brussels and Lisbon – change was in the air. France gave up its South-East Asian possessions in 1954 (out of necessity, following its defeat against the Vietminh on the battlefield of Dien Bien Phu), and shortly afterwards granted independence to its North African protectorates Morocco and Tunisia. At almost the same time, Britain handed over power in Malaya. The most significant event in Africa was the British initiation of a transfer of power south of the Sahara. Ghana, as the Gold Coast was now called under Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, was the first country to be given its independence in what were, at times, hard-bitten negotiations, and Nigeria followed soon after.⁷⁸

These developments not only provided further inspiration for nationalist movements in the remaining colonies, they also opened up new opportunities for the African and Asian States in international forums. As the Afro-Asian bloc grew, so did the force of the demands it raised within the ILO

and all the other parts of the UN system for an end to colonial rule.⁷⁹ The new strength of this group of States inevitably affected the colonial powers' approach to colonial questions. On top of this, in the mid-1950s the American Government renewed its criticism of its Western allies' colonial involvement – a response to the Soviet Union's new strategy of courting the new nations regardless of their political orientation. From Washington's point of view, the slow pace of reform and the colonial powers' apparent inability to maintain political control by peaceful means simply played into communist hands. Britain and France experienced the full force of the United States' lack of trust in their abilities when it compelled them to abandon their commando action against Nasser's Egypt during the Suez crisis at the end of 1956.⁸⁰

At the ILC in 1956 these developments culminated in attacks against the colonial powers more acrimonious than had ever previously been seen inside the ILO. With the Algerian conflict still raging, France, inevitably, came off worse than the others. What was most galling for the colonial powers, though, was the fact that US Government representatives mercilessly used this, their hour of need, to call on them not to obstruct plans for an African field office for too much longer.⁸¹ The icy calculation behind this move caused fury in the colonial metropolises, as Wilfred Jenks reported to Morse.⁸² One French representative declared himself to be dismayed by the "hatred of the colonial people against the white people and the West" he had experienced at the Conference, but equally disappointed by the fact that the United States had shown no sympathy whatsoever for the problems of the colonial powers and had joined in the banging of the anti-colonial drum.⁸³ Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans was not the only one who, looking back at the Conference, felt the kid-glove treatment the colonial powers had enjoyed up to now in the ILO, in comparison to the rest of the UN system, was coming to an end. He felt distinctly "that we are entering into a more difficult period in the ILO".⁸⁴

True enough, these events made even the Office realize that it would now have to give up its previous caution, as any further delay could do severe damage to the ILO and its future position in Africa. The Office was also concerned that things were getting so far out of control that they might be difficult to put back on the right track, which convinced it of the necessity of seizing the initiative.⁸⁵ A meeting of the ICFTU in the Ghanaian capital Accra in January 1957, marked again by harsh anti-colonial criticism, provided more impetus for the ILO to take action. The ICFTU condemned the CCTA in no uncertain terms and demanded that Africa be opened up to international organizations. It renewed calls for an ILO field office in Africa as soon as possible, and asked for speedy preparations to be made for a Regional Conference.⁸⁶

Against this background, Robert Gavin noted in a memorandum to the Director-General how prudent the Office had been in "not getting too

committed to the CCTA". He felt the new situation to be extremely serious, and advised the ILO to act quickly. "The tide [is] running strongly against them [the CCTA] and any attempt by the ILO to shore them up would react to its disadvantage."⁸⁷ This coincided with a general change in strategy on the part of the CO, which issued a memorandum at the beginning of the year that spoke in entirely new tones of the ILO's work:

The aims of the ILO are worthy, much of its technical work is first-rate, and it has considerable prestige, particularly of course among organized labour. Moreover it is not conspicuously anti-colonial or prominent, in spite of the special representation of organized labour in the Organization, among those agencies which seek to interfere in the affairs of dependent territories. We consider that we ought not to attempt to insulate our dependent territories from the Organization. ... On grounds of general principle, therefore, we are not disposed to obstruct the orderly development of ILO activities in Africa South of the Sahara.⁸⁸

The memo went on to say that in view of the growing group of Governments' and Workers' representatives that would insist on increasing the involvement of the ILO in Africa in future (and here the potential role of Ghana was highlighted), the CO had decided to make further concessions to the Organization. The strategy of trying to make the ILO's activities in Africa redundant by creating parallel structures within the CCTA could be written off as a failure. The CO recognized that "if we are not prepared to take a reasonably progressive attitude to it [the ILO], we shall lose the possibility of influencing it", and also expressed a new confidence in and sympathy for David Morse, "who (we are satisfied) does not wish to press forward at a pace faster than that at which he can carry with him at least the majority of the metropolitan countries, but who cannot appear obstructive to the development of ILO activity in Africa without being likely to lose the initiative to those who want to hasten it unduly".⁸⁹

Soon afterwards, Morse indicated to British delegates in the Governing Body that he would be agreeing to the Egyptian Government representative Said Salama's proposal to incorporate the costs of setting up an African field office into the ILO's budget for 1958. Once again, the British delegates attempted "by private pressure" and "urgent representations" to dissuade Morse from the idea,⁹⁰ but before long the first signals were received that, whatever they felt about it, London would not block the budget.⁹¹

Similar developments were observed with regard to the creation of a tripartite African Advisory Committee on the model of the one already in place in Asia. The Ministry of Labour suddenly decided that the AFAC that it had fought so bitterly to prevent might well turn out to be a "safety valve for the expression of African hopes and aspirations", just as the Asian one had, despite initial concerns, proved itself to be an "extremely good safety valve for

the letting off of steam by Asian countries".⁹² In the course of 1957 most of the other CCTA powers also came round to this new position. A British observer summarized the general feeling within the CCTA as being that things could not go on as hitherto. The only countries still putting up a fight were South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal, whose representatives wanted to know why, as "the non-African metropolitan countries knew how to run these African territories", "these other interfering busybodies [didn't] keep out and let them alone". All the other powers saw the increasing interest in African issues the Soviet Union was displaying in international forums, and the danger that, if they remained inflexible, the WFTU might get its claws into the young trade union movement in Africa, as good arguments for a change of course.⁹³

Fully aware of these considerations, at the end of October 1957, during the Governing Body meeting, David Morse invited representatives of the CCTA powers to discuss with him the future of the ILO in Africa. Morse explained to them that things had reached the stage "at which certain action is clearly necessary". He announced that a field office would be opened the following year and also revealed that he intended to set up other outposts in the new countries in Africa, starting with Accra and continuing in Khartoum (Sudan) and, later, somewhere as yet undecided on French territory. Morse informed the CCTA representatives that the meeting of the COESP at the end of 1957 would be its last one before its transformation into a tripartite AFAC. As was the case with the AAC, the AFAC's members would be all the ILO's member States in Africa, plus representatives invited by the Governing Body from those NMTs which already sent observers to the ILC (initially Nigeria and the Federations of Rhodesia and Nyasaland). The non-governmental members would be nominated by the Employers' and Workers' groups in the Governing Body. Preparations for an African Regional Conference, however, were likely to take some years, the Director-General reported. It was agreed that both the Conference and the AFAC would be limited initially to sub-Saharan Africa, and only those powers with a direct interest in the region would be allowed to participate.⁹⁴

Morse now set about getting things moving on the matter of the African Regional Conference (AFRC). As negotiations regarding the imminent independence of Nigeria progressed, it became clear that the number of African delegates to the ILC who would be increasing pressure for an African Conference was growing. More importantly, however, Morse was determined to keep this particular ball in the Office's court, in order to be able to make it clear from the start that the ILO's African activities would remain limited to the area south of the Sahara. This was because as soon as Egypt was involved, an all-African Regional Conference, like an all-African AFAC, would inevitably become an arena of anti-colonial denunciation, which Morse was keen to avoid. The Egyptian Government delegate had already demanded an all-African AFAC at the Governing Body meeting in March 1957,⁹⁵ so the colonial powers knew they would not be able to reject Morse's arguments for long, and their fear of an all-African gathering also outweighed all other

considerations.⁹⁶ Thus, when Morse presented the Office's proposals to the Governing Body in March 1958, no one was particularly surprised or even disgruntled that the plans extended to early preparations for an AFRC.

When ILO officials travelled round the colonial metropolises in January 1958 to discuss how the plans could best be implemented, they experienced no opposition. Morse and his colleagues had as few problems during their meetings in London with the labour minister Iain McLeod and members of the CO as they did in Paris, where they held talks with Labour Minister Bacon and Overseas Minister Jacquet.⁹⁷ On the contrary, as soon as it had been decided that a field office would be set up in Africa, a contest broke out among the colonial powers over where it should be located. Both the British and the French made it clear to Morse that they would like to see it situated in one of their territories. Even Brussels – where Colonial Minister Buisseret still doubted, as he admitted to Morse, whether a field office would be of any direct use to the Belgian Congo and who was still eagerly looking for the “hidden trap” behind the institution – declared its desire to play host.⁹⁸ The Portuguese had no particular intentions in this respect but were by no means dismissive either, and even issued an invitation for the first meeting of the AFAC to be held on Portuguese territory in Africa.⁹⁹ Only South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia refused to cooperate in any way.¹⁰⁰

Morse's final choice of location for the field office was Lagos, Nigeria,¹⁰¹ where it began work in January 1959.¹⁰² The same year, the AFAC met for its first meeting in the Angolan capital, Luanda, and preparations began for the first AFRC, to be held as soon as logistically possible.

On a long trip to Africa in 1959, Wilfred Jenks noted with satisfaction that the ILO's expansion into Africa now had the wide support of all the main powers represented on the continent.¹⁰³ In the light of this, the Office became less worried about accommodating and integrating them all. It continued to believe that a policy of polite but tenacious persuasion could bear fruit with Portugal in the long run, and the Portuguese Government's invitation to the AFAC was a glimmer of hope. South Africa was a different case altogether. The Office knew that Pretoria was not going to be persuaded to work more closely with the ILO, and Jenks confirmed that the South African Government's attitude to the Organization remained “essentially negative”. In view of this, he concluded that any further attempts at integration would be pointless, and the ILO would be better putting its energy into making sure that South Africa's position did not endanger the Organization's fledgling activities in Africa. Jenks was of the opinion that “if we continue to avoid serious trouble and serious obstruction by South Africa of our activities elsewhere in Africa we shall not be doing too badly”.¹⁰⁴

The Office had come to believe that the tasks awaiting the ILO in Africa were too important to be put at risk simply to avoid stepping on the toes of the last remaining opponents. This view was reinforced by the fact that now,

on the eve of African decolonization, not only were most of the colonial powers embracing the expansion of the ILO's activities in Africa, their hostility towards the TAP was also disappearing. Britain had actually begun to make use of the TAP two years earlier, and was carrying out an increasing number of technical assistance projects using ILO experts in its territories. Now the French, too, announced their intention to apply for the ILO's help for the first time for the *Communauté* that had been created in 1959.¹⁰⁵ This was significant, as French aversion to technical assistance through international agencies had been particularly strong in the past;¹⁰⁶ but now here was the President himself conveying Paris's decision to give its blessing to the ILO's activities. In a meeting Morse had with de Gaulle in 1960, the President let it be known "que moi, de Gaulle, et la France, sommes en complet accord avec votre oeuvre d'assistance technique, et vous soutiendrons dans tout ce que vous faites et ferez en Afrique française".¹⁰⁷ Even Belgium now signalled a need to make use of the ILO's technical assistance, in connection with the transfer of power Brussels was preparing in the Congo. Jenks went so far as to think that it was not unlikely that the Office would soon receive requests from Portuguese Africa.¹⁰⁸

The Office now began to look, not without some trepidation, towards the duties it would be facing in Africa. The need for and the expectations of the ILO were high, as Jenks realized on his travels through a number of African territories, in particular in the growing number of newly independent countries.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the mood in the Office was mostly one of confidence and optimism. The ILO's road into Africa had been long and stony, but there was no reason now why the Organization should not demonstrate the validity of its integrated approach to development on this continent, and provide Africa with the "tools of progress" which Morse was convinced the Organization could offer.¹¹⁰ With satisfaction, Morse also noted that, having now arrived on the African continent, the ILO could justifiably call itself "almost universal".¹¹¹ No act symbolized the firm will of the Office to integrate Africa into the sights of its universalistic model of progress better than the transformation, completed at the end of 1958, of the "Non-Metropolitan Territories Department" into a provisional "Africa Department". Under the leadership of Gavin, the Department's task was to ensure the full "integration of work relating to non-metropolitan territories with normal work of all technical Divisions in their respective fields".¹¹² The ILO had thus reached the end of its long struggle to get into Africa; also at an end was the epoch in which the Organization had divided its work into regular and colonial activities.

The experts' view: social policy in non-metropolitan territories from the perspective of the COESP, 1951–57

As a result of the resistance which the colonial powers put up for over a decade to all the ILO's efforts to exert an influence in Africa, the Office's scope

for involvement in debates regarding the development of colonial social policy was limited throughout most of the 1950s. This made the meetings of the COESP which took place between 1951 and 1957 a particularly important substitute forum.¹¹³ These gatherings prevented the ILO's colonial work after 1947 from falling into a total vacuum. Along with the Governing Body meetings, at which the COESP's reports were discussed, until 1959 when the new African Advisory Committee took up its work they were the only regular occasions on which late colonial social policy was discussed at all within the ILO. During this period the COESP was the "colonial voice" of the ILO, and its findings and recommendations formed a yardstick below the threshold of formal standard-setting against which progress in the colonial powers' social policy could be measured. This endowed the Committee's findings with particular significance, and also explains why, in comparison to the other expert bodies convened under the auspices of the ILO, the question of who should sit on the COESP was such a political issue.

"Native" experts or "real" experts: Who should sit on the COESP?

In theory, members of the COESP were chosen on the grounds of their academic knowledge or practical experience in the field of colonial social policy, and not as representatives of countries or social groups. In practice, however, the question of who should sit on the COESP was from the beginning – long before the Workers got involved with their tripartism initiative in 1955 – the result of a hard-fought battle between the various political forces in the Governing Body whose job it was to rubber-stamp the Office's nominations.

The Office had to take a large number of different demands into consideration when selecting suitable candidates.¹¹⁴ The most contentious issue was always that of the "colonial element" in the COESP. Before the first meeting of the Committee in 1947, the colonial powers had demonstrated their reluctance to comply with the demands by India and other non-European countries in the Governing Body that more African or Asian experts be nominated, and this reluctance continued throughout the life of the COESP. The metropolitan powers feared that the presence of such experts would lead to increased anti-colonial criticism and make the Committee's meetings more "political" in general. The result of these concerns was that the face of the COESP remained practically unchanged until 1955, and up to this point it was a predominantly white committee, the great majority of whose members came from a metropolitan and administrative background.¹¹⁵ The critics of the colonial powers' selection criteria suspected, rightly, that the type of expert knowledge represented on the Committee, coupled with the generally pro-colonial atmosphere, would be reflected in the COESP's findings.¹¹⁶ Out of consideration towards the colonial powers, however, the Office made nominations to the Committee only after consultation with the respective colonial ministries. Furthermore, the Office accepted, however unwillingly, the practice common in the metropolises – which actually contradicted the

whole idea of the Committee – of treating the experts as representatives of their respective countries of origin and briefing them at the relevant ministries in advance of Committee meetings.¹¹⁷ On this matter, too, the Office was keen to avoid confrontation with the colonial powers.

At the same time, however, ILO representatives campaigned doggedly in the colonial metropolises for a strengthening of the “colonial element” of the COESP. In the words of Wilfred Jenks, it was in the Office’s interests to make the Committee into an “instrument of co-operation between the various interests and races concerned with African affairs”, and so, as an “investment for the long future” and in view of the strong metropolitan bias currently prevailing, it became the Office’s “primary objective to strengthen African representation”.¹¹⁸ Robert Gavin managed to persuade France and Britain to send one “native” expert each to the meeting of 1951.¹¹⁹ On the suggestion of these two new members, the Committee recommended that same year that future meetings should make more use of native expertise.¹²⁰ However, when the recommendation reached the Governing Body in the form of a motion brought by the Workers’ group, the Governments of India and Iran and some Latin American representatives, the Portuguese delegation managed to water it down significantly. In the end, the original proposal that the Governing Body recruit “further members from non-metropolitan territories” was amended to read “further members including members from non-metropolitan territories”.¹²¹

Throughout all this, the Office clung to the hope that the colonial powers would be so keen to avoid any further politicization of the issue that they would eventually come round.¹²² Before the next meeting, in Lisbon in 1953, Robert Gavin warned the colonial bureaucracies that their inflexibility made it more likely in the medium term that the COESP would turn “into something of a much more political character on the UN model”, and thus recommended, again, that the colonial powers increase the African element of the COESP voluntarily and significantly.¹²³ As on the issue of the African field office being discussed at the same time, however, the Office’s suggestions fell on deaf ears. The colonial powers made it quite clear that they did not want the “colonial element” of the Committee to be extended.¹²⁴ London continued to insist that only “real” experts be appointed, and doubted very much that anyone with the “requisite experience and calibre” could be found among the indigenous populations.¹²⁵ The French, too, felt they had made quite enough concessions already by nominating an African to the second COESP meeting. Gavin’s interlocutor in the French Overseas Ministry, Guelfi, didn’t believe she would be able to find a second “appropriate person”. Gavin concluded from Guelfi’s remarks that, “while willing to nominate a further expert, [she] obviously thought in terms of herself”.¹²⁶ The situation was similar in Brussels,¹²⁷ and as the ILO already knew what the Portuguese and South African Governments’ reactions would be, they didn’t even bother to contact Lisbon or Pretoria.¹²⁸ As a result, by the third

meeting of the COESP at the end of 1953, in terms of its composition not much had changed.¹²⁹

As Gavin had predicted, however, the colonial powers' success in keeping the profile of the COESP essentially to their liking turned out in the end to be a Pyrrhic victory. The longer the situation continued, the more the colonial powers had to admit that in some respects they were actually achieving the exact opposite of what they intended by limiting the colonial element of the Committee. The longer they refused to nominate more African members, the more political the issue became. The African and Asian members already sitting on the Committee started to be perceived less as experts than as representatives of their particular territories and of the colonies in general. In 1954 India's representative to the Governing Body, Sen, concluded dismissively that "so long as the ILO [has] recourse to representatives of the metropolitan countries for the consideration of problems of indigenous peoples no useful results could be expected".¹³⁰ In this, the transformation of the COESP into the tripartite AFAC represented the final failure of the colonial powers' tactic of trying to "depoliticize" the meetings of the Committee. When a member of the CO asked in 1955, in frustration and increasing desperation at the prospect of the changes to come, "Why? Why not experts?", he failed to see that part of the answer was on his own doorstep.¹³¹

The COESP as a voice for the International Labour Office

On the issue of the composition of the COESP the Office's opportunities for intervention were limited. However, on another level the secretariat of the ILO was able to exert a significant amount of influence on the Committee. During the critical period in which the colonial powers were blocking the ILO's attempts to become active in Africa, the COESP served the Office as a medium through which to convey its ideas of an integrated approach to development, and one which lent these ideas added legitimacy. As a result, the statements of the COESP reflected not least the Office's specific view of the problems of social policy.

The strategy of using an independent committee of experts as a reference point outside the political structures of the ILO to lend extra legitimacy to the views and objectives of the Organization was not new when the COESP was established. It was a tried and tested method when it came to politically controversial issues, and the best example of its previous use was the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR).

The CEACR was a body made up of experts on international and labour law which met annually to draw up, independently from the Office, reports on the application of ILO standards. Apart from the moral pressure it put upon those countries found to be breaching ILO norms the CEACR had no real means of asserting its authority, but despite this, the high rank and independent



Predominantly white: COESP meeting in Dakar, 1955

status of its members made it very difficult for the governments concerned to deny or dismiss its findings. For this reason, the ILO was generally held to be in possession of one of the most effective instruments in international standards monitoring.¹³²

The Office hoped that the COESP would have a similar effect. Like the CEACR the COESP took as the starting point for each of its meetings the activities of the ILO to date, which essentially meant that the basis for its discussions was laid out in advance. Moreover, the Office's influence on the actual meetings of the COESP was at least as strong as it was in the case of the CEACR. Its officials played an active part in organizing, coordinating and following up the COESP's gatherings, with the obvious aim of "shaping" the Committee's results so that they tied in with the Office's own ideas. The Office drew up the agenda for the COESP's meetings, put together the documentary material which the experts used as a basis for discussion, and after the meetings provided the Governing Body with a summary of the COESP's results and conclusions. In this way the Office exerted such a ubiquitous influence on the COESP that objections were raised on a number of occasions to the extent of its involvement. After the COESP's second meeting in 1951 in Geneva, for instance, the CO felt obliged to ask Robert Gavin some polite questions "about the way in which his Division sought to improve upon the views expressed by the members of the Committee".¹³³ The colonial powers

were not the only ones concerned about the Office's frenzied activity behind the scenes of the COESP. After the Lisbon meeting in 1953, for example, the Governing Body's observer, the Brazilian de Souza e Silva, accused the Office of undermining the purpose of the Committee of Experts through its numerous interventions, "since the Committee was then acting as a link between the Office and the Governing Body".¹³⁴

The Office was intent on exploiting to the full the opportunity to maintain at least some influence on the design of colonial social policy that the COESP represented. Admittedly, the Committee's room for manoeuvre was limited by the special status that the colonies "enjoyed" in the cosmos of ILO standard-setting. Its official mandate was solely to discuss general principles of social policy. The problem was that these principles already existed in the binding form of the colonial Conventions of 1947–48. Any recommendations the COESP cared to make regarding new Conventions were hardly worth the paper they were written on, as the colonial powers had made it quite clear that they were not in favour of any more standards (the only exception to this being in 1954 on the issue of the application of penal sanctions for breach of contract).¹³⁵ As a result, the Office could do little other than use the COESP to register its basic claim to involvement in colonial matters and to draw attention to the concepts it already had in place.

With this in mind, its attempts to influence the COESP had two main objectives. First, the Office wanted the findings of the Committee to confirm the universal validity of the integrated approach to development. To this end, it attempted to ensure that the topics which made it on to the agenda of the COESP were problems for which the TAP had a solution. This reinforced the Office's claim that the TAP was also the ideal tool for the colonies. Thus the issue of vocational training featured at two of the Committee's meetings, in 1951 and 1953. The other items on the agenda were housing, productivity, wage policy, social security and industrial relations. Only once, in 1951, were classically "colonial" issues up for discussion, and both – migrant labour and penal sanctions for breach of contract – were topics the first COESP had dealt with in 1947 but to which a return was necessary.

The same claim to universality the Office held up for its TAP was reflected in the recommendations of the COESP. These always called upon the colonial powers, using the same phrasing each time, to make as much use as possible of the technical assistance offered by the UN and its specialized agencies, and the Director-General was solicited to take the appropriate preparations "to ensure the fullest co-operation in giving to the governments the maximum of practical assistance in carrying out [the Committee's] suggestions".¹³⁶ The integrated approach to development was clearly visible in the Committee's recommendations, which repeatedly emphasized, in equally standardized formulations, the importance of workers' participation or of good industrial relations in the implementation of technical measures, or the pursuit of development aims in general.¹³⁷

Second, the Office did its best to shift the focus of the COESP's work to the treatment of African problems. The colonial powers were reluctant to change the orientation of the Committee, precisely because they wanted to prevent the COESP from functioning as a substitute for the lack of regional ILO structures in Africa. The colonial work of the Office itself had been almost exclusively directed at Africa since the beginning of the 1950s. Via the topics selected for discussion and the formulation of the problems to be solved, the Office attempted to transfer this internal focus to the proceedings of the COESP. By 1955, when it met in Dakar, the Committee's stealthy transformation into a body concerned more with African problems than with colonial problems in general was complete. At this point, almost all the resources of the NMT division were currently being taken up by the large-scale African Labour Survey,¹³⁸ and the COESP's task in its last session was, in fact, just to evaluate this (900-page) report, which looked at every aspect of labour and social policy in Africa. The presentation by the COESP of the *African labour survey* in 1957 reinforced the ILO's interest in the African continent, and was not least the result of the Office's dogged attempts to use the COESP to compensate for its own shortcomings there, for which it had the defensive attitude of the colonial powers to thank.¹³⁹

Qualified universalism: the findings of the COESP

These were the influences to which the members of the COESP were exposed when composing their recommendations. What was striking about the majority of the Committee's findings on colonial social policy was the basically universalistic consensus they expressed. Evidently, the framework the ILO had laid down in this respect in its colonial reform opus of the mid-1940s had been accepted and now served as a set of guidelines for evaluating colonial social policy. More than anything, this meant that no one – apart from outsiders like South Africa – now argued in terms of the otherness of colonial populations or of “native” labour. It was a generally recognized premise of colonial social policy that, with the right policies, colonial populations would be fully integrated into a universal labour and development process. The break with the particularism of the pre-war period was visible in a series of COESP recommendations, and nowhere more so than in the revision of the migrant labour issue.

Migrant labour

The problem of migrant labour had been discussed in depth at the COESP's first meeting in 1947, but it had to be revisited at the Committee's second session. The symbolic value and significance of the debates surrounding systems of migratory labour in the colonial policy discourse of the post-war period has been explored at length above (see Chapter 3). The discussion was not over by 1951, but by this point the advocates of stabilization had clearly obtained the upper hand. Accordingly, at its second meeting the

COESP unequivocally endorsed a policy of stabilization and called for the rapid abolition of systems of migratory labour. The resolution passed by the Committee stated that the objective of all policy must be the "greatest possible measure of permanent settlement of the workers with their families at or near their places of employment".¹⁴⁰

In the discussions which preceded this resolution, the Committee was divided only on the question of how quickly systems of migratory labour could be removed without endangering the economic and social balance in the various territories. The longest transition periods were called for by British representatives, while the Belgian, French and African members of the Committee wanted to see migratory labour abolished as quickly as possible. However, on the ultimate goal they were all agreed. The South African representative, on this as on all the other issues dealt with by the COESP, took a position that marked him clearly as an outsider, defending his Government's policy of "separate development", which made extensive use of migratory labour and strongly opposed stabilization. The particularism of apartheid was simply not compatible with the basic universalistic consensus that characterized the Committee.¹⁴¹

Many of the recommendations made by the COESP at subsequent meetings confirmed this change in discourse. As early as 1951 the Committee demanded "positive measures" by the colonial States to help check the problem of migratory labour, ranging from housing and urban planning to wage policy, the creation of opportunities for vocational training and the establishment of systems of social security. The same topics came up at later meetings too. In summary, what the COESP was talking about were measures designed to organize the transition from traditional, rural forms of community and work to modern, urban environments. They were not so much specific steps to eliminate the social ills caused by migratory labour as a comprehensive project of societal modernization. The stabilization programme clearly centred on the ideal of urbanized workers living and working under the same conditions as their European counterparts.¹⁴² Accordingly, the COESP's findings also embraced the concept of the family wage. A passage on wage policy in the report on the Dakar meeting in 1955 found that workers in the colonies needed to earn wages that were "sufficient to support stabilised family life without the need for assistance from outside sources away from the place of employment, such as distant land holdings".¹⁴³ This was a clear sign that, in the view of the experts, the solution to the social problems of colonial Africa and (to a lesser extent) Asia was now to be sought not in the conservation of the colonial populations' "traditional" ways of living and working, but in overcoming them using concepts of social change that were now accepted as universally valid.

The basically universalistic tenor of the COESP's findings was not entirely free of overtones of doubt, however. The majority of the experts were sceptical, for example, about whether methods to increase productivity that had

proved their worth in the developed world would always be suitable for Africa. They believed there were "special factors affecting productivity in Africa, due perhaps to climate, human traditions or attitudes, which might tend to limit the successful application of new techniques to increase productivity and call for modified application of new methods to Africa".¹⁴⁴ There were also disagreements within the Committee on whether forcefully promoting an industrial, urban way of life was always the best way forward. In the discussions surrounding the wage issue, for example, some of the experts warned of the undesirable results of a wage policy that made influx into industrial centres too attractive. They argued that this in turn could have devastating effects on the economic structures in the colonies. In territories where most of the inhabitants lived in subsistence-economic conditions, a mass departure towards the modern sectors of the economy would likely destroy rural areas. Equally, a wage policy which promoted urbanization would also contribute to "detrribalisation", which would necessarily be accompanied by the "disintegration of the family and the social structure".¹⁴⁵

The experts who put forward these arguments were the same ones who, at every COESP meeting, were responsible for the passages in the Committee's findings calling on the ILO and the colonial powers to pay more attention to rural areas.¹⁴⁶ Their views reflected the socially conservative attitudes still prevalent among those members of the Committee who had long careers in colonial administration behind them. Their influence did not necessarily amount to a reversion to the particularistic thought pattern of the pre-war period, but it did create an undertone that was as constant a presence in the Committee's resolutions and recommendations as the fundamentally universalistic position. The significance for the modernization project of the "particular conditions" in Africa was mentioned time and again, as were the backwardness of the continent and the "magnitude of the problems to be treated".¹⁴⁷ Everyone on the Committee agreed, for example, "that it is hardly possible under present circumstances in the majority of non-metropolitan territories to consider the immediate introduction of general social security schemes covering all principal risks".¹⁴⁸ Although at the time this was sold as pure realism, it was also one of many illustrations of the experts' doubts as to whether universalistic models of development really were valid for Africa, and whether they could be implemented wholesale in the light of the state they believed the African continent to be in.

In the view of the experts, the stage of development Africa had reached, or not reached, also called for certain restrictions of the universalistic model on issues such as trade union freedoms. When the debate turned in 1955 to industrial relations, the majority of the Committee's members were convinced that the level of development in Africa and the embryonic stage of most African trade union movements would permit, at best, only a gradual application of ILO standards. The COESP was therefore willing to tolerate

extensive interference by the colonial powers in union freedoms, as long as this served the long-term goal of creating independent organizations and institutionalizing structures of collective bargaining.¹⁴⁹

The Office tended, through its reactions to the discussions of the COESP, to cement the qualified universalism of the Committee's findings. The main concern of its officials was to smooth out the differences of opinion that arose within the Committee. They believed it was essential that the COESP present an image of unity to the outside world in order not to endanger the legitimizing effect they hoped its findings would have on the ILO's colonial work. Those members of the Office responsible for organizing the COESP's conferences did everything they could to prevent existing tensions in the Committee from leading to open confrontation. This could mean, as Wilfrid Benson observed in Lisbon in 1953, ILO officials trying frantically behind the scenes to shield the South African representative from attacks launched by the Committee itself and by observers sent by the trade union movement.¹⁵⁰ It also meant leaving politically explosive issues, such as racial discrimination or workers' rights, about which the members of the COESP argued heatedly while discussing vocational training, workers' housing and productivity, out of the summaries of the COESP's results. The Office tried, in these summaries, to cover up the controversial points and to mask differences of opinion inside the Committee by using vague compromise formulations. The fear of losing what little influence on the future of colonial social policy it had, should the outside world get wind of anti-colonial sentiment coming from the COESP, made the Office very cautious in this respect.¹⁵¹

In essence, then, the ILO's colonial work in the 1950s was fully compatible with the two main objectives that the majority of colonial social policy-makers were pursuing with regard to the international public. These objectives were to present colonial social policy at all times as being consistent with the international modernization discourse, and to make it justify the continuation of colonial rule and the inevitable compromising of the universalistic model which colonial rule signified. The findings of the COESP were conducive to both of these aims. The colonial powers were able to claim that the basic consensus among the experts of the COESP was more or less identical to the dominant current in official thinking on colonial social policy. Not only were identical issues debated at meetings of the CCTA, under the same universalistic premises (which was hardly surprising, considering that the expert knowledge available to the CCTA was the same as that used by the ILO), but on the matters of stabilization, family wages and housing the CCTA even came to the same conclusions as the COESP. Furthermore, Britain and France now supported the creation of trade unions in their territories, and openly endorsed the ideal of good industrial relations as the basis of social progress. The emphatically anti-universalistic position of the South African representatives isolated them on virtually all issues, in the COESP and the CCTA alike.¹⁵²

The findings of the COESP experts also legitimated the actions of the colonial powers when it came to the application of labour standards. None of the colonial powers was prepared to bear the cost of establishing welfare systems in its territories to the extent demanded by ILO standards. Furthermore, their willingness to support trade union movements ended as soon as these movements threatened to become organizations capable of challenging the metropolises' political claim to rule (and the colonial powers' tolerance threshold here was, as a rule, very low indeed). This was just one of the points on which the universalistic rhetoric employed by the colonial powers rang particularly hollow. The vexatious experience of colonial social policy-makers that political and social movements in the colonies, and critics of colonialism in international forums, never missed an opportunity to demand the redemption of colonial promises and to point out the contradictions inherent in colonial rule made them all too aware of the fundamental dilemma they faced. The same universalistic discourse to which the colonial powers had subscribed after the war in order to maintain control was now threatening to undermine, socially and politically, the foundations of colonial rule. The findings of the COESP came in particularly handy for bridging the continuing gulf between universalistic language and the dilution of this universalism the metropolises believed was necessary if they were to maintain colonial control. In the colonial powers' view, those findings confirmed the colonial powers' main argument that the magnitude of the task of developing Africa beyond its backwardness required the continued direction of a colonial "development dictatorship".

In summary, the ILO's position on the problem of colonial social policy during the 1950s remained essentially that which it had taken during the reform phase of the war and the immediate post-war period. Its success in having integrated the colonial territories into a generally universalistic discourse was countered by its long-term failure to remove the double standard which the colonial powers continued to apply within their domains. After the war, the double standard had manifested itself in the adoption of specifically colonial Conventions; now it was reflected in the very existence of a separate committee concerned with social policy in dependent territories. It continued to manifest itself in the "gradual universalism" which characterized the findings of the Committee, and in the ILO's inability to overcome the colonial powers' resistance to its involvement in Africa. Almost until the very end of their rule in Africa, the colonial powers thus managed to uphold their contention that under colonial conditions, rules other than those which the ILO claimed were universal applied to the modernization process.

The ILO's inability to eradicate the colonial double standard inevitably affected the impact of the integrated approach to development. In the last phase of colonial rule in particular, immediately before the transfer of power to the new Asian and African governments, the ILO's failure

on this issue unarguably damaged its prospects of propagating the democratic development model after independence. But this was just part of the problem. During the 1950s the ILC passed a whole series of international human rights standards based on the core principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia. The ILO's inability to override the resistance and refusals of the colonial powers seriously undermined the alleged universality of ILO standard-setting during a period when the East–West conflict was already a complicating factor in the debates. The insufficient integration of the colonies into the complex process of negotiating the content and application of ILO human rights norms, which in turn were a point of departure for the integrated approach to development, was, though the effects were difficult to gauge, a very real handicap.

6

Universal Rights? Standard-Setting against the Backdrop of Late Colonialism, Decolonization and the Cold War

The concept of human rights, which since the Declaration of Philadelphia had provided a new intellectual basis for standard-setting, was the perfect vehicle through which to lend emphasis and moral credit to the claim to universality behind the ILO's integrated approach to development.¹ In contrast to the international labour standards of the pre-war period, human rights were, by definition, universally valid. The International Labour Office, then, had every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of the human rights debates of the 1950s. The ILC adopted a whole series of Conventions which reinforced the ideal of a democratic path into modernity. However, the discussions surrounding their adoption showed that the principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia were not unanimously accepted within the Organization. The continuing refusal of the colonial powers to afford full validity to human rights in the territories under their rule, and the Soviet Union's fundamental opposition to some of the Organization's basic principles, weakened the ILO's claim to universality and undermined the coherence of its values. The political and symbolic weight which the human rights discourse possessed against the background of the Cold War and the conflict between the colonial powers and the newly independent States in Asia and Africa had a range of effects. It led on the one hand to the adoption of some particularly far-reaching instruments, but on the other showed up all the more clearly the unbridgeable differences within the Organization. And in the case of freedom of association, these differences forced the ILO to make practical compromises that went to the very core of the concepts it advanced.

The ILO and human rights, 1945–60

Human rights and the integrated approach to development

The ILO's concept of human rights established an inextricable link between political and civil rights, such as freedom of association or freedom from discrimination, on the one hand, and social rights in the narrower sense on the other. The two sets of rights were defined in the Declaration of Philadelphia as mutually reinforcing conditions for the achievement of economic and social progress.² On an institutional level, too, the ILO managed to anchor the notion of the inseparability of social and political rights in a way that no other international human rights agency ever achieved. While the UN's quest to find a form for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that would make it more binding under international law soon led to the formation of separate groups of rights (and finally resulted in 1966 in the separate adoption of a civil and a social covenant), the ILO was always able to avoid dividing them in this way.³

Nearly all of the ILO's standard-setting work after the Second World War took place under the human rights banner. Wilfred Jenks, the legal adviser to the Office during the war and one of the architects of the Declaration of Philadelphia, described retrospectively how, in the new post-war thinking, "virtually all of the ILO Conventions and Recommendations" could be seen as a contribution to the "promotion and protection of human rights in the broad sense".⁴ Not only did this afford new legitimacy to the Organization's work in the area of standard-setting, but the pre-existing system for creating and monitoring norms gave the ILO a comparatively strong implementation mechanism to fall back on which put it at an advantage over the UN and gave it a unique position in the field of international human rights protection. The obligations which the signatories to ILO Conventions assumed were much further-reaching than those imposed by the UDHR, the ratification of which was tantamount to a simple declaration of intent. This was because the ILO had a range of instruments at its disposal which had originally been developed for less "controversial" technical standards, but which could now be used to implement and monitor human rights standards.⁵

However, its integrative notion of human rights and the comparative strength of its implementation mechanisms were the very factors that caused the ILO the greatest problems in its initial attempts to promote the integrated approach to development. Putting the human rights idea at the forefront of its standard-setting work undoubtedly strengthened the ILO's case for the universality of its development model, and calmed the fears of those members of the Conference who, at the beginning of the TAP, had expressed their concern that shifting the Office's focus of work to the developing countries could lead to a devaluation of ILO standards. Rebranded as human rights, the Organization's standards became more or less unassailable. On the other hand, it was always going to be illusory to demand that

developing countries embrace all the international labour norms in their entirety. The conditions in many of the new member States made the implementation of numerous standards impossible, especially those concerned with socio-political problems, which were mainly tailored to the problems of largely industrialized countries with a differentiated economic structure. The Office was well aware of this, not least as a result of the debate surrounding the universality of ILO norms which was sparked by the launch of the TAP and the Organization's increasing focus on Asia. Many of the Governments at the ARC initially shared the view summarized by a Ceylon Government representative who stated that no one could expect the countries of Asia "to implement social standards in the evolution of which they have been denied the opportunity to effective expression of their views".⁶ Some demanded that the ILO first make efforts to increase technical assistance to the developing countries in order to create the conditions under which the implementation of social standards would be possible. Others proposed that regional norms should be drafted that would better correspond to the situation on the ground in the less industrialized areas of the world.⁷ This latter suggestion, however, was something the ILO wanted to avoid at all costs. In the view of its officials, regional standards would spell the beginning of the end of universal standards. At the ARC in Tokyo in 1953, Deputy Director-General Jef Rens confirmed that the goal of all members must remain to apply ILO norms in their entirety and without restriction, but signalled that the ILO was willing to make concessions in other ways to the problems faced by the developing countries. Sessions of the ILC would, in future, attempt "without sacrificing the concept of universal standards to render our international instruments somewhat more flexible, with a view to their progressive adoption by countries at various stages of development".⁸

The Office insisted that the target of development had to remain the realization of social rights as they were expressed in the norms of the ILO, which were themselves universally applicable. At the same time, it recognized that a certain degree of flexibility would be unavoidable. This insight made the Office all the keener to ensure that the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia found universal recognition. Only when this had been achieved would it be guaranteed that the process of the gradual realization of social rights was following a course in which human rights as a whole would eventually be afforded adequate protection. As a result, promoting acceptance of the basic values laid down in the Declaration of Philadelphia – liberty of person, freedom from discrimination, distributive justice and the democratically organized reconciliation of social interests – formed the core of the ILO's modernization project.

In the light of this focus it continued to be crucial to the ILO that the universal nature of its norms found wide recognition within the bodies of the Organization. However, resistance came from two fronts. First, the colonial

powers once again proved to be difficult partners, determined as they were to cling to the colonial double standard. The overwhelming majority of the metropolitan powers displayed great reluctance to apply regular ILO norms in their territories, and they were united in their resistance to all attempts during the 1950s to remove the “colonial clause” from the ILO Constitution.⁹ In the clear light of the human rights idea, the double standards that the colonial powers continued to apply became more glaring than ever. The often-used argument that there was no need to rush the process of introducing regular standards to the colonial territories, since the ILO’s most important principles were already included in the colonial Conventions of 1947–48,¹⁰ rang hollow in the face of the colonial powers’ hesitation to ratify even these instruments. Although the Office campaigned tirelessly during the 1950s to get the colonial Conventions signed, many countries had not done so even by 1958.¹¹

This attitude compromised the ILO’s claim that its principles were universally applicable. It also led to a weakening of the human rights argument during the even more fundamental debates about the universal validity of ILO values in which the Organization found itself embroiled upon the accession of the Soviet Union in 1954. The socialist States had a different concept of rights from that reflected in the principles of the Philadelphia Declaration. They were sceptical about the individual civil and political liberties championed by the West and emphasized instead the economic and social rights and the role of the State in realizing them. Moscow’s opposition to some of the ILO’s most basic principles was particularly problematic because in the eyes of many developing countries the Soviet Union represented an attractive alternative model of modernization. While only a small minority of the new nations took the political and social order of the Soviet Union as a direct example, the interest the Soviet model aroused with regard to economic and social matters was not to be underestimated. The Soviet Union had made the leap from a backward, predominantly agrarian society to a highly industrialized one in less than half a century. During the 1950s it successfully managed to project itself as a powerful nation and world leader in technological advances, building atomic bombs and sending satellites into orbit. Its triumphs, which the Soviet delegates did not tire of mentioning at the ILC and at Regional Conferences, had been achieved within a state structure that did not permit the free play of organized interests. They had been accomplished by a strong State which, in the main, denied its citizens individual rights, and in some cases subjected them to massive coercion in the name of socialist development.

Despite their differences, the socialist States and the colonial powers actually had one thing in common in their resistance to the ILO’s drive for universality: they both favoured an authoritarian model of modernization over the anchoring of elementary rights as the starting point for development.

Human rights disputes

While this resistance gnawed away at the substance of the integrated approach to development, the normative basis of the Office's attempts to promote the fundamental values of the ILO actually grew. Between 1948 and 1958, the instruments came into being which the ILO has since regarded as its core human rights standards:¹² Conventions on freedom of association and on the prohibition of discrimination in employment and occupation, and, for the second time (the first being in 1930), a standard which dealt with the problem of forced labour. In addition, 1955 saw the adoption, clearly marked by human rights considerations, of the last colonial Convention to be passed by the ILC, which governed the application of penal sanctions in the prosecution of breaches of labour contracts. These instruments transformed the principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia into human rights norms that were binding under international law. The Declaration's principles were formulated in too general a way for them to be taken over wholesale, however, so the final form and content of the individual documents was the product of a complex process of negotiation, and always the result of some level of compromise between different interests.

At first glance, the opposing camps in the human rights debates of the 1950s were quite distinct. The dividing lines usually ran between East and West on one axis and between the colonial powers and anti-colonial forces on the other. As a result, each document was, to some extent, a snapshot reflecting the majorities and balances of power in place at the time it was adopted. The fact that the East–West conflict and the colonial peoples' struggle for emancipation were interlinked in many ways, however, always lent an element of unpredictability to the debates. The tripartite structure of the Organization complicated things yet further and prevented the forming of the same alliances that dominated the UN. Ultimately, though, it was the particular character of the human rights discourse, rather than the majorities that prevailed in the Conference at the moment a particular document was adopted, that had the greatest influence on the final form each document took, its scope, the strength or weakness of the language in which it was formulated, and the implementation mechanisms with which it was armed. Despite their very different interpretations of the validity or reach of whatever rights were being discussed, all the participants in the debates were moving inside what was a basically universalistic discourse. The notion of human rights per se was not questioned by anyone. Apart from a few exceptions (of which South Africa was the most extreme), none of the camps wanted to pass up the chance to exploit the moral force of the human rights idea for themselves. However, the discourse involved both opportunities and risks that were difficult to control, and, depending on the issue under debate, this led to the participants having to decide on a case-by-case basis what level of participation, what level of concession and how much resistance would best serve their own interests.

The colonial powers were keenly aware of these considerations. The continuation of colonial rule was, essentially, incompatible with the human rights idea; so, as far as was possible, the colonial powers tried to bracket out their colonial territories from the human rights debate. In their experience, the political and social movements in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa tended to take the promises contained in the international documents stemming from the war and the period immediately after it too literally, and were skilled at turning them into emancipatory claims that went far beyond what the colonial rulers were prepared to concede. For a variety of reasons, though, it was out of the question for the colonial rulers to admit to being fundamentally opposed to the implementation of human rights in the colonies, for this would have revealed, before an international public, that the universalistic rhetoric in which they had tried to wrap their projects of dominance in the period after the war amounted to nothing more than hollow words. France found the situation particularly difficult, as neither the image it liked to project of itself as the cradle of human rights nor its emphatically universalistic colonial doctrine permitted any public reservations about the idea of human rights for the colonies. At best, the colonial powers could be said to be in favour of a gradual realization of human rights, but there was danger in admitting even this, as the argument always used to justify a step-by-step approach – that the areas in question were not “mature” enough or were too backward for certain rights – could easily be turned against those whose responsibility it was to foster progress and development in such areas.

Although the colonial powers were not prepared to give much ground on the issue, they tended not to put up any direct opposition either, preferring to make the occasional concession and then dig their heels in for transitional periods or weak formulations within the documents being debated. Open confrontation was to be avoided at all costs, as the colonial powers were well aware what an effective weapon their opponents held in the form of the human rights idea. When Belgium temporarily veered away from the standard line in an attempt to stem, by launching a counter-attack, the anti-colonial tide which the Belgian Government believed was threatening to drown the colonial countries in the human rights debate, the fears of the colonial powers became very clear indeed. The Belgians wanted to use the agenda item “Living and working conditions of indigenous populations in independent countries” at the ILC in 1954 to draw attention to human rights abuses in developing countries, hoping that this would help curb the anti-colonial zeal of the new nations. London and Paris, however, energetically rejected the *thèse belge*, fearing it was far too dangerous and likely to cause a boomerang effect, returning the focus of attention with even greater legitimacy to their own records. If there was one thing they were keen to avoid, it was international attention.¹³

The Belgian initiative showed, however, that the human rights discourse was fraught with pitfalls even for anti-colonial forces. On the plus side it created a strong alliance between the African and Asian members of the ILO, who never tired of denouncing the colonial powers' reluctance fully to recognize human rights outside the metropolises. Apart from serving as ammunition in their disputes with their former rulers, embracing human rights also allowed these nations to establish their own position in the international system. The act of recognizing fundamental human liberties symbolized the overcoming of the colonial past and arrival in the international community of sovereign States. This notwithstanding, the majority of the governments in the post-colonial countries soon realized that participation in the human rights discourse was not unproblematic. They were forced to acknowledge that the human rights idea was not a weapon that could be limited to the settling of their accounts with colonialism, but could be used to great effect by political opposition movements, too. In other words, an overly ostentatious commitment to human rights could be dangerous in terms of domestic politics.

Something else which prevented the developing countries from taking up an unequivocal position on human rights issues was the fact that most of the debates could not be reduced to a dispute between colonial powers and anti-colonial forces, but in one way or another also forced the participants to take a stand in the East–West conflict. The often-invoked neutrality and independence of many African, Asian and Latin American countries was not always easy to maintain in the face of their political leanings and economic dependencies. With the battle of the political systems raging in the background, the human rights discourse was dangerous terrain for all involved, but especially for the protagonists in that battle. For the West it meant a tightrope walk of trying to put the communist States in the dock over issues such as forced labour or freedom of association without exposing itself to accusations of hypocrisy based on the policies of the colonial powers. As a result, despite its fundamental opposition to the “Western” notion of ILO human rights standards, the Soviet Union was always prepared to support the new nations in their struggle to have these standards implemented in the colonial territories. Putting pressure on the West was a welcome way for Moscow to distract attention from its own record.

The United States was also in a tricky position. After playing a leading role during the war in creating a human rights basis for the ILO's work, it now found itself trying to slow down the process. Not only did the issue of racial discrimination leave it wide open to the merciless barbs of the Soviet Union, but once the Eisenhower–Dulles Administration had taken up office, US delegates found themselves facing impossible dilemmas in all the human rights debates. As the American Government refused on principle to assume international obligations that encroached on national jurisdiction,

its representatives were placed in the paradoxical situation of demanding that the East apply standards which the US Government itself was not prepared to ratify. As a result, the United States increasingly lost interest in the ILO's human rights work during the 1950s. This change in the attitude of the Western superpower was a huge blow to the human rights aspirations of the ILO, which now lacked the support that during the war had proved so crucial in moving the colonial powers to approve the Organization's colonial reform instruments.

The human rights discourse was so politically charged during the Cold War that it was difficult for the Office to bring its own position to bear on the discussion. There was no doubt that ILO officials wanted strong and clearly formulated Conventions that would form the basis of the integrated approach to development. On the other hand, however, the Office had to make sure that in the tense situation in which the ILO found itself after the accession of the Soviet Union, the human rights discourse did not further damage the cohesion of the Organization. This made the relationship between the UN and the ILO in the field of human rights strained, to say the least. The ILO's main priority, as it had been on colonial issues, was to keep the "political factor" within its human rights debates as insignificant as possible.¹⁴

The Penal Sanctions Convention: the last colonial standard

Only one explicitly colonial Convention was adopted by the ILC after 1947, and not incidentally it governed the application of penal sanctions to breaches of employment contract. This topic was an indicator of the extent to which the universalistic view that underlay the colonial reform opus of 1947 would hold up in the legal reality of the colonies. In essence, the debate turned on the following question: should breaches of employment contract by an employee (e.g. refusal to work or unilateral termination), which in most independent countries were dealt with in the civil courts, be punished in the colonies by penal sanctions? What this boiled down to in the light of colonial realities was whether or not "natives" should be subject to the disciplinary power of the employer.

Penal sanctions had already been dealt with once before. In 1939 the ILC had, after long and laborious negotiations, adopted the Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention (No. 65), which called for the "progressive abolition" of such sanctions. From the outset, however, the colonial powers were reluctant to commit themselves to this norm. As a result, all the ILO's attempts during and after the war to persuade more countries to ratify it had been in vain. The Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 82), had again dealt with the abolition of penal sanctions, but when the issue reappeared on the agenda in 1949, Convention No. 65 had been signed by only two countries, Britain and New Zealand, the minimum number required for it to come into force at all.¹⁵

The initiative to take up this issue again came from the UN General Assembly, which in November 1949 asked the Trusteeship Council to work out solutions to the problem of penal sanctions in colonial territories on the explicit grounds "that one of the basic objectives of the International Trusteeship System is to encourage respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion".¹⁶ The Trusteeship Council referred the matter to the Governing Body of the ILO, which in turn asked the COESP to decide at its meeting in 1951 how best to proceed.¹⁷ The documentation at the COESP's disposal for the meeting showed that penal sanctions continued to be used in large areas of the colonial world, especially in southern and eastern Africa. In the Belgian Congo, for instance, there had been around 40,000 criminal convictions for breaches of employment contract or breaches of discipline at work in 1949 alone, a statistic which the Belgian Government found perfectly acceptable.¹⁸ Portugal also made extensive use of penal sanctions in Angola and Mozambique.¹⁹ The situation was particularly embarrassing for the British, for although penal sanctions had been abolished throughout their Asian territories, they were still omnipresent in Africa, especially in the white settler colonies in the south and east of the continent, and there were no signs of change here either.²⁰ This put Britain in an extremely awkward position, as by ratifying the penal sanctions Conventions it had declared the documents to be valid in all its territories. The governments in southern Africa, however, were now not only refusing to abolish penal sanctions progressively, as foreseen by the Conventions, but starting to reject the idea categorically in line with the South African Government. Pretoria's representative on the COESP, Smuts, informed the Committee that South Africa viewed it as inadvisable to abolish penal sanctions for a variety of reasons, including the fact that, because of their mentality and lifestyle, Africans were simply not as dependent on wages as Europeans. Faced with a culture as capricious and unpredictable as Africa's, employers needed recourse to something stronger than civil measures. Moreover, criminal law, Smuts insisted, helped the natives to learn the value of contracts: "It is essential, in the interests of the community, that freely contracted obligations should be respected and the inculcation of this truth among primitive peoples is of great educative value."²¹

These views were not shared by the rest of the COESP, however. The Puerto Rican Atilés Moreu warned that penal sanctions would ultimately lead to slavery, arguing that the interests of colonial employers could hardly be more important "than the maintenance of human rights and the dignity of the worker". Apart from Smuts and the Portuguese Neves da Fontoura, all the members of the COESP agreed that steps had to be taken towards the immediate and complete abolition of penal sanctions. In its resolution, the Committee called upon the Governing Body to inform the member States of the COESP's opinion "as to the wrongness of penal sanctions on moral grounds, their

ineffectiveness in practice and the very cogent reasons which exist for their immediate and general abolition".²² The Committee also concluded that it was not enough just to exhort governments to ratify the 1939 Convention: there had to be an additional move to outlaw penal sanctions completely with immediate effect.²³ The COESP's resolutions made explicit reference to the human rights idea and called upon the members of the ILO to fulfil their obligations. It suggested that the problem be dealt with at one of the next sessions of the ILC through the creation of a new instrument, a proposal which the Governing Body favoured. The Iranian Government representative, Kadje-Nouri, welcomed this idea as "a means of translating into action the current talk of democracy and human rights".²⁴ The issue was eventually placed on the agenda of the ILC for 1954.²⁵

The Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955 (No. 104)

The debate which ensued quickly developed its own dynamics and moved far beyond the framework laid down by the COESP. Several members of the Committee, following the lead of the French Senator for Dahomey, Ignacio Pinto, were initially in favour of proposing a new Convention that would regulate the complete abolition of penal sanctions. Following the intervention of Robert Gavin, however, they agreed it would be wiser to start with a Recommendation, as a new Convention was likely just to meet the same fate as the old one. Gavin's intercession was clearly motivated by the Office's fear of how the colonial powers would react to such a comparatively radical initiative by the COESP.²⁶ In the course of the debate at the ILC in 1954, however, the Office was forced to renounce its initial hesitancy as the upper hand was eventually taken by those who, in the name of human rights, were determined to turn the issue of penal sanctions into a symbolic struggle against racial discrimination, which they deemed to be the foundation of the old colonial order.

France's decision to spearhead the fight against penal sanctions was good news for the advocates of a new Convention. Those colonial powers branded as the main culprits by the COESP, however, were less enthusiastic about being dragged into the spotlight of the ILC. At the beginning of 1952, officials from the British CO and the Ministry of Labour informed Robert Gavin that their Government would not hinder a discussion of penal sanctions at a forthcoming session of the Conference, but asked Gavin to use his influence to make sure that these discussions did not go beyond the points laid down in the COESP's recommendations. The British were keen to ensure that if a new Convention were adopted, it did not prescribe fixed deadlines for the abolition of penal sanctions.²⁷ The governments in southern Africa still had to be persuaded to initiate the first steps towards an abolition of penal sanctions, and Britain knew it was at risk of losing face completely at the ILC if it did not act on the matter soon. The Commonwealth Relations Office

(CRO) thus wrote to the British High Commissioner in South Rhodesia,²⁸ explaining that Britain was particularly keen “to avoid provoking a crisis on a traditional ‘Colonial Crime’”, and emphasizing that it could not afford to put on the line the relatively mild treatment which the colonial powers still received in the ILO in comparison to other international forums. It pointed out “that while the ILO has not yet developed the disease of anti-colonialism to the same extent as the UN, the symptoms are present and it only needs one or two instances of ‘Colonialism’ to set the fever raging”.²⁹ However, hard-liners such as the South Rhodesian Government were as unmoved as most of the other CCTA powers by warnings such as this. France, with its calls for an even more radical document, was the sole and marked exception.

The draft Recommendation which the Office eventually proposed to the Conference referred, like the Penal Sanctions Convention of 1939, exclusively to indigenous workers, and in terms of content simply reinforced the provisions of the 1939 Convention. To counter the dissatisfaction that had been expressed in the past with regard to the formulation “progressive abolition”, the Office added a resolution which specified that all penal sanctions should be abolished within a target period of three years after adoption of the document. All the powers concerned were given the opportunity to comment on the proposal in the Conference Committee. The British signalled their basic approval but reserved the right not to make a final decision until they had seen how the debate progressed. The Belgians, who had originally objected to the renewed treatment of the issue at all, now indicated their approval (after failing to persuade Britain and France to join them in presenting a united front of opposition to the initiative). South Africa rejected the Recommendation, and although Portugal agreed with it in principle, it was not prepared to accept a deadline for the abolition of penal sanctions. When the Workers’ group in the Committee then even managed to reduce the proposed deadline to one year, the Belgians backtracked somewhat and made it clear that their approval was dependent on the Conference reinstating the original time period of three years.³⁰

Many of the plenary speakers took Belgium’s reaction as grounds to question the sense of the whole undertaking, with the French delegation leading the attacks on the other colonial powers. Forster, the West African adviser to the French Government, challenged the morality of adopting more documents concerned exclusively with “indigenous workers”. He argued that penal sanctions were unacceptable as they punished the poverty and illiteracy for which the administering powers were to blame and favoured employers in a way that would be unthinkable in any independent country. In short, they were, in his view, an expression of the old colonialism which France had overcome and now rejected.³¹

France’s clear stance on the matter encouraged other delegations to attack those countries that were refusing to take decisive action,³² somewhat

pushing the remaining colonial powers into a corner.³³ The French position received wide support in the Conference, which led to the Belgian Government's proposal to extend the deadline for the abolition of penal sanctions to three years being defeated by a large majority.³⁴

At the meeting the following year during which the document on penal sanctions was scheduled to be adopted, the colonial powers were fighting a losing battle from the start. Not only were the objections which Belgium, Portugal, Britain and a number of Employers' representatives raised to the immediate and complete abolition of penal sanctions swept aside in the early stages of the Conference Committee, but France, Poland, some Latin American members, Iran and Italy managed, with the support of the Workers' representatives, to enforce their view that the time had come for more than just a Recommendation. They decided that the new document should take the form of a Convention whose very title should make clear that its purpose was the complete abolition of penal sanctions. William van Remoortel, the long-serving Belgian delegate who had been involved in all the colonial discussions since Philadelphia, was the only "defendant" who dared in the plenum to stand up openly to the "prosecutors", reproaching countries such as Brazil for hypocritically pointing the finger at his country while treating the indigenous population on their own soil in a very similar way. He cited the racially discriminatory legislation and practices in place in many independent countries, and at the same time attempted to emphasize the civilizing influence of his Government in Africa. He explained that "we are trying to carry out educational work there, but we cannot always succeed" because sometimes – and here van Remoortel quoted the Brazilian Government representative de Rego Monteiro – it was necessary to help native populations out of their "primitive conditions", "and that could only be done by putting them to constructive work". Even van Remoortel, however, promised that his Government would make improvements and increase efforts to abolish all remaining penal sanctions,³⁵ and for the rest of the meeting not a single delegate defended their use or existence. The Convention was adopted by the ILC with an overwhelming majority of 169 votes to one (South Africa) and four abstentions.³⁶ Its opponents' only victory was that the document still referred only to workers in colonial territories.³⁷

Most of the advocates of the new instrument were satisfied. De Rego Monteiro proclaimed that the ILO had, in its entire history, rarely been as worthy of its mission as in its crusade against the "odious and inhuman, cruel and iniquitous division of the population of the world into two categories".³⁸ The challenge now was to use the impetus of this "victory for human rights", as many proclaimed it to be, to tackle the numerous other issues which required the Organization's urgent attention.³⁹

Discrimination in employment and occupation

Another opportunity for the ILO to anchor the human rights idea in its collection of norms soon arose in respect of the issue of discrimination. In the period after the Second World War the Office regarded the task of eliminating the various forms of de jure or de facto unequal treatment of employees as one that cut across all the areas of its work. The Declaration of Philadelphia, which unambiguously laid down that “all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity”, provided a useful point of reference for action,⁴⁰ supported by similar passages in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴¹ Racial discrimination had always been a central topic within the UN,⁴² causing Paul Gordon Lauren to describe the organization as a “microcosm of the world as a whole with international relations to a very large degree determined by interracial relations”.⁴³ The General Assembly had passed a resolution condemning discrimination on racial and religious grounds and calling upon the UN system to take decisive action against this scourge at its very first meeting in 1946,⁴⁴ and the new nations of Asia and Africa, in particular, never tired of bringing the issue of racial discrimination back on to the agenda.

Although the problem of discrimination in employment and occupation, which were the ILO's main areas of concern, was the Office's top priority when it came to achieving the goals of Philadelphia, it was a long time before any concrete normative action was taken on the issue.⁴⁵ This was mainly a result of the political sensitivity of the matter. The central element of the discrimination debate, unequal treatment on the grounds of race and skin colour, was inextricably linked on an international level with the disputes of the Cold War and the struggle for colonial emancipation. Criticism in the UN initially focused on South Africa, especially after 1948 and the official start of the apartheid era. No other government practised a similarly legalized level of discrimination or defended this policy before the international community with the same openness. However, the critics of institutionalized racism knew that South Africa was just the tip of the iceberg. If the debate on discrimination were to be extended, many other nations would also lose a great deal of international credit, which understandably made these countries eager to avoid the discussions already taking place within the UN spreading across to the ILO. Once again, the colonial powers had the worst record when it came to social and occupational discrimination. Statutory colour bars, or at least ones anchored in administrative practice that denied particular groups of the population access to education, certain professions, promotion, equal pay or equal social services, were not an exception but the rule in the colonies. Colour bars existed almost everywhere in practice, and even those with a basis in law were found not just in white settler colonies



A rigid and racist labour pass system was installed under the South African apartheid regime. Here, a miner is required to give fingerprints. Johannesburg, late 1950s

such as Rhodesia. As a rule, the larger and more influential the European population was in a territory, the greater the attempts to exclude the indigenous population from particular aspects of social advancement or professional opportunity. This was one of the most glaring contradictions of the universalistic rhetoric used by the colonial powers.

Although it took place in a less systematic way than in South Africa, discrimination on ethnic or nationality-related grounds was also rife in an astonishing number of independent countries. The policies of “White Australia”, “White New Zealand” and “White Canada”, for instance, were all based on discriminatory practices, and indigenous populations were subject to inferior treatment in many Latin American countries such as Brazil and Mexico.⁴⁶

Particularly significant for the international debate was the fact that the Western superpower’s record in this area was far from flawless, a point that was exploited to the full by the socialist camp in Cold War skirmishes. The status of the black population in the American South was not just a delicate issue within domestic politics, polarizing public opinion, but also a sore point for American diplomacy which the Soviet Union exploited relentlessly. This gave Washington some serious foreign policy headaches – particularly with regard to its relations with the new nations of Asia and Africa.⁴⁷

The additional political charge which the East–West conflict lent to the issue of discrimination was the main reason why ten years went by after Philadelphia

before the ILO was able even to begin preparations for a document that would tackle the problem, or at least the labour aspects of it, directly. Before this point an informal “coalition of defendants” had largely managed to prevent the Organization from broaching the subject. The Office was extremely wary of being seen to take the initiative on discrimination, which meant that numerous ECOSOC resolutions emphasizing the importance of eliminating discrimination in labour and labour relations, and calling on the ILO to act accordingly, went unheeded.⁴⁸ The only action the Governing Body felt able to take was to commission the Office in the spring of 1954 to carry out an extensive study into existing forms of discrimination.⁴⁹ The Office’s repeated attempts to keep discrimination-related aspects out of the COESP’s discussion of technical agenda items such as vocational training or housing were just one indication of its awareness of how politically sensitive the issue was.⁵⁰

In 1954, however, the tide began to turn perceptibly. The Soviet Union’s reaccession to the ILO that year made it clear that the Organization would now become another forum for Moscow’s attacks on the Western powers’ records on discrimination, and, critically, that the United States would have to answer to the self-appointed “moral tribunal” of the USSR. The debates surrounding the Penal Sanctions Convention at the ILC in 1954 also drew attention to the issue of discrimination, with more than one speaker making the connection between the abolition of penal sanctions, a relic of old-style colonial rule, and the much wider underlying phenomenon of unequal treatment. An African adviser from the French Government delegation called upon everyone involved in the discussion to exorcise the “diabolic spirit” of racial discrimination that was poisoning the Conference and which, if nothing was done about it, would ultimately be its downfall.⁵¹ Also in 1954, ECOSOC called upon the ILO again to examine in detail the various forms of discrimination that existed in employment and occupation and to investigate the possibility of introducing new means to tackle them.

The pressure on the Western nations to give up their opposition to the Organization’s handling the issue was mounting on all sides. Despite this, the Office still judged the predominant mood in the Governing Body to be so negative that even now it hesitated to take the initiative. Morse and his colleagues seriously considered referring the job back to the UN, as they had on numerous occasions previously, but finally decided to bite the bullet and attempt to drum up support among the Western countries for a Recommendation.⁵² The proposal the Office presented to the Governing Body was eventually accepted by most of the Western representatives, which paved the way for the creation of an official instrument to address discrimination.⁵³

The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

From this point on, the anti-discrimination debate within the ILO slipped steadily out of the grasp of those opposed to decisive normative action. In

1957, after extensive discussions with member governments, the Office presented its first draft on the subject. The South African Government was the only one that had declared itself in advance to be categorically opposed to any kind of standard-setting activity. All the colonial powers and the United States, plus a number of other countries, had pledged their support for a Recommendation which they felt would not affect them too severely and which would at least demonstrate progressiveness and good will. Other countries, in particular the African and Asian members, some Latin American nations and the socialist States, felt a Recommendation did not go far enough and had called for a Convention instead. The Office's proposal was a compromise between these two positions: although it did suggest that the document take the form of a Convention, the principles it would contain were fairly general and predominantly of an "educative" nature.⁵⁴

However, many of the delegates at the ILC in 1957 were still not happy with such a mild approach. A coalition made up of the group of African and Asian States, which had grown significantly in recent years, the socialist bloc and the entire Workers' group got together to campaign for more radical action.⁵⁵ The symbolic value which the topic held, for varying reasons, for all the members of this alliance made conflicting loyalties such as those of the Western national trade union associations to their governments fade into insignificance. The African and Asian States, buoyed up by the 1955 Bandung Conference on Afro-Asian solidarity and determined to tackle discrimination with new energy and unity in the international arena, elevated the issue to the subject of a fundamental discussion of the evils of colonialism. The fight against discrimination in employment and occupation had an equally fundamental significance for the majority of the Workers' group, and was also a good opportunity for the ICFTU to demonstrate its credibility to the new nations. The socialist bloc saw in it the double prospect of recommending itself as an ally to the African and Asian States while simultaneously subjecting the West to an embarrassing defeat. In the face of this alliance, the opponents of a strongly worded anti-discrimination Convention had very little chance. The might of the constellation became clear in the early meetings of the Conference Committee, whose job it was to make decisions on wording in the run-up to the adoption of the norm.⁵⁶ Instead of the "educative" Convention foreseen by the Office's draft, the Workers now called for a clearly formulated agreement which not only laid down the principles of non-discrimination, but also explicitly set out the political steps that would be necessary to enforce these principles. The signatories of the Convention would not only have to endorse the principle of non-discrimination, they would also have to anchor it in law on every level of society, with both employers and workers being involved in the formulation of the necessary legislation.⁵⁷

The compromise finally agreed upon, formulated by some of the Scandinavian countries, took account of most of the demands of the

advocates of a strong Convention. The Conference would be asked to adopt both a Convention and a Recommendation, and the Convention would set out certain concrete measures to be taken in the implementation of an anti-discrimination programme.⁵⁸

Despite this success, the African and Asian representatives at the Conference were enraged by the mere fact of having to make compromises at all when it came to putting a stop to discrimination. The main target of their anger, apart from the colonial powers, was the US Government, whose representative Johnson had announced to the Conference that America would abstain from voting, although it did in principle support the abolition of discrimination in all its forms.⁵⁹

The Ceylon Workers' representative Thondaman was not the only speaker to combine condemnation of the hypocrisy of the United States and other Western powers with stark criticism of the Office. He accused the ILO of taking too much account of the wishes of governments which were determined to hinder the enforcement of human rights, and, moreover, of doing so on issues on which the ILO's Constitution took an unequivocal stance. Thondaman was convinced that the text as it then stood would not put an end to discrimination.⁶⁰ The Egyptian Government representative Said Salama joined in the tirade, condemning what he saw as the successful attempts of the Employers and the Western governments "to impose as many loopholes as possible and to shift as many provisions as possible to the Recommendation".⁶¹

Nonetheless, the result of the debate could, on the whole, be deemed a victory for the advocates of strong normative action. When it came down to it, all the attempts to reduce the documents to mere declarations of intent had failed. This put the colonial powers in an uncomfortable position. Although they were still free to exclude their territories from the planned Convention, this was not an attractive option. The pressure to which they would be subject as a result of the documents was bound to be immense, and their resistance to a Convention in the first place had largely been based on the fear that the exclusion of the colonies from an instrument which defined a basic human right and was binding under international law would provide an infinite source of fuel for criticism of them. Not even the most far-sighted representative of the colonial powers, however, had reckoned with the fiasco in which the final discussion of the anti-discrimination Convention would end the following year.

At the ILC in 1958, Soviet Government representatives of the Czechoslovakian SSR and the Workers' group separately proposed the addition to the Convention of a passage which would oblige the signatories unreservedly to extend the provisions of the document to their colonial territories. However, the legal adviser to the Office, brought in as a result of the protest of the British Employers' representative, held a passage of this nature to be incompatible with Article 35 of the ILO Constitution. The

passage would either repeat the “colonial clause” word for word and thus be superfluous, he advised, or, by going beyond the provisions of this clause, contradict it. He therefore counselled the initiators to abandon their proposal – advice which they rejected. They won the vote inside the Committee by a small majority and simply added a footnote to the relevant paragraph mentioning the reservations of the Office.⁶²

Sir Archibald Harrison and Henri Hauck, the British and French Government representatives, appealed to the Conference not to allow the ILO Constitution to be undermined,⁶³ but theirs was a lost cause in the face of a majority which elevated the abolition of discrimination in the colonies to the status of an issue in which the very values and principles of the ILO were at stake.

What was a defeat for the colonial powers was a clear victory for the socialist States. The significance which the latter group attached to the issue was apparent from the mere fact that more than half the speakers in the discrimination debate had come from the Eastern Bloc.⁶⁴ The symbolic triumph for this group of countries lay in the fact that they had been able to humiliate the West while, side by side with the new nations, presenting themselves as champions of human rights and defenders of one of the ILO’s basic principles. Despite the criticism directed at the Office, it too came out of the debate victorious. The standards governing discrimination in employment and occupation which were finally adopted represented another milestone based in human rights on the democratic path to modernization in accordance with the principles of Philadelphia.⁶⁵ The Convention forbade discrimination “on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin” and was, officially at least, constitutional scruples aside, fully applicable to the colonies.

Forced labour

On the surface, it seemed inevitable that the issue of forced labour would provoke another debate on the universal, or more precisely colonial, validity of the ILO’s basic principles. Forced and compulsory labour had been the ILO’s most discussed colonial topics before the war, and the Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Labour) Convention of 1955, was also, essentially, a delayed consequence of the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 (No. 29). However, colonial aspects actually played a relatively minor role in the forced labour debate after the war, mainly because they were overshadowed by the East–West conflict, which influenced the discussions to a greater extent than it did any other human rights issue the Organization ever dealt with, including discrimination. And in this case it was the socialist camp that was in the dock.⁶⁶

After the Second World War, the issue of forced labour began to receive an unprecedented level of public attention, hauled into the international

spotlight by the experiences of the war years, and in particular the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. The authors of the UN Charter and the UDHR, which prohibited slavery “in all its forms”, strongly felt that what they were dealing with was essentially a new phenomenon.⁶⁷ The unscrupulous use of forced labour by Nazi Germany for economic and military purposes, and as a method of political correction and of extermination, had given the term a new dimension that simply was not covered by previous criteria used to determine levels of freedom or coercion.⁶⁸

Not long after the war ended, international attention turned from forms of forced labour that had been overcome towards the continuing and monstrous forced labour system in place in the Soviet Union. In November 1947 the American trade union association AFL called upon ECOSOC to commission the ILO, as the competent body, to undertake a comprehensive study of new-style forced labour systems in existence within the member countries of the UN. The AFL’s petition had been composed and submitted with the support and approval of the US Government and was directly aimed at the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites.⁶⁹ As UN observers would later put it, it was then at the latest that the problem of forced labour became “very much a part of the Cold War”.⁷⁰ Over the next two years, ECOSOC meetings regularly became the scene of extremely heated exchanges. All the Soviet Union’s attempts to banish the topic from the international agenda, or at least to prevent the referral of the issue to the ILO, failed. Moscow then resorted to a dual strategy of undermining the ILO’s initiatives against forced labour wherever it could, while at the same time trying to bring the attention of the international public back to colonial forms of the phenomenon.⁷¹ This was one of the reasons why none of the colonial powers were particularly enthusiastic about the forays of their American allies into the minefield of the forced labour issue, or about the prospect of subjecting their own records to inspection. Their fear of the anti-imperialistic propaganda that would be put out by the socialist camp, potentially with the support of the newly independent States of Asia, was intensified by the concern that a new discussion of the topic of colonial forced labour could actually fuel political uprisings in the remaining colonies.

Forced labour was a particularly delicate issue as it was inextricably connected with the image of the pre-war colonialism that the metropolises in their social policy discourse were proclaiming to have overcome. Britain knew that any local inspections by an investigative committee “would lay us open to attacks by ill-disposed persons”.⁷² Arthur Creech-Jones, Colonial Secretary in the British Labour Government, warned in a letter to all the colonial administrations that the dangers of this type of investigation must not be underestimated – not because Britain had anything to hide, but because they would expose the British Government to all kinds of accusations by “extremists”, which in turn could cause irreparable damage in the colonies “at this present critical stage of their development”.⁷³ In truth,



During a visit by the Office's Assistant Director-General, Raghunath Rao, Egyptian trade unionists accuse the colonial powers of using forced labour on the Suez Canal

however, Britain had a fair amount to hide at this “critical stage” in the development process. In the same letter, for example, Creech-Jones implicitly permitted the use of communal forms of forced labour if they served the development interests of the territories in question.⁷⁴ Britain held obligatory labour for the benefit of the community to be entirely reconcilable with Convention No. 29, but was not particularly keen on having to discuss this before an international audience. The same applied to the other colonial powers. Although they had all, with the exception of Portugal, signed the Convention of 1930 and declared forced labour in their territories to be abolished, it continued to exist on a significant scale, in Africa in particular – the justification once again being the extraordinary backwardness of the people and the enormity of the problems alleged to be involved in the development of these colonies.⁷⁵

As a result, the colonial powers had mixed feelings about the idea, energetically promoted by the US Government, of establishing under the aegis of the ILO a committee to investigate the phenomenon of forced labour. There was only one type of investigation that Britain could wholeheartedly embrace, and that was the one “that will do least damage to our position in the Colonies while damaging the Russians as much as possible”. London was well aware, however, that this was unlikely to be the outcome, and feared on the contrary that the committee “might well serve to spotlight conditions in the Colonies, about which so much more reliable information is available”.⁷⁶ As the Soviet Union was at this point not a member of the ILO and was not willing to cooperate with it on any other level, the investigation would have to make do without primary source material from the Eastern Bloc. When it came to the colonies, however, a wealth of information was available – not least in the form of the reports which the ministries were obliged to compile on a regular basis regarding the application of the

Forced Labour Convention. The US Government thus had real problems persuading the Allies to support an investigation that would focus on politically and economically motivated systems of forced labour. The French in particular were resistant until the end. The State Department complained as late as 1951 that the French envoy in ECOSOC was “making every effort to undermine the US position on forced labor”.⁷⁷ In 1949 and 1950, however, the Governing Body (with the exception of the colonial powers) voted in favour of the petitions of the US Government and informed the Secretary-General of the UN that the ILO intended to set up a committee to investigate forced labour, and, should the UN and the ILO fail to come to an agreement, was prepared to do so unilaterally.⁷⁸

**Attempts to define a “normal” level of coercion:
the Mudaliar Committee**

Finally, in 1950 the UN and the ILO created a joint ad hoc committee under the leadership of the Indian diplomat and legal expert Ramaswami Mudaliar.⁷⁹ It was only through the committee members’ “creative” interpretation of their duties that the colonial territories came to be investigated at all. The original mandate of the working group was a clear reflection of the joint will of the US Government and the colonial powers to target exclusively what they assumed was going on in the Eastern Bloc. The Mudaliar Committee was commissioned “to study the nature and extent of the problem raised by the existence in the world of systems of forced or ‘corrective’ labour, which are employed as a means of political coercion or punishment for holding or expressing political views, and which are on such a scale as to constitute an important element in the economy of a given country”.⁸⁰ Although the emphasis was on forced labour systems that were politically and economically motivated, the Committee took the liberty of carrying out separate investigations into political and economic forced labour regimes, which enabled it to scrutinize a wider spectrum of countries and territories.⁸¹

Whether the International Labour Office was pulling the strings in the Mudaliar Committee’s deviation from its actual mandate is not clear, but the distinction it made between politically and economically motivated systems of forced labour certainly met with the approval of the human rights advocates in the Office, who wanted to make sure that any future Convention in this area would not just be used as a weapon of propaganda in the Cold War, but would be a real chance to establish freedom from (non-economic) compulsion to work as a fundamental principle for democratic development. In order to achieve this goal it was of primary importance to prevent the specific combination of economic and political factors that distinguished the forced labour systems in place in the Eastern Bloc from becoming the sole target of potential normative action. These systems were simply too severe to be a helpful yardstick for the level of coercion permissible in the

development process, as was evidenced by the wealth of material presented to the Mudaliar Committee.⁸²

When the Committee published its final report in 1953, however, the two major colonial powers, Britain and France, actually got off very lightly. The report found them not guilty of all the accusations filed against them. Its only qualification was a footnote directed at the British which stated that certain emergency arrangements such as the ones currently in place in Malaya and Kenya following uprisings against the colonial rulers could, in the long term, lead to the creation of forced labour systems of a political nature. The Committee found forced labour systems that were simultaneously politically and economically motivated in all the countries of the Eastern Bloc it investigated, but only there. Exclusively political or exclusively economic systems were found to exist in a number of countries, including, at the top of the list, South Africa, which received a negative mention for its particularly large-scale and systematic use of forced labour. Of the colonial powers, only Portugal and Belgium found themselves on the blacklist.⁸³

Predictably, those countries which saw themselves branded as offenders were openly critical of the report. The Soviet Union deemed the results to be biased and rejected them accordingly.⁸⁴ The other countries on the list, however, along with many Western observers, felt that the report ran the risk of trivializing the situation in the East by putting it side by side with the – in their eyes much less serious – manifestations of forced labour that had been uncovered in non-socialist States.⁸⁵ The International Labour Office was not entirely satisfied with the findings either, and especially not with the general section of the report in which the Committee looked, among other things, at the background behind economically motivated systems of forced labour. The Committee attempted to show that the modern phenomenon of using forced labour as a means to the end of economic development was part of a general tendency of the age and one that was present in all political systems.⁸⁶ The report found that the modern State was expected to show “a greater and greater interest in the welfare of the individual and of the community”, and that, in order to meet their ever-expanding responsibilities and the demands placed on them, administrations had no other choice than to acquire new forms of authority and new means of intervention. As a result, public opinion was divided between “concepts of political liberty on the one hand, and social liberty and social obligations on the other”.⁸⁷ An ILO commentator expressed concern that abstract formulations such as this threatened to blur the distinction between the horrors of Stalinist labour camps and the comparatively harmless practices of other countries, and even to place the former in the same bracket as certain phenomena related to the development of modern welfare states. The ILO was also concerned that the Mudaliar Report implicitly justified the use of force in the development process – or at least did not explicitly condemn it.⁸⁸

However, the general remarks of the Mudaliar Committee actually had the opposite effect. The Committee's intention had been to establish what level of coercion was usual or tolerable in modern States, and to use this as a standard against which deviations could be judged. By finding British and French colonial policy "not guilty" of forced labour, the Committee also confirmed the notion, propagated by the two powers themselves, that in their development efforts they were moving within a universalistic consensus. This was emphasized by the report's mention of three colonial "outsiders" which all infringed the norm in some specific way. The most extreme offender was South Africa, guilty of pursuing a strategy of blatant anti-universalism to justify its "inner colonialism". In the Committee's view, what made South Africa different from the other colonial powers was the fact that its African population had no choice other than to provide labour to implement the economic policy devised by the (white) government, meaning that the coercive element was more a consequence of apartheid than a result of any direct measures of duress. What distinguished South Africa as an outsider among the colonial powers of the time, then, was in essence that the apartheid regime was the only one which refused, even on the issue of forced labour, to abandon the culturalist-racist strategy of justification of which all the colonial States had been guilty in the period before the war, but which had now fallen out of favour. While the other colonial powers now justified the use of coercion by making reference to their position of advanced knowledge in comparison to the colonial populations, and by citing the necessity of coercion for development purposes (always remaining within a fundamentally universalistic discourse), South Africa made no concession to the spirit of the time.⁸⁹

Belgium and Portugal stood out from the other colonial powers because of the sheer amount of forced labour used in their African territories, and the brutality of the methods involved. Portugal's argument that all the inhabitants of its African colonies, Angola and Mozambique, were subject to a general duty to work regardless of their skin colour failed to disguise what was, in reality, a fundamentally racist practice.⁹⁰ However, both there and (in a less ideologized form) in the Belgian Congo, forced labour was presented to the outside world as part of a general programme of assimilation which was justified in universalistic terms.⁹¹

In contrast, the late colonial "development dictatorships" run by France and Britain embodied the "normal level" of coercion that the modern State needed to exercise in order to fulfil its duties. The report criticized France and Britain merely for occasionally using the terms "state of emergency" and "civic duties" too freely to justify continuing forms of coercion. Although the Committee put these "normal" forms of coercion into a universal context, its recommendations to the ILO on how to proceed on the issue of forced labour indirectly confirmed the colonial double standard. The Organization was advised to tackle qualitatively new forms of systematically imposed

forced labour by means of a new Convention. Because the colonial clause in the ILO Constitution was still in place, however, this meant that the colonial territories would not automatically be part of the picture. For this reason, the Committee also recommended that the ILO insist on the widest possible, unreserved signing of the older standard of 1930, which, although it could be ratified by any State, was deemed to be a “colonial norm”. The result of this was not only that the colonies remained exempt from new normative measures to abolish forced and compulsory labour “for development purposes”, but that they were entrusted to the protection of a norm which gave the colonial powers various loopholes when it came to justifying the use of coercion for the purposes of development. The Convention of 1930 had specified that “normal civic obligations” did not constitute forced labour and that a “state of emergency” justified the derogation of the Convention’s provisions. These terms were so flexible, however, that, as the Committee itself had noted, it was all too easy for the colonial powers to fall back on them when required to justify recourse to methods of coercion.⁹²

The Ruegger Committee and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

In 1954 the Governing Body gave the go-ahead for a new Convention, and a new committee under the sole aegis of the ILO was set up to prepare the content. Paul Ruegger, the Swiss President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, was chosen to head it. On all the main issues, the Ruegger Committee followed the line taken by its predecessor, as the Western nations in particular, supported by a large proportion of the Workers’ group under the leadership of the AFL, worked hard to ensure.⁹³ Their largely successful attempt to use the topic for a propagandistic campaign against communism diverted attention in the debate even further away from colonial issues.

In its final report, delivered in 1955, the Ruegger Committee found indications that systems of forced labour with a political and/or economic background existed in 13 States: all ten of the ILO’s socialist members, the People’s Republic of China (on the subject of which the Nationalist Chinese Government of Taiwan provided a wealth of incriminating material), the Portuguese Overseas Territories and the South African Union.⁹⁴ The Committee did not have much material on the colonial territories at its disposal, but came to the conclusion that they could be separated into more or less the same groups identified in the Mudaliar Report. The Ruegger Committee received and investigated two accusations against the colonial powers. One, submitted by the British Anti-Slavery Society, referred to practices in Portugal’s African territories and to the South African custom of “hiring” convicted criminals out to private companies. The other, presented by the International League for the Rights of Man, accused Britain of using the state of emergency proclaimed in Kenya at the beginning of the Mau Mau uprising to justify forced labour on a relatively large scale.⁹⁵ While the

report treated the Kenyan case as a deviation from the general conformity of British colonial policy with ILO norms, and refrained from making recommendations to the British Government, it had very strong words for the South African and Portuguese perpetrators and demanded immediate legislative action from the governments in Lisbon and Pretoria to rectify the situation.⁹⁶

The responses of the Portuguese and South African Governments to the Committee's accusations were predictably brusque, while others criticized the report for too easily granting the colonial powers absolution for their policies. The Indian Workers' representative, Tripathi, complained that colonial territories had largely been excluded from the investigations, claiming that in British settler colonies such as Rhodesia and Kenya, methods of both direct and indirect coercion continued to be used on a large scale. Of more pressing concern than these specific cases, however, was the fact, raised by Tripathi and a number of other speakers, that forced labour was a problem inherent in the colonial system. The absence of democratic processes which characterized the political and economic system of colonialism everywhere necessarily led, it was argued, to coercion in various forms. Tripathi's Pakistani colleague, Aftab Ali, also asked why the report did not contain any passages that specifically referred to the colonial territories, stating that in his personal opinion slavery, and forced labour, inevitably occurred wherever there was no free trade union movement.⁹⁷

On the basis of the Ruegger Report the ILO drafted a new Convention aimed at bringing about the complete abolition of forced labour. The new document banned forced labour (a) as a means of political coercion and political education and (b) as a method of mobilizing and using labour for purposes of economic development. On the initiative of the Workers' group, the Convention was eventually extended in the Conference Committee to include a ban on forced and compulsory labour (c) as a means of labour discipline, (d) as a punishment for having participated in strikes and (e) as a means of racial, social, national or religious discrimination.⁹⁸

This result was endangered for a short while at the ILC in 1956 by an astonishing change of tack on the part of the Soviet Union. The socialist States had put up years of bitter resistance to a new Convention, and now they suddenly signalled their support for normative action, inviting the ILC delegates to make the issue of forced labour the core of a simultaneous tribunal against colonialism. It was quite obvious that this new strategy had been born of the recognition that a new Convention was no longer avoidable: by calling for the focus to be moved to colonial aspects of forced labour, Moscow was attempting both to divert attention away from itself and actively to court the sympathies of the new nations. First, it proposed (as it would a year later on the issue of discrimination) that a passage be included in the preamble of the new Convention obliging the colonial powers to apply the provisions of the document in both

the metropolises and the dependent territories; second, it called for the text of the Convention to focus less on “new forms” of forced labour and more on reiterating the unfulfilled demands of the old forced labour Convention.⁹⁹

The timing of this initiative was exquisite, especially with regard to the extremely embarrassing position the Western camp had just been put in by the US Government. To the disgust of all advocates of the new Convention, Washington had announced shortly before the start of the Conference that the United States would not be ratifying the document. Although this was in line with the State Department’s fundamental position on ILO norms, neither David Morse, who was one of the strongest champions of a new forced labour Convention, nor the American trade union movement had thought it possible that the US Government would go so far as to uphold this dogma even on the issue of forced labour – not after it had been the main initiator of a new document.¹⁰⁰ Right up until the Conference, Morse attempted to persuade the American Government to spare the ILO the loss of face he believed it would suffer if the United States stuck to its guns, but his efforts were in vain.¹⁰¹

The US stance was grist to the mill for the Soviet Union, which never missed an opportunity to point a finger at the “hypocrisy” demonstrated by the Western powers in calling for Conventions which they were not prepared to implement in their own countries, let alone in their colonies. Outraged by what he saw as the criminal short-sightedness of the US position, David Morse wrote in his personal notes that the matter had turned into a frightening example of “how evil can gain the lead”.¹⁰² The Brazilian Government delegate, de Rego Monteiro, accused the colonial powers at the Conference of having weakened the moral authority of the ILO, claiming that had just one of the many initiatives started by his and other governments to remove the colonial clause from the Constitution been successful, the East would now have “no justification for political or juridical euphemism such as might dissimulate the anti-social practices now so solemnly condemned”.¹⁰³

Ultimately, however, the attempts of the Soviet Union to give the Forced Labour Convention a new, more colonial flavour fell flat. Neither the Workers’ group nor the majority of Asian and African countries were prepared to help Moscow to a victory on points, especially as most of them felt that the East fully deserved its position in the dock. Indeed, in contrast to their position on the subject of discrimination, the Workers’ group were particularly definite in their unwillingness to support the socialist countries, and the representatives of the American trade unions did all they could to ensure this view did not change. Moreover, a few months before the 1957 Conference at which the new document was to be adopted Moscow had crushed the Hungarian uprising, which cost it the sympathies even of many developing countries.

All this made it more impossible than ever to debate the issue of forced labour without Cold War considerations creeping in.¹⁰⁴ In the heated atmosphere of 1957, there were not many countries prepared to risk being seen to take a stand in the battle of the systems by entering into so bold an alliance, which left the Soviet Union without a majority for its amendment proposals. Eventually, the previous year's draft Abolition of Forced Labour Convention was accepted unchanged by the Conference.¹⁰⁵

The reticence of most of the developing countries in the discussion may also have stemmed from their fear of drawing the attention of the ILO standards compliance watchdogs to themselves. In the Conference Committee, the Indian Government delegate had suggested adding to the paragraphs which banned forced labour for development purposes the stipulation "as a normal method of mobilising and using labour". Asked to explain this, he had noted that many governments whose countries were at an early stage of the development process had no other choice, in an emergency, than to resort to the limited use of compulsory labour for economic purposes, and that they might, as a result, have problems ratifying the new Convention.¹⁰⁶ In the heat of the East–West conflict, this initiative had hardly received a second glance, and had been voted overwhelmingly off the table; but it provided a glimpse of the conflicts that could arise in the future.

All in all, the ILO could look back at the end of the 1950s on another milestone in its human rights work. The new Convention reflected the liberal democratic values of the Organization and took a clear stand against totalitarian systems of forced labour. With regard to the implementation of universal norms in the colonial territories, however, the outcome of the forced labour debate was less conclusive. Within the confines of universalistic rhetoric, it seemed, coercion, under certain conditions, continued to be permissible. Outside these confines, the issue of forced labour was becoming more and more politically charged.

Freedom of association

Freedom of association was, without a doubt, the core of the integrated approach to development, more closely connected than any other human rights norm to the ILO's idea of a specifically democratic path to modernization. The concept of freedom of association was an integral part of the notion that civil liberties were a precondition for the realization of economic and social rights. A means of establishing appropriate new forms of organization for the transition from traditional to modern societies, it was the key to the peaceful solution of conflicts of interest between social groups within a pluralistic and democratic social order. From the perspective of the International Labour Office, this elevated freedom of association to the status of both a goal in its own right and a method by which economic progress could be achieved. Moreover, the concept of freedom of

association had the added advantage of strengthening the Organization's tripartite structure wherever it could be anchored in the legislation of the new member States, for free and independent Workers' and Employers' representatives gave the ILO important partners in the realization of its development-related goals.

For these reasons, the success or failure of the campaign to establish freedom of association in the developing countries was the decisive factor in whether or not the ILO would be able to implement its specific vision of societal modernization during the continuing process of decolonization. Luckily for the ILO, by the time the TAP began, certain Conventions regarding freedom of association were already in place to provide a clear point of reference and give it something of a head start. It was no coincidence that the Organization's human rights-based standard-setting work after the war had begun in this very area. Freedom of association was, after all, one of the founding principles of the International Labour Organization. The Preamble to the Constitution of 1919 had declared "recognition of the principle of freedom of association" to be an essential means of improving the situation of workers and of securing universal and lasting peace; and the Declaration of Philadelphia had gone on to elevate it to a principle of development, proclaiming for the first time that "freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress".¹⁰⁷

The chances of successful normative action on this front had been enormously improved by the huge increase in prestige enjoyed by the trade unions after the Second World War. As a result of the contribution they had made to the success of the war effort, trade unions everywhere in the West were now recognized by governments as reliable partners and part of a "healthy" democracy. The ideals embodied by the Allied victory over undemocratic regimes also did their bit to further support for the concept of freedom of association.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in 1947, mainly on the initiative of the US Government, the ILO began preparations for a Convention regarding freedom of association. For a while, the Organization had seemed to be in danger of being displaced from the task, thanks to the Soviet Union's tireless efforts to have the issue delegated to the UN, leaving the WFTU initially undecided as to which would be the better alternative.¹⁰⁹ As Under Secretary of Labor in the US Administration, David Morse played a key role in prompting the ILO to take decisive action on the matter. Freedom of association was a topic particularly close to Morse's heart, not least because of his New Deal experiences and his intense personal involvement in labour relations in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during the war.¹¹⁰

In 1948 and 1949 the ILC adopted various instruments governing a wide variety of topics related to the issue of freedom of association. The core of this opus were two Conventions, one of which laid down the right to freedom of association in the narrow sense,¹¹¹ and the second of which governed the right to collective bargaining.¹¹² The first Convention regulated

the protection of workers and employers and their organizations vis-à-vis the State, while the second defined, in the main, the rights of workers vis-à-vis the employer. Both documents, but especially the first, were formulated with a clarity and unequivocality unmatched by practically any subsequent ILO human rights instrument. Their provisions left barely any scope for interpretation and unambiguously embraced the concept of a democratic and pluralistic society. The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87) gave workers and employers the right to set up organizations of their choice without the prior consent of the state authorities, and gave these organizations the right to choose their own representatives freely and without interference by the state authorities. It also ruled that such organizations could not be dissolved by administrative means, but only as the result of full legal proceedings. Predictably, it was the Workers who had the most far-reaching demands regarding the scope of the Convention, and on almost all of the controversial points their requests were taken into account.¹¹³ The same applied to the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98), which guaranteed workers who were union members, and their associations, protection against discrimination by employers, and prohibited employer interference in the internal affairs of trade union organizations. More or less the only fault which the international trade union movement found with the Conventions was that neither of the two instruments explicitly laid down the right to strike.

The central importance of freedom of association was reconfirmed in 1950 when a mechanism was set up to oversee compliance with the Conventions that was unique within the Organization's standard-setting system. To this end, the UN and the ILO agreed, as they would again when it came to the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, to set up a joint commission of experts whose first duty would be to report to the Governing Body of the ILO.¹¹⁴ The Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission, which was composed of experts in international law, soon found itself in serious difficulties, however. Its mandate was to investigate accusations received by the UN and the ILO of breaches of the Conventions and, on the basis of the results of its investigations, to advise each country concerned on how to solve the problem. It was not long, though, before elements of the Governing Body began to complain about the Commission's clearly inadequate powers (hardly surprising in the light of its extremely restrictively formulated mandate) in the face of what was an almost insurmountably large problem.¹¹⁵ It was David Morse who then suggested setting up a tripartite committee made up of members of the Governing Body to review the complaints received and do the preliminary work on them before passing them on to the Commission. The Permanent Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA), which took up its duties in 1950, soon began to extend its mandate and eventually completely took over the functions of the joint UN-ILO Commission. Its duties went from pre-processing the complaints to carrying out detailed investigations into them – without the involvement of

the UN. In effect, this gave the ILO a permanent tribunal (the Committee met, like the Governing Body itself, three times a year) within which any violations of Convention No. 87 could be examined.¹¹⁶ In its first decade alone the Committee dealt with over 500 cases, and it developed into one of the most effective instruments in international human rights protection.¹¹⁷

Failure to overcome the colonial double standard

Although the ILO had the rare advantage in the case of freedom of association of having clearly formulated documents and strong implementation mechanisms to fall back on from an early stage, the matter still became a prime example of the difficulties the Organization faced in putting into practice its human rights-based approach to development.

Once again, the colonial powers proved to be a significant stumbling block on the path to universally recognized norms. During the discussions surrounding freedom of association at the end of the 1940s, they were tenacious in their attempts to restrict the scope of the Convention, particularly with regard to the provisions governing the free activity of trade unions in their colonial territories. This flew in the face of the fact that the debates had actually confirmed the fundamental universality of the principle, in particular through the reactions to various initiatives by the South African delegation at the ILC in 1948. The South African Government and Employers' delegates had proposed extending the "colonial clause" in the ILO's Constitution to those elements of the population of independent countries who were not yet "mature" enough, in terms of the state of their socio-cultural institutions, to benefit from a freedom of association Convention. Their objective was all too obviously to secure the exclusion of South Africa's own black population from the provisions of the future Convention.¹¹⁸ Their petitions, however, were rejected, first by the Governing Body and then by the Conference, on the explicit grounds that freedom of association was a "universal and indivisible" principle that could not be introduced gradually and would become worthless if subjected to too many exceptions and qualifications. Representatives of the Office and speakers from all the groups at the Conference emphasized the importance of freedom of association in precisely those areas of the world that were underdeveloped, and stressed the valuable role which democratic labour relations played in the social and political development processes of independent countries and colonial territories alike.¹¹⁹

Needless to say, these words did little to change the fact that, in reality, the colonies continued to face a double standard.¹²⁰ This was the result not only of the "colonial clause", but also of the fact that a Convention was already in place which explicitly governed the right to freedom of association in the dependent territories,¹²¹ and which the colonial powers were quick to cite as soon as the discussion came round to extending regular norms to the colonies. The colonial Convention of 1947 differed from the regular standards

in two essential ways. First, the documents contained different provisions concerning the types of organization which workers had the right to join. During the debates surrounding the regular freedom of association norm, the Workers' group and several Employers' representatives had managed to ensure that, as well as representing the economic and social interests of their members in the narrow sense, associations of workers and employers should also be entitled to take part in the general political debates of the country.¹²² The colonial Convention, however, was unclear on this point and gave the ratifying powers plenty of room for interpretation.¹²³ The second difference between the documents was that the regular Convention gave interest groups the right to join the international associations of their choice, whereas the colonial Convention did not. Both of these issues – the political role of trade unions and the right to choose the international associations with which they wished to be linked – were, however, particularly significant in the colonial context.

Even where freedom of association was recognized in principle, opinions were divided on how this should be translated to the situation on the ground. In theory, promoting the establishment of trade unions in the colonies was a key element of post-war colonial policy, for the British and the French at least. On the basis of the role played by trade unions in European history, the metropolitan governments hoped that the colonial counterparts of these unions would make reliable partners whose support would enable development projects to be carried out more peacefully and with greater government control than would be possible in their absence. So far there was general agreement between British and French colonial politicians, the metropolitan trade union associations which had been given most of the responsibility for overseeing the development of colonial unions, and the ILO.¹²⁴

In practice, however, the colonial trade union project was fraught with tension from the start. Not only did the young trade unions know how to exploit their opportunities more skilfully than the colonial authorities were comfortable with, they also used the universalistic discourse of which the metropolises were so fond to make demands on social policy that the ruling powers were generally not willing to meet.¹²⁵ Furthermore, it was difficult to make the up-and-coming colonial unions limit their activities to the confines which the colonial administrations had laid down for them. In many cases they simply refused to comply with metropolitan demands that they stick to representing the social interests of their members; in Africa in particular, trade unions often formed the best-organized element of the colonial nationalist movement or even replaced it in those areas where direct political activity was impossible.¹²⁶ As a result, the colonial powers reacted extremely sensitively to the attempts of the international federations of trade unions to gain a foothold on colonial territory. The WFTU, which had a decidedly anti-imperialist agenda, concentrated its efforts on recruiting members

from among the young Asian trade union movements,¹²⁷ but the ICFTU, whose anti-colonial position was becoming ever stronger at the instigation of the US federations, especially from the mid-1950s onwards, was active in both Asia and Africa. The colonial administrations' constant fear of losing political control led to their attempting to influence the trade unions to an extent which made free development in the spirit of the Convention No. 87 virtually impossible.

The Office soon realized that any attempt to broach the subject of freedom of association with the colonial powers took it on to dangerous ground. The metropolises' fear that an African field office could turn into a point of contact for union "agitators" was undoubtedly one of the main factors behind the colonial powers' resistance to an ILO presence in Africa. For the same reason they were deeply hesitant about the Office's plans to conduct a study on the state of labour relations there.¹²⁸ When the suggestion became official in 1952, London responded with a strategy of "strongest opposition".¹²⁹

With the climate as it was, then, it was evident from the start that all was not going to be plain sailing for the ILO's efforts to gain recognition for the principle of freedom of association in the colonies. None of the colonial powers was prepared to ratify the Convention on behalf of their colonial territories, and most of them refused to recognize even the colonial Convention, which until the end of the 1950s remained one of the least ratified components of the reform opus of 1947.¹³⁰ This was not, however, attributable to any shortage of initiatives by the Office to put the issue back on the agenda. The COESP looked twice at the problem of industrial relations, once in 1955 and once in 1957, both times focusing on the issue of freedom of association. The COESP's aim in Dakar was to encourage ratification of the colonial Convention on freedom of association, although the Committee's report stated explicitly that the instrument was to be seen only as a "transitional stage", implying that the ultimate goal was the universal application of the regular freedom of association and collective bargaining norms. The Committee did make some concessions to the colonial powers, especially on the subject of colonial trade union freedom, maintaining that although trade unions should be fundamentally free and independent, they should also concentrate exclusively, initially at least, on representing the social and economic interests of their members.¹³¹ Furthermore, the report merely defined the promotion of trade union movements irrespective of "race, national origin or political affiliation" as a "policy objective".¹³² The comments of the (now tripartite) COESP on the *African labour survey* two years later were more critical of racially discriminatory legislation but otherwise took much the same line. Once again, encouragement was to be extended only to those organizations whose activities were limited to the representation of economic and social interests and were not of a political nature.¹³³ On the delicate issue of governmental involvement in the

development of the colonial trade union movement, the report reassured the colonial powers that “official encouragement” was both “necessary and desirable” during the early stages of trade union development, but that state influence had to cease as soon as it began to jeopardize the unions’ “healthy future growth as vigorous and independent organizations”.¹³⁴

To all intents and purposes, these findings served to confirm the colonial double standard. They implicitly contradicted the ILO’s view that freedom of association marked the beginning of the development process, and provided support for the likes of Sir Richard Snedden, the British Employers’ representative, who announced to the Governing Body in the light of the report that he doubted “that the two major Freedom of Association Conventions had been drafted with the types of territory covered by the report in mind”.¹³⁵ They also provided justification for the colonial powers’ claims that the young trade unions needed the guidance of the colonial State.

The results did not pass without comment by the Governing Body. The Workers in particular were determined that the colonial powers should not get off so lightly. Jean Möri, the Swiss Chairman of the Workers’ group, insisted that “contrary to what is implied in the report, the Workers’ group consider[s] that trade unions [are] entitled to take an interest in politics”. The only decisive criterion for the healthy development of trade unions was not the restriction of their spheres of activity, he argued, but their “complete independence from governments and employers”.¹³⁶ His Egyptian colleague, Nasr, questioned the very logic of the colonial powers’ desire to keep trade unions out of politics, contending that the distinction between political and apolitical unions was artificial anyway under colonial conditions and served only to mask the colonial powers’ attempts to postpone the inevitable end to their rule. They were called upon to recognize that “in developing social leadership in non-metropolitan territories political leadership [is] also fostered”, and warned not to condemn this prospect but actively to encourage it in all areas as a step towards the independence of the colonies.¹³⁷

Appeals such as these had little impact on the colonial powers. Not one of them embraced the freedom of association standard for their territories until as late as 1960. For many of the colonies, then, the Office’s hope that freedom of association would be accepted as a universal principle of democratic development came to nothing until the eve of independence. The coherence of the concept had been strained almost to breaking point under the resistance of the colonial powers, which was directed essentially against the idea that free and democratic labour relations were actually a precondition for modernization. The metropolises held the democratic organization of interests to be something that could happen only gradually and that was dependent on a certain level of “maturity”. During this transitional period, then, the ILO’s democratic model of development was rejected in favour of a different, authoritarian form of development imposed from above.

Tripartism under fire

Not only was the ILO's campaign to gain recognition for the principle of freedom of association during this period impeded by the colonial powers, it met with increasing resistance from within the Organization itself. The reaccession of the Soviet Union significantly weakened the spirit of tripartism that had distinguished the ILO up to that point in its history. The socialist States' view of the function of social organizations within the State was completely different from the one implied by the liberal concept of the ILO. The distinction between free employers and trade unions on the one hand and the State on the other simply did not exist in socialist countries. The State embodied, officially, the interests of the workers, and the State was the only employer. Trade unions were, in the Leninist sense, purely "transmission belts" between the party or State and its enterprises. The concept of state socialism left no room for independence from the interests of the State, or for the right of an individual to join the organization of his or her own choice. Consequently, the function of trade unions was predominantly to secure social stability, to provide a setting for social and cultural activities and, most of all, to help draft and implement party directives on increasing productivity.

The main reason for the bitter disputes that erupted just after the Soviet Union's reaccession, however, was the socialist States' insistence on complying with the ILO's constitutional requirement that each country send to the Conference independent delegates from its most representative employers' and workers' organizations. As the socialist countries possessed neither workers' nor employers' associations that were independent from the government, a number of Western States rightly protested that they were effectively sending four Government delegates to the Conference, but passing two of them off as Employers' and Workers' representatives respectively. The West argued that this turned the Organization's basic democratic principles on their head, and gave the Eastern governments a disproportionately high number of votes into the bargain. The Western Employers and Workers thus tried to push through a constitutional amendment to ensure that in future only representatives of those trade unions and employers' associations that were actually independent of the government would be allowed to take part in the meetings of the Conference and the Governing Body. However, as they did not wish to risk losing the cooperation, so recently attained, of the socialist States in the ILO, most of the Governments and most ILO officials were against the proposal.¹³⁸ In order to bring the dispute down to a less politically charged level, in 1955 the Governing Body commissioned an independent committee of experts headed by the Briton Lord Arnold McNair to investigate the independence from government control of workers' and employers' organizations worldwide.¹³⁹

Like the Mudaliar Committee on forced labour, McNair's team was keen for the investigation to appear as objective as humanly possible. The Office

made it clear from the start that the results of the Committee's work were to contribute to a resolution of the tripartism dispute and not to intensify it. In essence, the report which the Committee published in 1956 completely re-evaluated the tripartite principle. One of its main arguments was that it was unwise to tie the principle of tripartism to one particular economic and social system. The Committee even claimed to see a certain convergence of Eastern and Western socio-economic systems when it came to the relationship between the State and workers' and employers' organizations. It cited in particular the massive increase in state involvement in the economic sector which had occurred in the liberal democratic systems after the war, concluding that the dichotomic models of the pre-war period were no longer a reliable measure of tripartism. The report found that the role of employers' and workers' associations had changed even in the Western countries. Long gone were the days when their duties were limited to protecting the interests of capital and labour, it pointed out. Indeed, the increasingly interventionist and corporate Western State was now found to be involving these associations in its own efforts, forcing them to turn more and more of their attention to new issues such as productivity. As a result, the organizations themselves now expected to be involved in matters of general national interest, and particularly in government economic and social policy. Despite this, the report noted, employers' and workers' organizations had not forfeited any of their independence. Although this independence did not exist in the socialist States, the report found that the actual function within these societies of government-led trade unions and socialist industrial management was very similar in many ways to that of Western workers' and employers' associations, concluding that representatives of the former groups could certainly make a useful contribution to the work of the Organization. The McNair Committee also called for the values set out in the ILO Constitution to be treated not as a condition for membership of the Organization, but as the goal of an evolutionary process.¹⁴⁰

When the report was discussed at the ILC in 1956, emotions once again ran high. Representatives of the Western employers' associations were bitterly opposed to the conclusions to which the Committee had come. For them, the road which the report proposed the Organization take was tantamount to a renunciation of tripartism. Eventually, however, they came round to the way of thinking of the majority of the governments in the Conference, which did not wish to risk a break with the East and which deemed a constitutional amendment to be neither feasible nor desirable. The Western Workers' representatives ultimately adopted this position too.¹⁴¹

Although the Office was relieved that the cohesion of the Organization was secured by the outcome of the debate, the cost of this compromise to the coherence of the concept of freedom of association was obvious. From now on, those delegations composed in accordance with the spirit of the ILO Constitution and the Freedom of Association Conventions had the same

rights as and no more legitimacy than a block of Workers' and Employers' representatives which openly contradicted one of the Organization's basic principles. The McNair Report had implicitly given its blessing to the authoritarian model of development for which the Soviet Union stood, thus further weakening an important element of the Office's democratic idea of modernization: the development of free and independent trade unions. What made this even more significant was the fact that at the same time the Organization was involved in an intense and difficult dialogue with the newly independent States of Asia and Africa on precisely this subject.

Asia as a test case and the "educational approach"

One section of the McNair Report dealt with the status of freedom of association in Asia and found widespread "restrictions and limitations" in the legislation concerning it "which would afford opportunities of domination and control to a government desirous of using them".¹⁴² This served only to confirm what the Office had been experiencing since the beginning of the 1950s. Asia was the test case. The reports which the Director-General drew up as a basis for discussion at the Asian Regional Conference always emphasized at length the significance the ILO attached to the principle of free and democratic industrial relations.¹⁴³ Judging by the approval shown by most of the Asian Government representatives at the two meetings of the ARC in Nuwara Eliya in 1950 and in Tokyo in 1953, these appeals appeared to have landed on fertile ground. The general tenor was positive when it came to freedom of association.¹⁴⁴

The Workers' representatives, however, told a different story. One delegate from Ceylon spoke of "serious lacunae" and warned that the "crusade for the establishment of complete freedom of association" was far from having achieved its aim.¹⁴⁵ The reality which the Asian trade union movements faced was indeed difficult to reconcile with the avowals of the governments. Subsequent debates would reveal that the free development of trade unions faced two recurrent hurdles. First, many governments were firmly opposed to the idea of politically active trade unions. Representatives from the WFTU in particular complained numerous times that, in the wake of anti-communist campaigns, its member associations in many places in Asia had been banned from operating, or at least firmly suppressed.¹⁴⁶ The governments seemed to fear the oppositional potential of the trade unions in a general sense, which made even non-communist unions in a number of countries the target of their hostility.¹⁴⁷ Second, many Asian governments were becoming increasingly sceptical about whether the concept of freedom of association in the form enshrined in the ILO norms was compatible with the demands of the national development effort, and tended to subject the trade unions (and sometimes the employers' associations too) to tight state control. Almost everywhere in Asia, the State was determined to have the last word when it came to the regulation of industrial relations.

The most common argument against allowing organized social interest groups to develop freely was that countries with a weak economic basis whose aim was to increase productivity as rapidly as possible needed everyone to pull in the same direction, namely that of national development. A fragmented trade union movement with differing political leanings, and a free play of forces in industrial relations, could only be detrimental to the interests of the country. The comment in Nuwara Eliya of the Indian Workers' representative Shastri, Secretary-General of the trade union federation INTUC (which was affiliated with the governing Congress Party), that "a hundred per cent copy of western methods of trade unionism may not be helpful in the peculiar circumstances that we are confronted with", was typical of this line of thinking. Elaborating, Shastri said that Asia was in a precarious position which demanded that the full realization of the principle of freedom of association take a back seat for a while. "The hope of the Asian working class lies in shedding its sectarian outlook and in identifying itself with national interests... Increased production is the supreme need of the hour. The policy of the trade union movement in Asia has to be so shaped that national production is accelerated to its maximum capacity."¹⁴⁸

The idea that the trade union movement needed to be subordinate to national (economic) development interests recurred in varying guises at all Conference sessions over the next few years. Delegates tended ever more frequently to draw a line between the national good and the good of the workers – a distinction which was inadmissible in the eyes of the ILO. In practice, this meant that in many places mechanisms of mandatory state arbitration were established, and strikes and lockouts forbidden by law, so as to nip any kind of labour struggle in the bud.

ILO officials were concerned about this trend towards complete state control over labour relations and decided to put the issue of industrial relations on the agenda of the ARC for its 1957 meeting in the Indian capital, New Delhi. In a report published in advance of the gathering, the Office stressed once again for the benefit of the Asian governments how important it considered free labour relations to be for the development process.¹⁴⁹ The Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, indicated in his opening speech that although he accepted this in principle, he would not hide the fact that in his eyes, the good of the nation had to take precedence over certain rights of workers. While recognizing the right of trade unions to use strikes as a way of protecting their interests, for example, he felt it was "quite absurd when we are talking about increasing production...to waste our energy in industrial conflict".¹⁵⁰ One thing on which almost all the governments agreed was that a distinction had to be made between the principle of freedom of association (to which they continued to be committed) and the actual organization of labour relations, in which state control was deemed to be indispensable and about which the Office's report had concluded that with

regard to industrial relations, “no single formula or system can be universally recommended”.¹⁵¹

This distinction was frustrating for the ILO, implying as it did a similar gradualism to that proposed by the colonial powers. Like most of the Workers’ delegates, ILO officials believed that the increasing state control over labour relations in Asia was just a symptom of a general decline in willingness to grant full trade union freedoms. The development argument put forward by the governments was, clearly, closely connected to considerations of domestic and security policy,¹⁵² which was going to make it doubly hard for the ILO to anchor its concept of labour relations in Asia. Deputy Director-General Rens returned from an extensive visit to many countries in the region overwhelmed and dismayed by their problems, but even more by the open hostility of the reception he had been given by a number of governments. Not even in those countries that were still positively disposed towards the ILO had the concept of freedom of association taken root to the extent previously hoped, Rens noted with regret.¹⁵³

The Office looked to the developing countries at the end of the 1950s, then, with hope and concern in equal measure. The TAP had enabled the Organization to gain much greater support for its work from the new nations and the rest of the world outside Europe, and the human rights Conventions which the ILC had adopted since the end of the war offered an increasingly solid basis for the ILO’s specific concept of democratic modernization. The first decade of the Organization’s work as an agency of development aid, however, had also shown that these new activities were far from the key to automatic acceptance of the ILO’s basic principles.¹⁵⁴ It was obvious that the ILO’s message was not always being heard, and as a consequence lessons had to be learned from the setbacks the Organization had faced. The ILO had changed since Morse took office. It was no longer a purely “Western” organization. The reaccession of the Soviet Union and the ensuing quarrels about the Organization’s tripartite structure had shown clearly that, for reasons of self-preservation, the ILO was going to have to make compromises which, to some extent, necessarily weakened the coherence of its approach.

If the ILO was going to be able to continue under these difficult circumstances to fulfil what David Morse saw as its mission, two things had to happen. First, the Organization’s technical functions had to be strengthened and expanded. This would not only help it to meet the very real need for technical assistance, which was growing all the time, but also contribute to depoliticizing the work of the Organization. Second, Morse believed, the promotion of the ILO’s basic principles had to be removed from the politically charged debates of the Conference and transferred to the more favourable context of its practical work. These were two of the main considerations behind the new “promotional” or “educational” approach which Morse introduced in his human rights report of 1958.

The idea had taken root two years earlier in the form of Morse's Labour-Management Relations Programme, which the Director-General intended to be "part of the process of education".¹⁵⁵ The Office had commissioned the American David Cole, a specialist on industrial relations, to write a report in 1956 investigating the opportunities for international action in this area. The Cole Report emphasized, in accordance with Morse's own beliefs, the importance for greater productivity of harmonious yet freely organized labour relations. Above all, though, it pointed out potential areas of activity for the ILO in fields such as research and technical assistance. On the basis of this report, the Office actually managed to convince the Governing Body of the need to approve and set up a programme of technical assistance in the area of labour relations.¹⁵⁶

The Labour-Management Relations Programme was a prime example of how, under Morse's leadership, the Office used consultation with "non-political" experts as a means of removing its projects from the arena of political debate. It was both the start of and a model for a series of other programmes which the Office drew up, as part of the TAP, in the years that followed, the most important being in the areas of management training and worker education.¹⁵⁷ All the programmes were directed almost exclusively at the developing countries, which strengthened the ILO's function as a transmitter of expert knowledge. The difference between these new programmes and the Organization's previous technical activities was that the new programmes made use of committed experts in areas in which they could and were encouraged to act as direct mediators of the Office's democratic model of modernization. Another key step was the establishment of the International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS), which from the end of the 1950s the Director-General worked tirelessly to promote among the various groups within the ILO's membership.¹⁵⁸

The experiences of the 1950s had made it clear to the Office that the ILO was standing at a crossroads in its history. The next few years would be critical in deciding whether the models of social development that took hold were authoritarian or democratic ones. "In the last analysis," wrote the Director-General in 1959 of the ILO's renewed attempts to direct the world down the path of democratic modernization, "the most and perhaps only effective answer to communism and other antidemocratic forms lies in the success of social and economic development complemented with education and training in all of its aspects." David Morse knew that the Organization was facing a race against time. The decolonization process had gained momentum during the 1950s, and was now speeding up in Africa too. Morse believed, though, that the ILO was prepared. If it could just continue on the road it had begun to go down, "we will be able to have more impact on the world than at any other period in our history".¹⁵⁹

Part III

A Growing Conflict: Development, Human Rights and Decolonization, 1960–70



International Labour Conference, 1963

7

A New Power: The ILO and the Growing Importance of the Developing World in the 1960s

At the beginning of the 1960s, the wave of decolonization reached the African continent and swept through it with force. The “African year”, as 1960 came to be known, saw a multitude of countries following the trail-blazers Ghana and Guinea into independence. The “wind of change which is blowing through this continent”,¹ in the words of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that same year, left an indelible mark on the ILO, which notched up 16 new members in 1960 alone.² By 1965 its membership had more than doubled in comparison with 1947, from 55 to 115 countries.³ This influx of new members was viewed by the ILO first and foremost as another major step towards fulfilling its aim of becoming truly universal. For the first time, the Organization could really claim to be active all over the world.

However, the tide of new members also brought certain problems with it. Suddenly, developing countries actually formed the majority in the Organization, and they soon began to demand more than to have this weighting reflected more strongly in the ILO agenda. When David Morse spoke at the 1964 Conference of a conflict of opinions “on basic questions concerning the aims, purposes and methods of the ILO”,⁴ he was referring in particular to the political claims of the new members. Their insistence on using the forums of the ILO to attack the remaining colonial powers, and especially the South African apartheid regime, led the Organization, for a while, to the brink of disaster.

Against this politically volatile backdrop, the Office went about attempting to strengthen the technical functions of the ILO by initiating a wide-ranging debate among its members on aspects of programme and structure, while at the same time trying to find an explanation for the obvious failure of the development strategies of the 1950s. This was the starting point from which employment went on to become the dominant theme of the 1960s, with the World Employment Programme (WEP) at the end of the decade

finally enabling the ILO to package its specific perspective on development in a way compatible with the expectations and demands of the majority of its members.

The ILO and the new majorities

Pressure to reform

The influx of African members accelerated a trend that had been developing since the end of the Second World War and which gradually led to the majority in the ILC being formed by the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Africa's rapid progression towards independence raised a series of problems for the ILO similar to those that had confronted the Organization during the first wave of decolonization in Asia a decade earlier. However, the speed with which the ILO's membership structure changed at the beginning of the 1960s made these problems much more acute. Developing countries now formed the bulk of the ILO's members, and this majority was calling emphatically to have its interests more strongly reflected in the structure and agenda of the Organization.

Their demands initially concerned the role of the ILO as a development agency. There was wide agreement in the Office that if the new members were to be successfully integrated, the Organization would have to continue to expand its work in this capacity. With regard to the material prerequisites for such an undertaking, the position the Office found itself in at the beginning of the 1960s was actually very strong. The strategic value attached to development assistance by Western donor countries in the global fight against communism had been growing continuously since the middle of the 1950s, and the ILO was benefiting from an unprecedented increase in multilateral aid. Khrushchev's new strategy of actively courting the sympathies of the new nations, regardless of their political orientation, was driving the West increasingly to bring its own, superior, financial clout to bear. One result of this was the setting up in 1960 of the International Development Association (IDA) under the auspices of the World Bank, which until that point had not been an agency of development aid at all. The role of the IDA was to grant cheap loans to developing countries. At the same time, similar aid agencies were springing up under the aegis of other Western organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Economic Community (EEC). All these strands together meant that significantly more money was available for economic development at the beginning of the 1960s than ever before.⁵

The main implication for the ILO of such initiatives was the new seal of approval that they bestowed on technical assistance. As the capital made available to developing countries grew, so did awareness of the necessity of creating "pre-investment conditions" – the conditions which needed to be met if an injection of capital into the development process was to be effective.

The ILO's Manpower Programme fitted the bill here perfectly: after all, was a well-trained workforce not one of the main conditions for the success of more comprehensive development strategies? As a result, the ILO was able to secure a healthy share of the takings when the UN reorganized its allocation of funds at the end of the 1950s on the basis of "pre-investment" thinking. At this point it was widely agreed that the EPTA (which until then had been the main body of financing for UN technical assistance), given its modest resources and especially the very short-term basis on which its funds were allocated (one year), was of only limited use in helping developing countries to meet pre-investment criteria. Thus, in 1959, on the initiative of the developing countries, the UN Special Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED) was launched. Having access to SUNFED money marked, both qualitatively and quantitatively, a milestone in the TAP and provided a "big boost" to the development work of the ILO as a whole, as David Morse remarked with satisfaction.⁶

This strengthening of the TAP gave the ILO an extra string to its bow which it put to use in attempts to win the sympathies of its new African members. The first African Regional Conference, which took place in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1960, provided a good opportunity for this kind of PR work. The ILO's offer actively to support the development process in the new African nations was received enthusiastically in Lagos. As in Asia in the 1950s, interest in the technical assistance provided by the ILO was keen. A resolution was passed underlining the continent's drastic needs in fields within the ILO's sphere of competence and reiterating the importance the Organization attached to technical assistance, particularly during the decolonization process. It stated explicitly that the TAP was an important tool for helping African nations to full independence, independence that might otherwise "be compromised by insufficient economic autonomy".⁷

The words of this resolution seemed to bespeak a harmony between the goals of the International Labour Office and the desires of its new members; however, the ILO also came in for heavy criticism in Lagos. Some African delegates expressed doubt as to whether the still fundamentally Eurocentric Organization was really in any position at all to meet Africa's needs. Many speakers complained that the ILO continued, primarily, to represent the interests of the industrialized West. For the same reason, a minority of delegates even called into question the intrinsic value of the technical assistance provided by the Organization. Delegates from Ghana, Guinea and the United Arab Republic (UAR) in particular, representatives of the more radical wing of Pan-Africanism, rejected wholesale the outwardly neutral stance taken by the Office, claiming that behind its apolitical, technical façade the ILO was a capitalist, Western, even "European" organization which could easily allow the TAP to become a vehicle for neo-colonial interests. Ghana's Government delegate Tay warned that care must be taken lest the ILO turn out to be a "Trojan horse with imperialists and colonialists in its belly".⁸

Seydou Diallo, a close political ally of the Guinean President Sekou Toure, shared this view, cautioning that the “exaggerated courtesy towards certain States” displayed by the ILO right up to the present day hardly spoke for the impartiality of the Organization, even in supposedly technical matters. “There are kisses that kill and embraces that stifle,” he admonished, and warned those present to consider long and hard before accepting the ILO’s offer of technical assistance. As long as the ILO failed to make changes to its structures, there was every danger that such structures could reveal themselves to be a “veiled manner of interfering in the internal affairs of countries”, paving the way for a new form of colonialism more hypocritical and thus even more dangerous than the last.⁹

ILO officials cannot have been surprised by words such as these, as radical Pan-Africanists were distrustful of international organizations in general. Nor was this the only way in which the goal of Pan-Africanism – to pursue a specifically African course on political, economic and social matters – collided with the ILO’s universalism, as will be illustrated below.¹⁰ However, in his closing speech in Lagos David Morse rejected as unfounded all the accusations that the ILO’s function or even intention in Africa was to promote Western or neo-colonial interests, calling the idea “completely foreign and completely opposite to the way the ILO works”.¹¹ The majority of delegates in Lagos in fact did not subscribe to this fundamental criticism of the ILO’s “neo-colonialist” slant and welcomed, in principle, the activities of the Organization, but this was of little comfort to Morse. It was all too clear that most of the countries present did share, at some underlying level, the perception that the ILO’s loyalties were pro-European or pro-Western. The resolution passed by delegates at the Conference demanding better representation for Africa on the political committees of the ILO and in the allocation of Office posts was just one illustration of this. The ILO was also called upon to regionalize its work further and to focus its agenda even more intensively on the needs of developing countries.¹² The Office was aware that all the countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America subscribed to these demands in principle, so it had to demonstrate that it was receptive to such calls. After all, it was in its interests to ensure that the new members were integrated into the Organization’s programme of technical activities as quickly and as smoothly as possible.

Politicization

The haste with which the ILO went about responding to the developing countries’ demands for more participation also stemmed from another trend which the influx of new members had accelerated and which the Office saw as an existential threat to the Organization. On top of their demands for fair representation in the structure and agenda of the Organization, the developing countries were attempting to introduce “a more political vision of the functioning of international organizations”,¹³

as Victor-Yves Ghebali puts it. This applied in particular to how the remnants of colonial rule should be dealt with. The phenomenon was not a completely new one by the beginning of the 1960s, as decolonization conflicts had been dominating the debates throughout the ILO to a growing extent since the mid-1950s. The war in Algeria, British policy on Cyprus and the Suez crisis had all been dealt with in depth in plenary sessions of the ILC. However, at the beginning of the 1960s the anti-colonial tone became noticeably stronger. In the international arena, the fight against colonialism had a hugely cohesive effect on the African, Asian and Latin American States. While divergent political and economic interests weakened the unity of this group on other issues, consensus was never very far away when it came to the question of how to tackle the remnants of colonial rule or how to react to policies of racial discrimination such as those pursued by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Apart from a temporary joining of forces on global economic issues, colonialism was the only area in which the ideas of Afro-Asian solidarity, "Non-Alignment" (the movement which had its first conference in Belgrade in 1961) or "South-South cooperation" ever became anything more than just that – ideas. It was a rare occurrence for the "Third World" to present a united front in the way dreamed of by statesmen such as Nehru, Sukarno, Nkrumah or Nasser; but, in their determination to use all the international forums available in the fight against colonialism, Africa and Asia at the beginning of the 1960s were more united than ever before.

The first major coup pulled off by the African and Asian States in this regard came at the UN General Assembly in 1960. The passing of a resolution brought by 43 African and Asian countries, in which the colonial powers were called upon to renounce their rule immediately, was momentous enough to guarantee that the session would go down in history. UN Resolution 1514, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, was to become the "bible of the anti-colonial religion".¹⁴ The Declaration denounced "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation" as a breach of basic human rights and of the right to self-determination of all peoples. It called for all States to respect the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on this basis to take immediate steps to establish the political freedom of all the territories still under colonial rule. It ruled that a low level of socio-economic development in a colony should never serve as a pretext to delay the granting of independence.¹⁵ The Declaration set the tone for a whole series of other initiatives, within the UN and the specialized agencies attached to it, which originated inside the ranks of the African and Asian countries. For those countries still clinging on to their colonies, and in particular for South Africa and Portugal, which were putting up stiff resistance to this "wind of change", attending UN meetings began to feel like running the gauntlet.¹⁶

The Office did everything in its power to ensure that these debates did not spill over into the Lagos Conference, which began immediately after that year's session of the UN General Assembly. Never before had it been at such pains to emphasize to the new members the technical nature of the Organization.¹⁷ However, if the Office wanted an "apolitical" meeting, the Governing Body's decision, taken in March 1960,¹⁸ to include North Africa in the Conference was not the right way to go about it. The Office was aware from the beginning that inviting the whole continent would make the event a much more political affair, on the strength alone of the presence of the United Arab Republic under Nasser, which was why its original plan was to limit the Conference to sub-Saharan Africa. However, the tensions between Israel and the Arab States made a Middle East Conference impossible, and excluding North Africa from the Lagos Conference would essentially have meant excluding it entirely from the regional activities of the ILO. This being the case, the Office had little choice other than to plead before the Conference began that participants should refrain from discussing anything except the technical items already on the agenda.¹⁹ The chairman of the Governing Body, the American George Cabot Lodge, reminded the assembly at the beginning of the meeting of the Director-General's appeal "not to deal with political issues on which African peoples may be divided and which we in the ILO have no competence to discuss or decide".²⁰ His admonition was in vain. Many of the delegates viewed the distinction between "political" and "technical" as artificial anyway, and simply ignored the request. The Nigerian Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, spoke in his opening address for most of those present when he expressed his respect for those "who believe in all honesty that labour problems are so closely related to politics that it is unrealistic to try to separate them".²¹ The general tenor of many of the speeches was that, under colonial conditions, social or technical problems were by nature political, as colonialism was always going to be the root of the evil, and until it was eradicated the goals of the ILO would never be realized. A trade union delegate from Guinea spoke in this connection of the "new and dangerous conception of the non-political character of the ILO", the sole intention of which, he claimed, was to divert attention away from the fact that the ILO was in the service of European, namely colonial, interests.²²

On the whole, then, any attempt to keep political problems out of the meeting could be regarded as having failed from the start. Indeed, it was all ILO officials could do to prevent the ship from sinking entirely. The Guinean Government delegate petitioned for the colonial powers to be excluded from the Conference and expressed his disgust at the presence of the French and British representatives, who, he claimed, were making a mockery of the whole of Africa by daring to show their faces in the light of the colonial wars currently being fought in Algeria and Kenya. Other delegations took part with equal zeal in what one US observer termed "the popular

sport of imperialist-baiting".²³ The Conference put to the vote resolutions which were specifically directed against Portugal and South Africa. Ghana and other political allies of the recently arrested Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba accused the members of the Congolese delegation of being lackeys of colonialism, and a group of Pan-African trade unionists distributed to members of the Workers' group copies of a pamphlet entitled *The great conspiracy against Africa*, which accused the British Government of pursuing a secret plan to infiltrate the African trade unions and promote neo-colonial interests. All this was rounded off by the United Arab Republic's attacks on Israel,²⁴ and intensive propaganda campaigns by the Soviet Union and the United States, which had both sent observers to Lagos.²⁵

Only the "truly masterful behind-the-scenes diplomacy" of ILO representatives, as one American official remarked with admiration, saved the Conference from collapsing altogether. The Office took advantage of the tensions which existed between radical and moderate African governments, for example, or between various factions within the Workers' group, and through "cajolery and coercion" managed to keep at least the final communiqués free of political snipes.²⁶ It was clear, however, that this was just a temporary victory. The problems which had surfaced in Lagos had simply been put on the back burner, not solved, and the Conferences and meetings of the Governing Body in the years which followed were full of similar anti-colonial initiatives.

The Office observed these developments with increasing concern. It was less the anti-colonialism of the new nations per se which they feared than the unforeseeable effects that anti-colonial debates could have on the Organization's ability to remain united, especially in the face of the additional pressures of the Cold War. The conflicts that had plagued the Organization since the reaccession of the Soviet Union were still smouldering. The critical international situation of the early 1960s in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis and the erection of the Berlin Wall made for a new consciousness within the Office of the significance and at the same time the vulnerability of the Organization's delicate equilibrium. As David Morse saw it, the real danger of the decolonization conflicts which were increasingly troubling the waters of the ILO was the potential they harboured to endanger the critical status quo. ILO officials had only to look to the UN to be reminded of what could happen in this regard. The organization and its Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld had been subjected to severe criticism in 1960 for their handling of the Congo crisis, in particular by representatives of the radical wing of the Pan-African Movement and by the Soviet Union. The UN was accused of being an instrument of the West and a tool in the promotion of neo-colonial interests.²⁷ The ILO, which had also been involved in the Congo mission, feared that it would come in for equal criticism as soon as such debates reached the Conference.²⁸ The fact that the Congo crisis seemed to have paralysed the UN was a particularly worrying

development. Morse and many other observers saw it as evidence of the danger that lay in the Soviet Union's allying itself with developing countries on the anti-colonial issue in an attempt to change the architecture of international organizations to its advantage, or at least to stop them from functioning effectively.²⁹

"The future really is dark indeed," warned David Morse at the time of the Congo crisis. In his eyes, decolonization in Africa had catapulted the East-West conflict into an ominous phase with unforeseeable consequences for all the international organizations. He was convinced that most of the responsibility for this state of affairs lay with the Soviet Union, which, as Morse wrote in 1961, "does not take any action in Africa or elsewhere in good faith or because the project to be undertaken is good sense", but for purely tactical reasons, that is, "to accomplish world communism". But he also recognized that some of the blame must go to the new nations, who played along with the Soviet Union to see what they could get out of it. For a long time, Morse believed that the UN might very well split into three parts, the "free world", the "communists" and the "neutrals", inevitably taking the ILO with it.³⁰ For the first time since taking office he even thought, albeit briefly, that the best way to proceed might be to "break with the illusion of universality until some later date when the world would be ready for it". He took comfort in the thought that in this event at least the "free world" would be able to concentrate its resources more efficiently and act more on the basis of common values than it had done previously.³¹

Even when it became evident that the worst-case scenario was not going to occur, the potential for disaster remained high and worried the Office as much as it did the majority of Western politicians. The prospect of the Soviet Union managing to gain enough support among the new nations to alter the architecture of the ILO, an organization in which it had previously been more or less powerless, was particularly disturbing, for Morse knew that this would lead to the Western governments and a significant number of the employers' and employees' groups losing all interest in the ILO. As it was, he was finding it harder and harder to resist the pressure that the Soviet Union was placing on him to install one of their nationals as Assistant Director-General. This brought home to him how thin the ice was on which the ILO was skating, and the lack of support he felt he was getting from the United States on the matter almost led him to step down a short time later.

The Soviet Union first expressed the wish for a Soviet Assistant Director-General in 1960. Morse did not want to comply, believing that it would endanger his independence and that of the ILO. The United States would also have been strongly against any such move, which would have had fatal consequences for the already tense relationship between the American Government and the Organization. This was something which Morse did not want to risk under any circumstances, especially since from 1961 he had finally got, under President Kennedy, a Government in Washington

more open to international cooperation in general and the ILO in particular than the Eisenhower Administration had been. Morse refused the Soviets' request, but announced that he would not be standing again when the 1962 election for the post of Director-General came around. However, under pressure from some US officials and many Governments and trade union representatives, Morse reversed this decision and the Governing Body re-elected him Director-General by a large majority (only the Soviet Union and Ghana voted against him). The outcome of the episode did not, however, ease the difficult position into which Morse was thrown by the East–West conflict. The Soviet Union's demands did not let up, and even hopes for better relations with the US Government were steadily undermined by the increasingly hostile attitude of George Meany, the President of the AFL–CIO. Meany was convinced – much more so than the American Government – that Morse was “soft on communism”.³²

Soon enough the developing countries began, emphatically, to demand change. The main focus of their attention was the Governing Body, the executive organ and real powerhouse of the ILO. At the beginning of the 1960s its Government component of 20 officials was still dominated by the industrialized nations of the West. Of the ten permanent members, seven represented industrialized Western countries, which alone was enough to guarantee their hegemonic status within the Organization. The developing countries called for the seats in the Governing Body to be reallocated on a geographically more balanced basis and for the permanent seats to be abolished; or, as an alternative, for the Conference to be constitutionally strengthened vis-à-vis the Governing Body. Both initiatives were doomed from the start. The Western countries were not willing to relinquish their position of supremacy and the developing countries were unable to force the changes, as both their suggestions would have required an amendment of the Constitution for which a two-thirds majority was necessary. The industrialized countries merely consented to a moderate enlargement of the Governing Body, which occurred in 1963, with the majority of the new (elective) seats going to Asian and African members.³³ This, however, fell far short of the sort of shift in the balance of power in the ILO that the developing countries were looking for.³⁴

Although the international situation did ease after the Cuban missile crisis, and the UN, under the leadership of its new Secretary-General, U Thant, managed to steer itself into calmer waters, the African and Asian countries' dissatisfaction with the structure of the ILO remained a real danger to the Organization. It was still a matter of existential importance that any further politicization of ILO debates be avoided, which once again meant emphasizing the Organization's technical nature and function. Against this backdrop, David Morse asked the member States at the ILC in 1962 to refrain from any political initiatives at the next two years' sessions of the Conference and to work together in a wide-ranging debate on the structural and programmatic reform of the International Labour Office.³⁵ Before this debate even had a

chance to get off the ground, however, the ILO got caught up – unexpectedly, for many who were surprised at the timing – in its most serious institutional crisis since 1940. And, as Morse had feared, the issue which led the ILO to the brink of disaster was connected with the anti-colonial agenda of the new members.

“With us or against us”: the ILO’s South African crisis of 1963

Apartheid under fire

The first attempts of the group of African and Asian States to bring their increased weight to bear in the 1960s were mainly directed against Portugal and South Africa. The Portuguese Government was targeted first and foremost because of its unwavering refusal to introduce political reforms in an Africa which was making rapid political progress, and its stubborn insistence on continuing to declare its colonies to be Portuguese provinces.³⁶ In a visit to Lisbon in 1960, David Morse experienced at first hand, in the course of discussions with the Portuguese dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, Portugal’s conviction that it was the last outpost of Western civilization in Africa, and that the concessions which the other Western powers were willing to make to the anti-colonial movement were a grave mistake.³⁷ Morse cautioned that if Lisbon did not declare its support for political reform, Portugal was certain to become the target of the anti-colonial forces within the ILO, but his warnings fell on deaf ears. International outrage over Portugal’s stance grew when an anti-colonial uprising in Angola in 1961 initiated a process in which the previously quiet Portuguese territories in Africa became the arena of a series of bloody colonial wars.³⁸ The UN General Assembly criticized the regime sharply, and even close allies of Portugal, such as the United States, began publicly to distance themselves from Lisbon.³⁹ At ILO meetings not an opportunity was missed by the African and Asian members to attack Portugal and to pass resolutions directed against the Portuguese Government. But all this paled in comparison with what was in store for the other major target of the new nations’ political outrage: South Africa.

The white apartheid regime’s radical rejection of the post-war human rights discourse had made South Africa a favourite target of the new nations within international forums. Despite incessant criticism from the international community, Pretoria refused to abandon its policy of racial discrimination. At the beginning of the 1960s, indeed, it seemed determined to take the apartheid programme even further. Under the Government of Henrik Verwoerd, who came to power in 1958, the system was consolidated, and the policy introduced of deporting the African population out of the towns into areas known as “homelands”. Outside the cities, which were whites-only areas, labour policy under apartheid centred on providing industry with large amounts of cheap African labour. Events in Sharpeville, a township

outside Johannesburg, where 69 people died when South African police opened fire on a crowd of unarmed black demonstrators in March 1960, opened the international community's eyes to the brutality of apartheid and cemented the regime's pariah status once and for all. For the first time, South Africa was taken before the UN Security Council, which found the South African Government to have been primarily responsible for the massacre and denounced the policy of apartheid as the root of the problem. But not even this had much of an effect on Pretoria. The Government declared a state of emergency and began mass arrests of its opponents.⁴⁰

On every front, the countries of Africa and Asia used their seats in international bodies to demand that South Africa be ostracized by the rest of the world, and stepped up their calls for the country to be barred from all international organizations. Before long, these calls were resounding through the halls of the ILO. The Organization had publicly criticized South Africa on a number of previous occasions. The Mudaliar Committee on forced labour, the Committee on Freedom of Association and the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations had all repeatedly condemned the social practices of apartheid.⁴¹ Since the introduction of this policy in 1948, the Office had maintained relations of "distant cordiality" with Pretoria, and did not expect, as Wilfred Jenks put it at the end of 1959, much cooperation in the foreseeable future.⁴² But this was not enough for the African and Asian countries, which pointed out that not only was South Africa flouting the principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia and failing to observe all the human rights standards passed by the ILC, it had gone as far as to make its contempt for the principles of the ILO into official government policy.⁴³ "I fail to understand how," said the Tanganyikan Workers' delegate Michael Kamaliza in his address to the AFRC in Lagos, "given these evils, it [South Africa] can still continue to be a member."⁴⁴ One year later, the Nigerian Labour Minister Joseph Modupe Johnson submitted a resolution to the ILC in the name of some African and Asian countries in which South Africa was called upon to face the consequences of its disregard for the principles of the Organization and to leave the ILO voluntarily.⁴⁵ Johnson made it clear that the African and Asian countries regarded the matter as one of fundamental importance and would interpret any opposition to the resolution as a gesture of hostility.⁴⁶ The second Nigerian Government delegate, Salubi, emphasized that from the point of view of his and every other African and Asian government, every vote against the resolution would be "a vote against the principles of this Organization, a vote against Asia and Africa, and above all a vote against the good and progress of mankind".⁴⁷ Not a single voice was raised in defence of apartheid, and indeed, not one of the many speakers failed to condemn Pretoria's policies in the strongest possible terms.

At the same time, however, there were significant differences of opinion on how to proceed. The British Government delegate rejected the "if you're

not for us you're against us" attitude of many of the African and Asian States, believing, along with the majority of the Western Governments, that South Africa's leaving the Organization was not the best way to deal with the problem of apartheid. The inevitable isolation of the country which would result would have the most damaging effect on those very groups the Organization actually wanted to protect. The point of international cooperation was doggedly to keep the channels of communication open so that positive change could be brought about. Western countries pointed out that it would smack of double standards to abandon the principle of universality in the case of South Africa when many of the Organization's other members – a pointed swipe at some of the Eastern Bloc countries – demonstrated an equally blatant disregard for basic principles such as freedom of association.

There were undoubtedly other reasons, which did not make it into the speeches given at the ILC, for many delegations not wanting to increase South Africa's pariah status any further. Economic ties and military strategic considerations, as well as the recognition that Pretoria offered an anti-communist bulwark in Southern Africa, were almost certainly on the minds of more than one foreign policy-maker in Washington and London.⁴⁸ Something else which kept a lid on enthusiasm for the resolution, especially in the case of the smaller countries, was the knowledge that this could create a precedent. Throwing South Africa out now might mean that other countries could experience a similar fate themselves one day.⁴⁹ In the end, all the African, Asian and Eastern Bloc delegations voted in favour of the resolution, as did almost all the Workers' group. This represented a clear and unambiguous victory for the motion. However, although the resolution received 163 votes in favour and not a single one against it, there were 89 abstentions,⁵⁰ which meant it would have no actual consequences. For its part, South Africa remained unimpressed by the whole business and made no move whatsoever either to change its policies or to leave the ILO.⁵¹

The ILO in the balance: the ILC of 1963

Most people were convinced that the passing of the 1961 resolution would be the height of the storm surrounding South Africa, but they underestimated the depth of pent-up resentment that African countries in particular were feeling about how ineffective their initiatives up to now had been. Many Office officials and a fair number of delegates were fully unprepared for the violence with which the topic of South Africa forced its way on to the agenda of the ILC in 1963. What David Morse and the Office had, up until that point, regarded with concern as the undesirable politicization of ILO debates against the backdrop of decolonization grew into a crisis of dangerous proportions. The new nations were about to show that, in their fight against colonialism and racial discrimination, they were willing to risk challenging the ILO to a test of strength.

The ILC in 1963 was especially significant for Africa. For the first time ever, an African, Nigeria's Joseph Modupe Johnson, had been chosen to chair the Conference. In May 1963, immediately before the ILC started, there was a meeting of African heads of State in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, at which the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded and the decision was made, with unanimous support, to take steps which would lead to the ostracism of the South African regime in all international bodies.

There was another reason for the events which followed, however. This was also the year in which the ILO had announced it wanted to concentrate exclusively on debating structural and programmatic reforms. This was important with regard to the South African debate in that the socialist countries recognized they could use South Africa at the Conference both to score propaganda points and to create an alliance with the new nations which would put them in a strong position to challenge the constitutional arrangements within the ILO which up until that point had favoured the West.

After a smooth enough beginning, the explosion came on the third day of the Conference. Second on the list of speakers for that day was the South African Employers' delegate William Hamilton. Several African delegations had made it clear in advance that they would not accept any South African contributions to the debate. The representative of the United Arab Republic enquired officially of the Office's legal adviser whether South Africa's right to speak could not be challenged on the basis of the 1961 resolution. The answer was unambiguously negative: Hamilton had the right to speak. However, the Vice-President of the Conference for the Government group, the Ukrainian Sergei Slipchenko, who was representing Johnson as the Chairperson that day, let speaker after speaker take the floor to bring emergency motions, all of which attacked in increasingly aggressive tones the South African presence at the Conference. The Africans were supported by delegates from Latin America, Asia and several communist countries. From the sidelines of the Conference the Liberian Minister of Agriculture and Commerce hinted to the press that failure to exclude South Africa from the Conference could have unpredictable consequences: "We have a rat in the house. Shall we burn the house in order to get rid of the rat?"⁵² The French Government delegate, Alexandre Parodi, was booed for claiming that the issue was not apartheid, but whether or not a delegate who was duly accredited to the Conference had the right to speak.⁵³

The next morning Johnson told Morse and the whole chairing committee that he would not take back the chair if the South African was allowed to speak. It was finally agreed that the American Workers' delegate Rudolph Faupl would take over the chair on the day in question.⁵⁴ This put Faupl into a difficult position, as he himself was one of apartheid's most resolute opponents and had been instrumental in enlisting the Workers' support for the 1961 resolution. However, there was unspoken recognition among

everyone present that the South African was, constitutionally, entitled to speak, and that Faupl would not be able to refuse to allow him to take the floor. But when, the next day, Faupl turned down several African delegates and gave the floor instead to Hamilton as scheduled, the majority of the African, Arab and Asian delegations left the Conference, along with those from socialist countries and many of the Workers' delegates.⁵⁵

A feeling of general unease descended on the International Labour Office. It was not clear whether the missing delegations would return to the Conference, and there were indications that the Africans were already planning their departure from Geneva. This put the ILO in a precarious position, not least because the following year's budget had not yet been passed. If the Conference collapsed, the ILO's whole agenda of work would be put on the line, as at least half the delegates had to be present for the budget to be adopted.

David Morse could certainly sympathize with the African countries as far as the reason for their actions was concerned. On the other hand though, the Director-General was convinced that excluding States from the ILO was fundamentally the wrong way to go about making progress. He believed that the fight against apartheid would be much less effective if carried on outside the ILO and subscribed to the credo that effective pressure could only be exerted on member States. Morse had applied this integrationist rule before, in the case of the Soviet Union, arguing then too in the face of strong resistance (including from the United States) that integration and universality had to take precedence, if it came to it, over a dogmatic clinging to principles. His main worry now was that South Africa might set a precedent for the future. He also feared any action that held the Constitution in contempt, and he was in no doubt at all about the fact that, constitutionally, South Africa had every right to speak before the Conference.

Nevertheless, the ILO was on the brink of an existential crisis and initiative was called for. Morse decided that he himself would suggest a course of action to the Africans which made concessions to their demands but at the same time offered an alternative to a complete withdrawal from the Conference.⁵⁶ This plan was quickly shattered by the fact that the African countries had meanwhile definitively agreed that they would not accept any more contributions from South Africa. And if South Africa were not banned from taking the floor, Sikhe Camara, the Guinean spokesman for the African group, told the press, Johnson would stand down as Chairman and the Africans would leave the Conference and not return. Johnson himself accused the Director-General of being partly responsible for the fact that "the Officers of the Conference had put such a premium on the legal and constitutional side of the South African issue and had ignored the moral aspect".⁵⁷ A press release published by the Nigerian Government on the same day warned that "meanwhile, the International Labour Organization future hangs in the balance".⁵⁸

As South Africa was still determined to exercise its right to speak, Morse was left with very few options.⁵⁹ He decided to take the bull by the horns and to make a speech to the Conference in which he would explain the Office's position on the matter. But when he came to take the floor on 18 June, he discovered that the African delegations had apparently been conferring with the socialist bloc on the course of proceedings because, contrary to what had been agreed earlier, Slipchenko, the acting Chairman, invited not him but Johnson to speak first.⁶⁰ This gave Johnson the opportunity to resign his chairmanship of the Conference and to blame the escalation entirely on the "legalistic manner" in which the Office, in his opinion, had handled the matter. Johnson made a direct comparison between the fight against apartheid and the battle against fascism which had been fought not so long before, and asked the Organization to consider carefully whether its lack of interest might not be due to the fact that the evil in this case was being perpetrated outside Europe and America.⁶¹

Morse responded to these accusations in what was to become one of the most memorable speeches in the Organization's history. An American press observer even termed it "Morse's finest hour".⁶² With no regard for diplomatic niceties, he rejected the allegations Johnson had levelled against the Organization, denying that the ILO was guided by legalistic principles and pointing out that it had done more than any other international organization to lend concrete substance to the moral postulates of the Declaration of Human Rights. The ILO's commitment to the fight against discrimination stemmed from a more firmly moral standpoint than that of any other organization. But it could only fight this fight within a constitutional framework. The alternative was "arbitrary, vicious rule which today may be turned against one party but tomorrow will be turned against another party". Morse said he was convinced that the only way to promote human rights was through a scrupulous observation of the rule of law and proper procedure: "Without law there can be no respect for human dignity, no civilised recognition of equal rights and equal opportunities." Furthermore, Morse assured his critics, "I need no lessons on racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is the enemy of the civilized world community. It is a challenge to the existence of a world community, and so it is a challenge to world peace, it is a challenge to world order. We must fight this enemy but we must fight it with methods which strengthen the foundations of world order."⁶³

Morse's speech had the desired effect. Although the African and Arab nations did go ahead and act on their threat to withdraw from the Conference,⁶⁴ the tone of the press conference given the next day by Camara, the spokesman of the African group, was much more conciliatory than previously. Camara assured those listening that "the ILO will go on living".⁶⁵ It was no one's intention to destroy the ILO, he said, and for that reason the Africans had decided to continue to take part in the meetings



The Nigerian Minister of Labour, Joseph Modube Johnson, announces he is stepping down as President of the Conference at the ILC in 1963 (David Morse is visible in the background)

of the Governing Body that were taking place parallel to the Conference. In the end, even the budget was approved with a small majority and the Conference was brought to an orderly conclusion.⁶⁶ The obstructive tactics employed by the communist bloc, which hoped to see the Conference adjourned without the budget being approved, thus effectively paralysing the ILO, failed because neither the Africans nor any other country behind the initiative to exclude South Africa was prepared to support them.⁶⁷

“Stronger than before”: the ILO after the crisis

The worst of the crisis was over. David Morse knew very well, however, that the Organization had got off relatively lightly and that this was no guarantee that something similar would not happen in the future. He knew that action was required, and on the strength of this conviction took an unusual step. He went to the Governing Body, which had been given responsibility for dealing with the South African question, and personally submitted a set of proposals which would allow for the gradual exclusion of Pretoria, but within a constitutional framework. Morse suggested that first of all South Africa should be barred from all the meetings of the Governing Body, all the Regional Conferences

and some of the other committees. Parallel to this, a delegation from the Governing Body should consult with the UN Secretary-General on how South Africa could legally be excluded from the ILO. The ILO would offer the UN its support in implementing any future sanctions which the latter might decide to impose on the apartheid regime. Finally, the Governing Body should set up an investigative committee which would carry out its own analysis of the human rights situation in South Africa with regard to compliance with ILO standards, regardless of whether Pretoria had ratified them or not. These proposals met with the approval of the African and Arab members of the Conference, and all the other groups,⁶⁸ and the Governing Body voted overwhelmingly in favour of them.⁶⁹

Morse's initiative was born partly of the realization that any attempt to keep South Africa in the Organization was doomed to failure. He knew that if the ILO did not take action now, the initiative would pass back into the hands of more radical forces.⁷⁰ He also thought that consulting with the UN would take some of the responsibility off the ILO and win the Organization some time. It was clear that South Africa was extremely unlikely to be barred from the UN, even before Morse and a delegation from the Governing Body met Secretary-General U Thant in September 1963.⁷¹ The Security Council would have had the last word on any initiative to exclude South Africa, and its members included two of the most resolute opponents of this course of action, the United States and Britain.⁷² ILO officials knew that, as a specialized agency of the UN, the ILO would have real problems expelling a State which was to remain a member of the parent organization. But as it transpired, the situation never arose. As a result of the measures taken by the Governing Body at Morse's suggestion, the problem of South Africa's membership finally took care of itself. In 1964 a Governing Body commission published a plan of action on apartheid. The paper contained a declaration denouncing South Africa's racial policy in the strongest terms and describing its infringements of the basic principles of the ILO as so serious that they could no longer be considered an internal affair of the country. The commission recommended amending the Constitution so as to allow members that had been condemned by the UN for policies of racial discrimination to be barred from all ILO bodies except the Conference. When the Governing Body approved this plan of action by a large majority,⁷³ South Africa pre-empted its imminent castigation and declared that it was leaving the ILO.⁷⁴

With the exception of the Government in Pretoria, everyone was content with the way the South African crisis had ended. The African and Asian States had won a landmark victory for their cause in a highly symbolic matter. They had brought their – substantial – weight within the international community to bear and forced the ILO to act. In doing so they had managed to reset the limits of what the world diplomatic community would tolerate.

There were also positive aspects for the ILO in the way the conflict had ended, first and foremost because the crisis, which for a moment had taken

the Organization to the brink of dissolution, had not exerted the centrifugal force on the principle of universality of membership which it had at times threatened to do. Immediately after the ILC in 1963, Deputy Director-General Jef Rens noted with relief a willingness on the part of the African and Asian members of the Governing Body "to limit the motive for sanctions only to the obnoxious policy of apartheid, and not to open the door wide for the expulsion of any member State which did not live up to its obligations under the Constitution".⁷⁵ Even those who had fought on the front line of the campaign to ban South Africa seemed to be content to leave it there.

The unspoken agreement which prevailed from now on among the members of the ILO was due as much to David Morse's ceaseless efforts in this regard vis-à-vis the groups concerned as to the recognition by many governments that it was simply not in their interests to make membership of the ILO dependent on compliance with the Organization's basic standards.⁷⁶ If this were made into a general rule, it could too easily be turned against themselves, and there was many an African or Asian State less than keen to see its membership tied to its position on freedom of association or freedom from forced labour, as the parallel debate on the future agenda of the ILO made clear.⁷⁷ The same went for the Soviet Union. A motion had already been brought by the Employers' group at the ILC in 1963 calling for any member whose policies represented a permanent infringement of the principles of the Constitution to be barred from the Organization. Moscow, which had no doubt that motion was directed at itself, had reacted with extreme caution.⁷⁸ But Portugal was the main beneficiary of the apparent consensus among the ILO's members that there were to be no more South Africa-style initiatives. Although the situation in its African territories continued to deteriorate over the course of the 1960s, Lisbon was spared any moves to ban it from the Organization. Despite continued criticism from all sides and the annual burst of condemnation by the ILC, where whenever a Portuguese speaker stood up to take the floor the rows of African and Asian delegates would empty rapidly, the legality of Portugal's presence in the ILO was never questioned.

The outcome of the South African crisis was positive for the ILO in other ways, too. In insisting on a constitutional solution to the conflict, it had proved that it was capable both of acting and of remaining true to its principles, even when the Organization seemed to be on the brink of collapse. The Indian Labour Minister Gulzarilal Nanda was just one of many to remark approvingly to Morse that the ILO had dealt with a difficult situation with courage and tact and had come out of it "stronger both morally and constitutionally".⁷⁹

In addition, South Africa's voluntary departure gave the Office a chance to criticize the apartheid regime in a way which would have been unthinkable if it had remained a member of the Organization. In 1964, for example, the Conference adopted a declaration drafted by the Office

condemning the “degrading, criminal and inhuman policies” of the South African Government and deeming Pretoria “unworthy of the community of nations”.⁸⁰ Never before had the political and social system of a single country been the object of such intense monitoring and relentless criticism over such a long period of time. The Director-General began to submit special reports to the Conference at periodic intervals detailing what progress had been made in the confrontation with apartheid. The ILO regarded it as its specific duty to keep drawing attention to the evils of apartheid and thus to mobilize world opinion against the South African regime.⁸¹ The uncompromising tone in which the publications and work programmes of the Office condemned South African policy after 1964, when it no longer had to worry about the rules of diplomatic etiquette, was also intended as a clear statement to all those who accused the ILO of being toothless when it came to standing up for its principles.

For David Morse, the South African episode served as yet another incentive to try to impress upon the African and Asian States the desirability of keeping the Organization primarily technical, that is, apolitical. He was convinced that incidents such as this could be prevented from occurring in the long term only if the ILO redoubled its efforts to accommodate the needs of the developing countries on a practical level.

The social side of development: the TAP in the 1960s

The ILO and the North–South conflict

In 1961 the UN General Assembly declared the 1960s to be the “First United Nations Development Decade”.⁸² This initiative was taken in response to the general feeling within the international community that previous efforts at encouraging development had fallen far short of the desired result, and that specific new measures were necessary if the social and economic conditions faced by a large proportion of the earth’s population were to improve. By the end of the 1950s the developing countries’ hopes of being able to catch up with the industrialized world were already turning into disappointment. The economic divide between the “First” and “Third” Worlds had not narrowed since the end of the war but had actually widened. In the light of realizations such as these, the rift between industrialized and developing countries began to increase on the international stage, too. In the 1950s, the developing countries’ demands on the rich industrialized nations had centred mainly on extending the provision of aid to overcome internal barriers to development. Now, however, attention began to shift to external factors such as the biased structures of the world economy, which were said to be putting developing countries at a disadvantage. The structures of international trade came to be seen as the main culprit in the failure of all previous efforts to eliminate the colossal differences in prosperity separating humankind. This idea was supported by the findings of the structuralist

development economists of the “dependency theory” school of thought which emerged at the end of the 1950s. Its most prominent representatives, Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer, both high-ranking UN officials at the time, had from the beginning of the decade rejected the prevailing view among first-generation development economists that the international division of labour between the primary producers and the industrialized countries would lead in the long term to increased welfare on both sides. Prebisch and Singer argued that this arrangement simply led to a constant deterioration in the terms of trade which primary producers were offered, with the only winners being the industrialized North. They pointed to the fluctuations in world market prices for raw materials which characterized the 1950s as confirmation of their warnings.⁸³ In this context a discourse grew up in which the structures of the world economy increasingly began to be labelled “neo-colonial”.

The arguments of the structuralist development economists were grist to the mill of those who saw industrialization, as practised by India and many Latin American countries, as the only way to avoid the disadvantageous conditions suffered by primary producers on the world market. But where the internal market was too small, capital too tight or the general economic basis too limited, for example, import-substituting industrialization (ISI) was not always a feasible strategy. And as the industrialized nations were not willing to expose their industries to direct competition, export-oriented attempts at industrialization soon saw developing countries come up against insurmountable trade barriers – another aspect of world trade relations which drew strong criticism.

At the beginning of the 1960s the group of developing countries, despite the large economic and political differences between them, began to make concerted efforts to bring their new weight within the international organizations to bear on this matter. The Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned States in 1961 marked the beginning of a process of unification which reached its formal conclusion with the founding of the Group of 77 at the first UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. One result of this joining of forces on the part of the developing world was the emergence within the UN system of a clear North–South divide when it came to issues of world trade. On one side of the divide, a largely united group of developing countries was demanding not only increased multilateral aid, but international agreements to secure the prices of raw materials and, under the slogan “trade not aid”, preferential access for their manufactured goods to the markets of the industrialized nations.⁸⁴ On the other side, an equally united group of industrialized nations was showing, apart from the occasional increase in funds for multilateral development aid, absolutely no signs that it was willing to accede to any of these demands. International price agreements, which would have provided a measure of security to countries whose national economies were based on the export of

raw materials, were simply not in the interest of the industrialized West; nor was the idea of exposing Western industries to potential competition. The notion of regulating world trade so as to benefit developing countries had few if any supporters among the Western nations. It was, in fact, to avoid this very scenario that the capacity of the World Bank to grant loans to developing countries had been increased. The American Government in particular, which had been instrumental in setting up the IDA and in getting Western partners on board,⁸⁵ saw the Agency as a way of increasing general prosperity while avoiding the need to make compromises on the concept of a liberalized world trade order. It was precisely these considerations which were behind the "can-do" approach of the new US President John F. Kennedy, who made the "development decade" one of the watchwords of his presidency. Whatever else it may have been, Kennedy's development offensive had nothing to do with realigning the coordinates of world trade to benefit the "Third World".⁸⁶

It was difficult for the ILO to know what position to take on a battlefield where the fronts were so clearly defined. The developing countries, of course, pushed for the Organization to take their side in the fights which lay ahead. Resolutions passed by the African and Asian Regional Conferences in 1960 and 1962, for example, called upon the ILO to work on an international level to bring about agreements which would secure price stability for raw materials on the world market.⁸⁷ The authors of these resolutions based their demands on the Declaration of Philadelphia, which in principle gave the ILO a mandate for measures such as this.⁸⁸ Debates at the ARC in Melbourne in 1962 were particularly dominated by the issue of raw material prices.⁸⁹

But on this as on all questions concerning the world trade order, the ILO's hands were tied. The industrialized Western nations claimed that such matters lay outside the Organization's competence and should be reserved for the financial institutions of the UN or the talks held under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Nor was it just the Governments that were opposed to the ILO intervening on the side of the developing countries in matters of world trade. Any regulations which led to an increase in prices for raw materials or forced the rich industrialized nations to open up their markets would hardly have been in the interests of the Western Employers or trade unions either.⁹⁰ As a result, David Morse did not have much choice but to call upon both sides to subscribe to a "Declaration of Interdependence". He promised the developing countries that the Organization did accord priority to the needs of its poorer members ("the needs of those countries where poverty is greatest and which are making efforts to develop their economies have a prior claim upon our potential for action"), but simultaneously appealed to the Asian, African and Latin American delegates to be more understanding of the concerns of industrialized nations, especially with regard to the internal difficulties

which opening their markets to industrial products from developing countries might create.⁹¹ But the developing countries, which had wanted the Director-General to come down firmly in support of them, heard in these words only an empty attempt at placation. Morse's position also fed the suspicions of those who believed that the ILO continued to support the interests of the industrialized West over those of its other members.

Paradoxically, the ILO found itself facing a similar dilemma over the question of industrialization, despite this being one of the areas in which the Organization was most successful and proudest of its record, and one in which its competence and desire to offer technical assistance were very much in line with the interests of many developing countries. However, the sheer weight which the developing countries attached to industrialization eventually came to be problematic. Since the late 1950s they had been putting pressure on the UN to increase support for their development efforts. In 1960 ECOSOC set up a body to focus on industrial development, and there were soon initiatives to turn this body into a new UN specialized agency. The problem for the ILO was that in many areas, and especially on vocational training, the planned United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) threatened to compete directly with the ILO's Technical Assistance Programme, which would have forced the ILO into a difficult contest for UN resources.⁹² For this reason the Office was "strongly opposed to the establishment of a new agency" and did everything it could to torpedo the initiative.⁹³

The controversy surrounding the setting up of UNIDO carried on into the mid-1960s, but was finally resolved as the ILO had hoped. UNIDO was set up as an autonomous organization and not a UN specialized agency, which meant that its status was inferior to that of the ILO. With regard to the allocation of areas of competence to the two organizations as far as technical assistance was concerned, a *modus operandi* was found which allowed the Office to continue its previous activities more or less without restriction. However, from the point of view of the ILO the outcome was flawed by the fact that it had been brought about mainly through the efforts of the industrialized Western countries, which from the beginning had wanted to limit the influence of the new organization as much as possible. As they were the potential donors to UNIDO, they were in a strong position to wring compromises out of the developing countries regarding its status.⁹⁴ As a beneficiary of these compromises, the ILO was once again exposed to accusations that it had acted on behalf of the interests of the industrialized nations.

A social response to the crisis

Throughout these conflict-ridden times for the Organization, from the beginning of the 1960s onwards the Office had been working on renewing and revitalizing its Technical Assistance Programme. The disputes surrounding the world trade order now made it more important than ever

to prove to the developing countries the functional value of the ILO in overcoming the structural factors within those States that were responsible for underdevelopment. The Office wanted the new-look TAP to provide a way (compatible with the goals of the ILO) out of the impasse into which the development policies of the 1950s, with their concentration on economic growth, had all too obviously led. The proponents of the dual theory of development had assumed that a certain level of annual growth (initial estimates put it at 2 per cent) would be enough to support a self-sustaining development process. By the end of the 1960s it was clear that this assumption had been erroneous. Even in countries where governments were reporting high economic growth, it was not enough to increase the standard of living for the majority of the population by any significant amount. The scenario was the same wherever one looked: poverty in economically stagnant rural areas led to unchecked migration towards urban centres, which, as a result, grew rapidly and chaotically. Nowhere, not even in countries (such as India) where industrialization strategies had seen a certain level of success, did the cities provide anything like enough employment to soak up the migrants arriving in millions from the countryside.⁹⁵ The basic premises of the dualistic model of development had been proven false: the growth of the "modern" economic sector did not suffice to absorb the influx of labour from the "traditional" sector. The process was as devastating for the cities as it was for rural communities. Asia and Latin America were the areas most visibly affected, as the situation there was aggravated by high population growth.⁹⁶

Against this alarming backdrop a wide-ranging debate had been initiated at the end of the 1950s, both on the academic level and within international development agencies, to try to find out what had caused the development policies of the past to fail, and to establish what lessons could be learned. The ILO took the view, shared by many development economists at the time, that the growth-oriented approaches of the past had placed too much trust in the power of the "invisible hand" of the market. The answer, then, was for the State to play a more active role in economic planning and coordination. In some countries, such as India, this idea already had a long tradition, but it was, in theory, possible all over the developing world, with late colonial institutions often providing a good starting point.⁹⁷

The setting up of the United Nations Special Fund for Economic Development allowed the ILO to play more of a role in the planning processes of the developing countries. Not only did SUNFED provide more funding than EPTA for the Organization's Technical Assistance Programme, it also financed longer-term projects of three to five years. Whereas in the 1950s such long projects had been the exception rather than the rule, now the ILO could put its energies into project planning as well as implementation. The mere fact that from the year SUNFED was set up the ILO financed more TAP projects through it than through EPTA every year (with the sole

exception of 1964) shows how quickly the planning element became one of the defining features of the Technical Assistance Programme.⁹⁸

With these new opportunities opening up before it, at the beginning of the 1960s the Office started to formulate its specific contribution to the debates of the first development decade. It became more and more convinced that even increased economic planning would not on its own solve the problems of the developing countries, and began to try to raise awareness of the social aspects of development, which had been more or less ignored up until that point. This position was unconventional, to say the least, in the development economic debates of the time. In the ILO's view, neither the classic development theorists, such as Arthur Lewis, nor the dependency theorists, with their focus on the structures of world trade, paid enough attention to the social aspects of development.⁹⁹ ILO officials believed that the real reason for the failure of efforts to raise the standard of living for the majority of the population in so many Asian and Latin American countries was the fact that the social consequences of economic development had largely been ignored. For David Morse, one of the bitterest insights that development efforts since the war had provided was that social progress did not automatically emerge from economic progress. Indeed, for the millions everywhere living in subsistence conditions despite economic growth, or on the brink of starvation in urban centres which were spreading out of all control, the term "development" had, for precisely this reason, actually taken on negative connotations.¹⁰⁰ Morse made it the declared aim of the ILO to prevent the development ideal from being further discredited and to put an end to the political destabilization that had resulted from this disillusionment. The ILO would exploit the world's new recognition of the importance of planning, and bring to it a strong social component. And it would concentrate first and foremost on employment policy.

"First attempt at truly world-wide planning": towards a World Employment Programme

As time went by, ILO officials became more and more convinced that the Organization's role in getting the development process back on the right track was to raise awareness within the developing countries of the necessity of focused planning and active policies to create "productive employment". From the beginning of the 1960s onwards, the ILO began to refocus all its activities, including the TAP, in line with this new objective.

The Director-General's report from 1961 entitled "The role of the International Labour Organization in the promotion of economic growth and social progress in developing countries" argued that creating productive employment was by far the most effective strategy that could be applied in the pursuit of social development because, it was hoped, productive employment would counter the development-blocking consequences of unchecked population growth. The report criticized the failure of most

of the developing countries' economic plans to set out clear goals relating to employment, and pointed to a lack of awareness of the problem among economic planners and general uncertainty about the possibly damaging effects of employment-oriented economic policy as additional underlying problems.¹⁰¹ In the same year, the ILC passed a resolution calling on all countries to incorporate the goal of creating productive employment into their national plans.¹⁰²

Building upon this basis, the following year the Office launched a global plan of action so ambitious that it towered above everything the ILO had previously done under the TAP. David Morse made it his number one priority in his last years in office to get the World Employment Programme up and running, and he made sure that both within the political bodies of the ILO and inside the Office the planning of this programme topped the agenda. He campaigned tirelessly to promote the WEP within the Organization, and succeeded in winning the active support of the international trade union confederations. Parallel to all this, intensive efforts were beginning on the regional level to convince the governments of developing countries of the sense in having a global programme on employment. At the second AFRC, in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa in December 1964, Morse described the scourge of unemployment as the "single, dominant social problem of Africa today".¹⁰³ The same year, the Governing Body put the issue on to the agenda of the next American Regional Conference, scheduled for 1966 in Canada.¹⁰⁴

The "Ottawa Plan" which came out of the 1966 meeting was the first in the series of regional employment programmes which, taken together, would go on to form the pillars of the WEP. Under it, all the American members agreed to take concerted steps to create more productive employment. The plan's authors saw this as a positive alternative to other measures, such as birth control or forced restrictions on the mobility of the population, which for political, religious or administrative reasons would be difficult to enforce or would take longer to have an effect. The four-step programme of action outlined by the Ottawa Plan embodied, even at this early stage, all the basic principles of the WEP. First, labour reserves should be put on a level with capital or other resources in countries' national plans. Second, a list of employment-related criteria should be drawn up to be used in the selection of investment projects. Third, on the basis of these criteria a national policy aimed at creating more employment should be put in place. Fourth, these national solutions should be harmonized into an integrated regional approach.¹⁰⁵ The Ottawa Plan was followed by similar initiatives for Asia and Africa.¹⁰⁶ Finally, in 1967, Morse presented his plan for a global employment programme to the ILC.¹⁰⁷

It is important to note that the WEP was more than a second technical assistance scheme. To be precise, it was not, itself, actually a programme, but a coordinated reorientation of the ILO's activities within various existing programmes. All the work that was already under way, on the organization

of the labour market or on wage policies, for instance, was turned to the service of the WEP. David Morse, who presented the WEP on the ILO's 50th anniversary in 1969, described it as "an entirely new departure" for the ILO. In his eyes, the programme drew the right conclusions from the failure of the growth-oriented development model of the past and replaced it with one of active and far-reaching planning. In fact, he went so far as to term the WEP the beginning of a "first attempt at truly world-wide planning".¹⁰⁸ Because it included the entire world and aimed at bringing the employment targets of developing countries into line with those of the rich regions of the earth, the WEP was also, to some extent, an embodiment of the "Declaration of Interdependence" which Morse had proposed at the beginning of the decade. When at the end of the 1960s, on the threshold of its "second development decade", the UN called for better coordination of its activities and an increased focus on common goals, the WEP was already ahead of the game.¹⁰⁹ The programme was carried out on a regional level and the ILO played a coordinating role and actively worked together with

Three areas of technical assistance in the 1960s



Vocational training centre in Kenya



Management training seminar in East Africa



Land use project in Chad

a wide range of other international organizations on the implementation of WEP measures.¹¹⁰ At the same time, the ILO participated in comparable large-scale plans organized by other UN specialized agencies, including UNESCO's World Literacy Campaign and the FAO's World Plan for Agricultural Development. Thus David Morse could pride himself on having played a pioneering role in making long-range planning a key element of the work of the UN system during the 1970s.

The WEP's most significant achievement, however, was in a different area entirely. The programme marked the world's first attempt to come up with a development strategy which, unlike previous economics-centred approaches, concentrated on the problem of poverty. In this, it became a model for the work of all the international organizations in the 1970s. The "basic needs" approach which the World Bank adopted under its new President Robert McNamara and the UN's "human needs" campaign were both, as Morse later remarked, quite rightly, "really the World Employment Programme, but with a different name".¹¹¹

The other activities going on under the TAP were not neglected during the 1960s, even if they were outshone a little by the WEP, but turned to focus on the new – for the ILO – areas of rural labour and rural production. The Office's sudden "discovery" of the countryside was triggered by two main factors. First, decolonization in Africa had given the Organization a large number of new members whose populations survived mainly on the basis of rural activities. Second, and just as importantly, prevailing thinking held that the problems currently faced by the developing countries were in large part due to the neglect of rural areas in the development concepts of the 1950s.¹¹²

David Morse announced to the UN system as early as 1960 his conviction that in the future the ILO should devote more of its energies to the modernization of rural employment structures in developing countries. He argued that this would be a way for the Organization to contribute to closing the destructive social rift that existed between the new urban centres and the countryside. The goal of the ILO would be to launch an employment offensive for rural areas which would help to improve living conditions and thus prevent rural poverty shifting to the cities.¹¹³ By the time that year's session of the ILC came round, he was even able to propose a programme of work for rural areas,¹¹⁴ which by 1962 the Office had turned into a wide-ranging programme of measures for the development of the countryside. The programme focused on employment and vocational training, but also foresaw the ILO providing assistance in setting up the institutions which, in the Office's opinion, were important in the modernization of rural areas. Ways to promote cooperative production methods, for example, played an important role in Office planning.¹¹⁵

Despite this new interest in the rural economy, the majority of TAP projects in the 1960s actually remained based in the industrial sector. The

Organization's new awareness of the significance of rural development did not necessarily weaken the general conviction that industrialization was the best way to lasting economic, and social, progress. It was vital for the ILO at this time to emphasize its role as a driving force in the industrialization of the developing world, and to prove its competence in this area to the developing countries, especially in the light of the UNIDO episode.¹¹⁶ The development of human resources was the unchallenged focus of all the programmes at every level of technical cooperation.¹¹⁷ In 1965 the ILO set up the International Centre for Advanced Training in Turin, thus increasing its range of services on the institutional level, too. The courses offered at the Centre were directed first and foremost at skilled workers, vocational trainers and management personnel from developing countries.¹¹⁸

The ILO's efforts in the field of technical assistance represented a significant political success for the Organization as far as its African, Asian and Latin American members were concerned. The WEP in particular illustrated the Organization's value as a development agency better than any previous campaign had been able to.

New avenues for the integrated approach to development

The ILO's intention at the beginning of the TAP had been to find a specifically democratic road to modernization. The WEP was an example of the new avenues the Organization explored in pursuit of this end. A Convention and a Recommendation on employment policy adopted in 1964, both of which were, essentially, tailored to the developing world, provided the legislative framework within which the debate on the future shape of a technical programme could begin.¹¹⁹ These documents defined the basic principles and aims of active employment policies, and, rather than just taking the form of technical guidelines on the role of planning in policy-making,¹²⁰ they contained a series of passages reflecting the core values of the ILO. The Convention emphasized the importance of free choice in employment, as opposed to forced labour. It called for employers' and workers' organizations to be involved in the process of defining employment targets and contained an explicit reference to the anti-discrimination Convention of 1958 (No. 111).¹²¹

A similar impulse, aimed at creating a stronger link between the technical and the standard-setting elements of the ILO's work, lay behind the wide-ranging structural and programmatic reforms of the Office which began in the mid-1960s. In 1965 the Governing Body mandated Morse to ensure that, in the future, all the ILO's activities would fall under the three main headings of (1) human resources, (2) development of social institutions and (3) improvement of working and living conditions. The very choice of these three areas of focus was clearly motivated by the integrated approach to development. While the first reflected the aim of stimulating economic development and the third was a product of the focus on poverty, the second point reflected the

importance which the Office attached to creating functioning institutions for a healthy development process. Taken separately, each of these areas also combined technical activities under the TAP with standard-setting work. At the Office level, "programme sections" were set up for each of the three areas, with the task of formulating targets for the Organization's work and researching the ways in which these could best be achieved. The programme sections also had to work out the right mix of technical assistance and standard-setting activity for the issues they were dealing with.¹²²

The same basic idea was behind the decentralization of the Office which took place parallel to this structural reform of the Geneva headquarters, to applause from the developing countries. Between 1965 and 1968 the field offices were turned into area offices, with an "area" being a small number of countries within a larger region. The area offices were subordinate to the new regional offices that were set up under the leadership of special coordinators. Unlike the former field offices, the regional offices were full subdivisions of the International Labour Office, and were responsible for all the ILO programmes and projects within a particular region. Various functions which had previously been concentrated in Geneva were also decentralized at this point. The regional offices took over the duties of research and the provision of information, and above all monitored the application of international labour standards.¹²³

On the institutional level, 1962 saw the foundation of the International Institute for Labour Studies, another essential step in the promotion of the integrated approach to development. The master plan behind it envisaged a centre of research and training which would focus on the current socio-political problems faced by the developing world. In particular, the ILO wanted to create a working environment in which controversial topics such as industrial relations could be discussed away from the politically charged atmosphere of the Conference. As David Morse put it, the IILS was intended to "promote rational examination of...emotionally explosive issues in an atmosphere somewhat removed from the field of battle".¹²⁴ The Institute, which was structured like a university with its mixture of research and teaching, was to be a "world intellectual centre" of social policy,¹²⁵ offering a forum for discussion and exchange. However, its main purpose was "educational action". IILS courses were directed at "potential leaders" from the social sector, as Robert Cox, one of the Institute's first directors, explained.¹²⁶ The Office wanted to bring young, middle-grade government staff together with employers and trade union officials from developing countries to teach them methods which would put them in a better position to analyse the problems facing their countries. The courses on offer covered a wide range of areas, from employment issues to industrial relations. Syllabus planning was supervised by an academic council which, in its makeup, reflected the Office's strong conceptual leanings towards modernization theory, especially the "industrialism" school. The council contained many of the



The participants in the first ILS course, 1962

theory's leading proponents, and for a long time it was chaired, at Morse's personal request, by Clark Kerr,¹²⁷ one of the most prominent representatives of this school of thought.¹²⁸

From the point of view of the ILO, the ILS was an extremely significant step in establishing and furthering the integrated approach to development. The world's future policy-makers would go to Geneva, encounter the methods and principles of the ILO and take them back to their home countries. Since the creation of social institutions was deemed to be extremely important as a starting point for the process of modernization, and the training of the world's future elite in accordance with the ideals of the ILO was an important step towards anchoring these principles in the developing countries, the Office went to great lengths to have the last word over its member governments when it came to the selection of candidates for the Institute's courses.¹²⁹

Thus, over the course of the 1960s, the ILO expanded the institutional basis from which it hoped to promote and implement its specific concepts of modernization. These concepts, however, had come about during a period of alarming uncertainty for the ILO and may even be seen as a direct reaction to the serious problems the Organization faced in gaining acceptance for a development model which reconciled economic growth with respect for

human rights. To put it bluntly, as far as this ideal was concerned, the ILO had been fighting with its back against the wall. Although it did manage, over the course of the decade, to convince its new members of the value of its technical activities in the development effort, it had much less success in winning them over to the universal character of its fundamental principles.

8

An Intellectual Fashion: Human Rights Standards as a Barrier to Development?

Although the ILO's role as a technical assistance agency helped to make the Organization more popular among the developing countries during the 1960s, the obstacles facing the integrated approach to development during this period were greater than ever. The new nations' initial enthusiasm with regard to the ILO's human rights norms soon waned dramatically. In the words of George Weaver, a human rights expert and American Government representative on the Governing Body, the Organization became witness to a "growing conflict between economic development and the... guarantee of human rights".¹ On central issues such as forced labour or freedom of association, many developing countries began to question, in an increasingly fundamental way, the value of ILO human rights norms. A new discourse emerged in which the governments of the newly independent States defined the underdevelopment of their countries as a state of emergency that called for the subordination of individual interests to those of the State. The ILO's endeavours to uphold its principles were increasingly interpreted as an attempt to torpedo the economic efforts of the developing countries. These accusations brought to light conflicting views on the relationship between development and certain human rights norms even within the Office itself. Thus, with decolonization complete, the ILO again found itself having to satisfy itself of the universality of its own concepts.

The good society: the ILO's norms after African independence

A "question of honour"

At the beginning of the 1960s most of the African countries obtained independence, and the ILO was keen to convey to them its conviction that economic development could spell progress only if firmly based on social and human rights principles. Indeed, Wilfred Jenks had warned explicitly

as early as 1955, at the COESP meeting in Dakar, that for Africa “political advance may signify retrogression” if the independent States of the future did not commit to the Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO at an early stage in their political development.²

The Office now renewed the offer it had made to the Asian countries at the beginning of the 1950s of technical assistance to promote economic development. Before the first meeting of the AFRC in Lagos in 1960, the ILO attempted to convince the African States that what they needed most for development were guiding principles which would ensure that, within the development process, the individual worker remained “safe in his rights as a human being”.³ Accordingly, it was one of the Office’s top priorities to encourage the newly independent States to ratify the Organization’s norms, concentrating its efforts in particular on the “core” human rights norms.

It was the first hopeful sign for the Office in this respect that all the newly independent States embraced the virtue of legal continuity and assumed almost without exception the obligations which the metropolitan powers had previously taken on in their names.⁴ Another point of continuity between the colonial past and the future was the adoption in 1962 of a Convention entitled Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards).⁵ This was a revised version of the Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 82), which had laid down the universalistic social guidelines for the colonial policy of the post-war period. The documents were identical but for one significant exception: the new instrument was no longer a colonial Convention and was thus unreservedly applicable. It defined a superordinate social objective which was to be the goal of all policy. The revision of the Social Policy Convention, which came about as the result of an initiative by the African countries at the Lagos Conference,⁶ indicated that the universality of ILO norms would be recognized even after the end of political dependency with the declaration that “economic development must serve as a basis for social progress”.⁷

The beginning of the 1960s brought other achievements in the recognition of ILO principles. A resolution adopted with a huge majority in Lagos made a “solemn appeal” to the African States progressively to ratify all existing ILO norms and to take this act as the “starting point for their future policies of social and economic development”. Particular emphasis was placed on the human rights Conventions, the strict application of which was declared to be a “question of honour and prestige” for all African nations.⁸ The fifth ARC, which took place in Melbourne in 1962, also adopted a resolution inviting governments “to pursue policies of balanced economic and social development so that measures of economic expansion are accompanied and reinforced by the promotion of social and human rights of workers” and called for the rapid ratification of all the relevant documents.⁹

And indeed, the ILO saw an unparalleled upswing in the ratification of its standards during this period. The number of ratification certificates received

in Geneva between 1960 and 1964 was almost the same as the number of signatures that ILO documents had collected during the entire period between the wars. While the norms taken over wholesale from the colonial rulers were predominantly technical, most of those that were signed anew were human rights standards (concerning discrimination, forced labour and freedom of association).¹⁰ All in all, the signs seemed to indicate that the post-colonial nations were largely in favour of the ILO's universalistic approach. The ratification of human rights norms was unarguably symbolic for the new States, both marking their arrival as equal members within the international community and demonstrating to their populations, which under colonial rule had been completely or partially excluded from the rights in question, that the long struggle for emancipation was over. The public acceptance by the post-colonial governments of the principles set out in the Organization's Constitution and human rights documents thus represented an end to the colonial double standard and was, accordingly, imbued with deep political and moral significance for the new nationalist governments that had emerged from the fight for independence.

When it came to the ILO's technical standards in areas such as social security or health and safety, the Office did its best to take the situation of its new members into account and to accommodate their demands. In order to make it easier for the developing countries to agree to them, elements were introduced to make them more flexible. The Office argued successfully that in comparison to the regional standards still advocated by some of the developing countries, more flexible norms really did represent the lesser evil, leaving as they did the universal character of ILO standards intact.¹¹

Development as a state of emergency

While welcoming the developing world's public endorsement of ILO norms, the Office was not blind to the fact that there were strong currents actually moving in the opposite direction. These emerged most clearly when it came to the practical implementation of the norms once they had been signed – in other words, the part of the process wherein the real success of the ILO's concepts was decided. Even as the representatives of the newly independent States were voicing their support for the universal validity of human rights in international forums, a consensus was emerging among the governments of these countries that the wholesale application of such norms was actually irreconcilable with the goal of mobilizing all available forces for the development effort. The debate which had been conducted at the Asian Regional Conferences of the 1950s on the issue of whether the desire for rapid economic progress was really compatible with certain of the ILO's basic principles was thus reignited.

It was of little comfort to the Office that only a small minority was initially sceptical about the value of ILO standards. It became clear soon enough that the radical Pan-Africanists who claimed to recognize the "European"

character of the ILO in its norms, which they criticized across the board as part of a neo-colonial strategy being pursued by the Western powers at their expense, were only the tip of the iceberg. At the annual sessions of the ILC from 1960 onwards more and more governments began to protest, albeit in a less radical way, that when a choice had to be made economic development must always take priority over compliance with standards. This view reflected a combination of various lines of argument which together constituted a qualitatively new discourse that challenged the immediate validity of ILO norms and within which the distinction between technical standards and human rights norms was blurred. It centred on the premise that the governments of the newly independent States were, effectively, emergency regimes. In the political rhetoric of the leaders of the new nations, the underdevelopment of their young national economies was an emergency situation comparable to a state of war. This compromised the ILO's norms in two ways. In terms of the outside world and the struggle for development within the international political and economic order, complying with ILO norms was tantamount to falling for a type of hidden protectionism that benefited the rich industrial countries. While in countries with a high national income and a differentiated economic structure social standards served to protect workers and promote distributive justice, in developing countries operating from a weak economic basis they actually hindered the advancement of the national economy. Moreover, they thus gave a competitive advantage to the industrial nations that could "afford" to comply. On the domestic level, the development effort – defined as an emergency situation – justified, demanded even, the mobilization of all forces in pursuit of a common goal, and called for solidarity and a united front.

The governments of the post-colonial States saw no incongruity in the fact that the very norms now being regarded as a barrier to development were often the same as those they had fought tooth and nail with the colonial rulers to have recognized before independence. Under colonial rule, international standards had been a point of reference outside the existing power structure which could be used to challenge the status quo. However, the task of deciding what was for the common good now lay in the hands of the legitimate representatives of the people, thus removing the need for an external point of reference. When it came to formulating national policies, the interests of the population – or at least, the new governments' perception of such interests – took topmost priority. The target of the struggle for emancipation had shifted from the colonial rulers to the international system, and as a consequence the ILO's norms lost their emancipatory power and actually became a hindrance in the fight for development or, even worse, an instrument of neo-colonial control.

A pamphlet published in 1963 by Tom M'boya, the Kenyan Labour Minister, typified the basic attitude taking hold among the majority of the African member States at the beginning of the 1960s. In an examination

of the relationship between development and standard-setting in newly independent States, M'boya, a generally moderate and Western-oriented nationalist, argued that when it came to implementing the Conventions of the ILO, African governments faced a decision between adhering to them, and thereby risking a U-turn in their progress, and not adhering to them in order to ensure that development could proceed. M'boya's attitude was not clear-cut. He did not challenge ILO norms *per se*, and even expressed the hope that it would one day be possible to create the stability that would permit compliance with the Organization's standards. On the other hand, he regarded them as outdated and demanded that they be re-examined and revised to take into account the problems of the new countries.¹² This anticipated a culturalistic line of argument that would emerge more strongly in years to come and according to which the opus of ILO standards as a whole was a reflection of Western concepts that were irreconcilable with the situation in Africa and Asia. But for the time being it was enough that the fundamental stance of the African governments, as expressed by M'boya, was one that rejected the specific universality of the ILO's standards and their particular value at the beginning of the development process.¹³

It was not long before the new nations' willingness to embrace ILO human rights standards in principle came into conflict with the right they claimed to make the implementation of such standards conditional on their not posing a danger to the development effort. At the beginning of the 1960s the African countries in particular came in for increasing criticism from the ILO standards monitoring bodies, criticism which forced the governments in question to formulate their position on ILO norms more clearly. In this connection, the contributions of many African and Asian delegates to the discussion of the Director-General's report to the ILC in 1962 revealed a tendency which seriously undermined Morse's claim that the ILO had succeeded in bringing about a far-reaching consensus between member States with regard to the incorporation of human rights standards into the development process.¹⁴ At the starting point of the debate surrounding its structure and programme, the Organization was given to understand that its very principles, too, were up for discussion.

So numerous were the voices taking this line that at the beginning of the 1960s David Morse began to speak of a new "intellectual fashion" which held individual freedom and democratic forms to be irreconcilable with the demands of economic growth. Morse did everything he could to counter the trend, calling upon the developing countries to think carefully about what the goal of their development efforts actually was. He acknowledged that there were various roads that could lead to "the good society" but appealed to the governments of the developing countries to recognize that economic growth was only part of the picture. An equally important element of the modernization process – indeed, one that was perhaps even more significant in the long term – was that provision be made "for the awakening and

development of the individual personality and for the growth of institutions through which people can freely and responsibly decide the goals for which they are prepared to work". The Director-General insisted that the developing countries examine their own thinking carefully,¹⁵ reminding them of one critical truth: "the good society moves towards greater freedom and greater well-being at the same time."¹⁶

The development offensive and coercion: the African youth labour service conflict

One of the first and most significant areas of conflict between the development efforts of the new nations and the application of ILO human rights norms was, inevitably, that of forced labour. To some extent the problem formed the "dark" side of the employment discussions that were getting under way at around the same time. In 1962 the annual report of the CEACR contained a general survey of the situation on the ground for the first time since the 1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention had come into force.¹⁷ The experts concluded that past condemnations of forced labour had not effected a significant reduction in its use and had even become more usual in some parts of the world. This remark was aimed in particular at Africa, where, according to the report, a range of forms of forced and compulsory labour outlawed by the Conventions of 1930 and 1957 had survived independence.¹⁸

What the CEACR found particularly alarming was that some countries had even gone so far as to set up new forms of compulsory labour. The report listed by name seven West African countries whose methods of mobilization of labour were described as incompatible with both the forced labour Conventions.¹⁹ The governments of these countries, which included both radical Guinea and the more conservative Côte d'Ivoire, had introduced compulsory labour service for young people, either under the auspices of the military or by creating a separate institution for the purpose. The "recruits" generally worked on public development projects, and in some cases were provided with basic vocational training. The model for these youth labour services, as the CEACR collectively termed them, was an institution that had been established at the beginning of the 1950s in Israel, and, indeed, the help of Israeli experts had been enlisted in the setting up of most of the labour services in Africa.²⁰ The CEACR pointed out to all concerned, including Israel, that labour services by their very nature contradicted the provisions of Convention No. 29, which permitted compulsory military service only for purely military purposes. They also, according to the experts, breached the provisions of Convention No. 105, which forbade forced and compulsory labour "as a method of mobilising and using labour for purposes of economic development". The Committee also criticized excessive recourse to the emergency regulations used to justify the services.²¹

The States in question reacted with deep indignation to the findings of the CEACR. They vehemently defended the vocational training which youth service provided and stressed the absolute necessity of the work carried out under its auspices. They had no time for the scruples of the CEACR which, while recognizing the need of these countries to build up a qualified workforce and to tackle the problems of growing cities and youth un- and underemployment, still rated the danger of abuse intrinsic to systems based on coercion as more relevant than their potential benefits. True development, according to the Committee, was possible only where fundamental ILO standards were respected. "The aim of development is to train citizens, in the full sense of this word; the consequence of forced labour is to create slaves."²² The African States claimed that apart from being entirely justified, the military involvement condemned by the CEACR was absolutely necessary under post-colonial conditions. Only the army, they argued, was in a position to organize all that needed to be done, and at the same time to impart to young people a sense of the aims of the national development effort. As one Government representative from the Côte d'Ivoire put it, the army could be seen as a "melting pot" in which the soul of the nation was forged. Like many of the speakers after him, he believed that another reason the army was a suitable means of achieving development goals was that the developing countries were involved in a battle for economic independence that was just as serious as any military struggle. The young people prepared to shed blood for their country must be given a chance "to defend the real independence of the country, by which I mean its economic independence".²³

The bitterness with which the African delegates reacted to the accusations of the CEACR at the ILC in 1962 was partly due to the immense symbolic charge the issue had held in the struggle for independence. To be accused of a "classically colonial crime" such as forced labour was particularly hard for the post-colonial nations to stomach. To make matters worse, the accusations of the CEACR came at exactly the same time as the report by a committee commissioned by the Governing Body more or less acquitted Portugal of maintaining a forced labour system for the purposes of economic development in its African colonies. Aggravating the situation still further was the fact that the charge against Portugal had been brought by two African States, Ghana and the United Arab Republic, which had been attempting to exploit the fact that since the end of the 1950s, while still determined not to relinquish its rule, Lisbon had been trying to give its colonial regime in Africa a face which would be more acceptable to the international public. In the context of this new "universalistic strategy" it had, at the end of the 1950s, ratified all the core ILO human rights documents except the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, and as Lisbon regarded its colonies as part of the home country, the instruments were fully valid in the African territories.²⁴ According to the ILO Constitution, though, once a country had ratified a standard, other nations had the right to complain about any failure to

comply with it; and when a complaint was received, the Governing Body was obliged to set up a committee to investigate the situation in the country in question and present its findings in a final report.²⁵

It was no coincidence that Portugal's accusers had chosen the issue of forced labour on which to pounce, particularly in view of Portugal's long list of previous transgressions in this regard. It was also clear that the complaint was well founded, as forced labour was still widely used in the Portuguese territories. The general duty to work to which all adult inhabitants were subject necessarily implied compulsion – something which Lisbon's ratification of the two forced labour Conventions had not done much to change. Despite all this, however, the investigation into the situation in Portuguese Africa did not have the outcome which its initiators intended. The conclusions contained in the report of the three-man commission headed by Paul Ruegger were frustratingly ambiguous.²⁶ Although the report criticized the situation in the Portuguese colonies, particularly with regard to recruitment methods and workers' lack of rights, the committee's mandate, which was limited to examining practices in the light of the legal situation, did not permit an unequivocally guilty verdict to be passed. As the provisions of Convention No. 105 were almost all reflected in Portuguese legislation, the commission was forced to conclude that the country's intentions were good.²⁷

Many African and Asian delegates made it clear to the Governing Body just how sickened and outraged they were at this outcome. The Tunisian Government representative Ladhari complained that the committee had taken such pains to understand the situation on the ground that it had almost reached the point of excusing it. This in turn masked the very grave light that the report actually shed on the whole colonial system, "since after several centuries of colonial occupation, the Natives in these territories did not even know what freedom of contract meant". The report's true message, Ladhari argued, although the committee avoided stating it directly, was that freedom of labour was impossible where political freedom was lacking.²⁸

The Portuguese Government, on the other hand, was fairly content with the committee's findings.²⁹ Referring to the CEACR report attacking the African States for their youth labour services, the Portuguese Government delegate Goncalves de Proenca even remarked smugly that many countries frivolously signed as many Conventions as possible without thinking about whether their level of development would permit compliance with the standards on a practical level. His Government found this fact so regrettable that it had taken it upon itself "to give an example of probity and strict observance of the instruments ratified by it". Lisbon, he boasted, ratified Conventions only "when the economic and social development of the country permits it".³⁰

To the anti-colonial forces within the ILO, these comments were an expression of pure cynicism. They also compounded the African governments' feeling that the ILO experts were guilty of applying double standards. While

the colonial clause and excessive concern about offending the colonial powers had made it impossible to curb the use of forced labour in the colonies in the past, the ILO's experts now seemed to have no qualms about attacking the newly independent States for practices that arose from nothing other than the bitter necessity of maintaining the national development effort. The Côte d'Ivoire's representative not only criticized the excessive "formalism, rigidity and legal red tape" which marked the experts' findings, but also expressed his suspicion that they were trying "through our country to redress the wrongs which those countries [the colonial powers] did not wish to recognise".³¹ Mali's Government representative, Ba, also condemned the excessively abstract and legalistic way he felt the committee had gone about its investigation, describing it as proof of the "two justices" which continued to prevail within the ILO.³²

The fury of the African countries was further inflamed by the fact that Portugal was not content to bask in its "victory", but decided, at the same Governing Body meeting at which the Ruegger report was discussed, to file its own forced labour complaint. The target of Portugal's counter-propaganda was the West African State of Liberia, a country which in the past had often been found by the CEACR to be violating both forced labour Conventions. Once again, a committee was put to work to investigate.³³ Its findings, when they were published the following year, were much more critical than in the case of Portugal, mainly because Liberian case law directly sanctioned forms of forced labour forbidden under both ILO Conventions.³⁴ The whole affair was a sobering one for Africa. Disillusioned, the post-colonial nations realized not only that the issue of forced labour had proved itself to be a defective weapon in the campaign against the hated Portuguese colonial regime, but that what should have been an effective means of attacking what was left of the colonial system could all too easily be turned against any country which dared to make the attempt.

Against this emotionally charged backdrop, the ILO attempted to heal the rifts that the CEACR's findings with regard to youth labour services had created. David Morse called upon the delegates of the countries criticized not to see this criticism as being solely directed at them. He interpreted it as a sign that the ILO as a whole needed to intensify its efforts in the areas of employment policy and vocational training for the developing countries.³⁵ As the dispute progressed, however, it became clear that it would not be easy to reconcile the Office's concept of free labour with that of the African countries. At an inter-African symposium on employment issues in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika, in the autumn of 1962, the head of the ILO's Labour Standards Department, Valticos, attempted to explain to those present what he saw as the drawbacks of labour services. He argued that compulsory labour was expensive and ineffective and not an adequate solution to the problem of underemployment. In the long term, voluntary forms of labour mobilization were not only more economically effective, but preferable on

a fundamental level, as only free labour promoted the development of a "good society". Most of the African Government representatives present, however, saw things differently.³⁶

The climate deteriorated at the end of 1962 when the Office withdrew one of its experts from a cooperative project in Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) on the grounds that the *investissement humaine* programme being run in the country, which involved young men being sent to build roads in the villages, violated fundamental ILO principles.³⁷ This was one of the rare occasions on which a direct link was made between technical assistance and compliance with standards, and although the situation arose mainly because of personal decisions on the part of the Office staff concerned, the outcome led to much bad feeling between the Government of the country and the Office. It also put the Office under greater pressure to find a way out of the general impasse and to counter the charge increasingly brought against it that its position on youth labour services had shown it to be working on the side of neo-colonial interests.

One of the main problems was the fact that the (former) colonial powers were obviously relishing the chance to turn upon their accusers the human rights discourse that had previously been such a stock weapon in the fight against colonialism. France went so far as to tell the African governments via diplomatic channels that it saw their *services civiques* as nothing less than a rebirth of the *travail forcé* of the colonial era. A member of the British Ministry of Labour remarked that after all the attacks that had been levelled at the British Government in the past over forced labour, he could see "no particular reason why we should go out of our way to get the Africans off the hook they have made for themselves". He also found it regrettable that diplomatic etiquette forbade open discussion of what he saw as the inevitable outcome that "a system of this kind applied to Africans by other Africans will be far more vicious and open to abuse than when it was applied to Africans by Europeans".³⁸ The FO too was initially unprepared to put up with "double standards", insisting that the forced labour Conventions protected fundamental human rights "which have as much relevance to independent territories as to colonial territories".³⁹ At the end of 1962, the British ambassadors in West Africa reported to the Government that resentment was mounting over the role of the ILO in the conflict. The envoy in Conakry, for instance, predicted that Guinea was likely to react radically if found guilty of any further violations of the forced labour standards. It would accuse the ILO and any country which supported its findings of neo-colonialism, and the WFTU and other communist forces would be bound to step in to try to exploit the situation.⁴⁰ Other embassies in the region warned of similar scenarios.⁴¹

Standards or development? The Office divided

As a direct reaction to the politically explosive situation that had arisen as a result of the youth labour service debate, during the discussions in 1963

on the future programme and structure of the Organization David Morse convened a working group to look into ways of making the application of the forced labour Conventions compatible with the demands of economic and social development. The group, comprising representatives of various departments of the Office, was asked to examine the issue of forced labour against the backdrop of the employment situation in developing countries and to make recommendations as to how the ILO's operational programme could better support the implementation of its standards.⁴²

When the views of the various departments were submitted to the Director-General in the summer of 1964, it became apparent that there were grave differences of opinion running through the Office, especially on the question of how the use of forced and compulsory labour for development purposes should be judged. These differences ran deep, and boiled down to fundamentally conflicting views of the role of the ILO in the development process as a whole.

One side, described by the political scientist Robert Cox, who at the time was head of the ILS, as the "labour standards faction", clung tightly to the integrated approach to development and emphasized the predominantly normative role of the ILO. The other side, which could be described as the "development faction", wanted to see the applicability of ILO standards coupled to economic factors such as productivity and supported gradual implementation, even of core standards, where necessary. These diametrically opposed positions had their institutional roots in the division of the Office into a Labour Standards Department, traditionally (and still) the most important subsection of the Office, staffed mainly by experts in international law who were bound to the ILO's ideology of achieving social justice through social standards, and those departments predominantly staffed with economists and social scientists, whose task was to prepare the Technical Assistance Programme.⁴³

The Economic Section of the ILO, part of the latter camp, saw the CEACR's report of 1962 as one of many examples of the ILO's excessively restrictive approach to the constraints faced by poorer countries, and complained about the general "hostility towards economic development" which prevailed both in the Conference and in parts of the Office. Its position paper postulated the primacy of economic development, which it viewed as an essential prerequisite to the realization of social rights. The paper described how requiring the developing countries to comply with the forced labour Conventions would render the term "freedom" meaningless when it was not inextricably bound to the unconditional struggle for freedom from poverty. The degree of coercion to which a country could legitimately resort must be decided first and foremost by its state of socio-economic development and the cultural hurdles which its Government had to overcome in its modernization efforts. The further behind a country was in its development, the less hindrance there should be to the mobilization of labour for the purposes of

building up the national economy. The paper's authors saw it as imperative to accept that a subsistence economy would never produce wealth and that any means of directing people into a cash economy should be seen as an active contribution to human dignity.⁴⁴ In their view, the ILO would rightly be regarded as an instrument of Western interests if it attempted to prevent the use of cheap, otherwise idle, labour, often the only resource which developing countries had at their disposal.

The comments of the Economic Section thus illustrated that it had largely adopted the position of the developing countries themselves. The authors of the paper warned that all too often in the past the impression had been created that in the philosophy of the ILO, retarded development and a delay in the eradication of poverty were preferable to any kind of relativization, however minor, of ILO standards. They believed, however, that it was inadmissible to attempt to define the "permitted measure" of development via standard-setting. The paper called on the Office to make a completely fresh start and to begin taking full account of the development constraints of the new nations in its standard-setting work. If the Organization continued to function as a hurdle to development, the authors predicted, it would, in the medium term, lose its significance as an international organization.⁴⁵

The standard-setting department of the Office saw things quite differently. The authors of the department's memorandum on "certain aspects of forced labour in relation to development" had already read the Economic Section's paper when they came to state their position, and harshly criticized its underlying "economistic" tone.⁴⁶ By focusing exclusively on the demands of economic development, they argued, the proponents of the economic approach tended to sweep human rights scruples rather too conveniently under the carpet. The memorandum accused the economic camp of being too quick to concede the necessity of using coercion and limiting rights, without exploring how the same goals might be achieved in compliance with ILO standards and without the use of coercion. Thus, it alleged, this camp created a fundamental conflict between the economic requirements of developing countries and the implementation of ILO standards (of which the issue of forced labour was a prime example) which the ILO as an organization must not accept under any circumstances. The standards camp used the same argument that the opponents of forced labour had been defending tirelessly since the 1930s – that methods of coercion may be successful in the short term at mobilizing manpower, but in the long term they were economically less efficient than free labour. Furthermore, coercion was fatal, they claimed, to the development of a democratic society – and this applied in particular to labour services run by the military. While both within and outside the ILO opponents of the rigid application of standards assumed that in underdeveloped countries not enough suitably disciplined manpower was available on the free market, this was simply not the case. The Standards Department was convinced that labour service was dangerous

because it forced civilian functions into a military hierarchy in which participation and co-determination were impossible. The economists, however, saw precisely this practice as a chance to develop a more disciplined workforce better prepared for the demands of the modern world of work, and one which could make a significant contribution to creating a developed and thus democratic society. According to the Standards Department, the ILO could help to resolve the apparent contradiction between development and freedom of labour by carrying out intensive research into the prospects of positive employment policies. Patience, persuasion and training would also be needed to improve acceptance of ILO standards and principles. However, the Organization had to make it clear in all its activities that it would provide only such development assistance as could be regarded as a way of bringing the country in question closer to its objective of full compliance with ILO principles. No country which refused on a general basis to apply ILO standards could expect to receive the help of the TAP.

Like the Economic Section's paper, the memorandum by the Standards Department was not restricted to the issue of forced labour. The authors of the latter wanted to tackle what they felt was a fundamental flaw in the Organization's understanding of its role and its purpose. They found it almost absurd that the ILO, the only development agency in the UN system concerned with social affairs, should believe it had to subordinate its work to economic considerations. In their eyes, the ILO's primary task was to take an interest in the methods used in development and to judge them on the exclusive basis of the principles of the Organization. The authors believed that softening or sacrificing existing standards, as demanded by the Economic Section, would not, in the long term, strengthen the Organization, and indeed, that only by working persistently to see its standards implemented could the ILO preserve its "integrity and self-respect".

Ultimately, the dispute between the two factions revolved around nothing less than the fundamental question of the right way into modernity, and the debate increasingly reflected this basic underlying divide. Both approaches were compatible with the ILO's poverty-centred strategy of flanking the development process with social measures, and it was this strategy which provided the starting point for the World Employment Programme. The difference lay in the fact that while one side believed that authoritarian models of development were acceptable as long as the ultimate goal was a social one, the other side held ILO standards to be a means as well as an end.⁴⁷

In a nutshell, the discussions surrounding the forced labour issue reflected the epistemic changes that had taken place within the Office as a result of the ILO's assumption of new functions in the area of development, and indicated how far the Office had moved, under Morse's leadership, from the traditional ideology of the Organization. Thanks to Morse's skill as a moderator, the dispute had few enduring negative effects. However, the rift running through the Office on the issue of the right way to modernization

was impossible to overlook. The closed “community of values” which the ILO had formed since its foundation could no longer be taken for granted.

A positive concept of free labour

While the Office was being rocked by colliding views on the permissible measure of coercion in the development process, the issue of African labour services remained an acute problem. The instruments on employment policy adopted in 1964 did little to clarify the situation. Although they repeatedly emphasized the value of “freely chosen employment”, they both contained a passage which stated that employment policy must take “due account of the stage and level of economic development” and should be “pursued by methods that are appropriate to national conditions and practices”.⁴⁸ Inevitably, this left ample room for interpretation. The African nations made it clear that they were not going to budge from their position. The President-designate of Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, confirmed during an ILO seminar that the poverty of his soon-to-be independent country and the necessity of creating productive work for a large part of the population made it downright impossible to fulfil certain standards to the letter. He saw it as the duty of every African government to ensure that as many people as possible had employment, “even if they do not have all the benefits that the ILO says they should have”.⁴⁹ The Malagasy Government was so enraged by the CEACR’s repeated criticism of its youth labour services that for a short period in 1965 it even threatened to leave the Organization.⁵⁰

With no end in sight to the problems in this area, at the end of the 1960s the ILO convened yet another committee to look into the issue of forced labour. The committee, again chaired by Ramaswami Mudaliar, concluded that despite the high rates of ratification of the two forced labour Conventions, excessive use was still being made of emergency regulations to justify the use of coercion. Not only had there been no decline in the number of forced labour systems set up on economic grounds, the committee had observed an even more worrying tendency in developing countries of forced labour increasingly being used as a means of political discipline and as a punishment for participation in strikes.⁵¹

As in his previous report 15 years earlier, Mudaliar investigated thoroughly the central question of whether certain forms of coercion could be considered legitimate and, if so, where the line should be drawn. His main conclusion was that the litmus test had to be whether the use of coercion for development purposes was accompanied by a process of social democratization. Only when democracy and the rule of law developed parallel to one another could abuses be avoided. Certain restrictions of the rights of the individual in favour of society as a whole were acceptable, but within those limits a just and stable order must guarantee the individual freedom from coercion with regard to work, participation in industrial relations and the exercise of his or her civil rights. By formulating their findings in these

terms, the experts wanted to make clear that their concept of freedom was not a negative one, but one which attempted to give all members of society the opportunity “to participate fully and responsibly in the economic, social and political life of their community”.⁵² These considerations flowed directly into the formulation of the World Employment Programme, which in Morse’s eyes was the most effective contribution the ILO could make to eradicating the phenomenon of forced labour in developing countries.⁵³

The original starting point of the debate – the issue of labour services – was finally resolved, in the spirit of pragmatism, by a compromise. In 1970 a Recommendation was adopted which drew a distinction between training-oriented and work-oriented labour services. The former, whose primary end was the vocational training of recruits, were deemed acceptable, while the latter, whose sole purpose was the mobilization of manpower for economic growth, continued to be condemned.⁵⁴

The Recommendation was revealing in two ways. On the one hand, it was a signal that the ILO was holding firm to its democratic concept of development, but on the other it showed that the Office was now prepared to concede that developing countries should be allowed to employ some specific forms of coercion in their development efforts. To a certain extent, of course, this was tantamount to an admission that the universalistic concept of free labour as expressed in the two ILO forced labour Conventions was not always reconcilable with the needs of developing countries.⁵⁵

“Harsh realities”: Freedom of association after independence

The ILO and the African trade union movement

As in the 1950s, another of the Office’s main areas of concern when it came to anchoring human rights principles in the development process was the issue of freedom of association. Because of the difficulties it had had in obtaining full recognition of this principle in Asia at the end of the 1950s, and in the light of the dispute concerning the tripartite structure of the Organization that had arisen as a result, the Office was doubly keen to get things moving in the right direction as early as possible in Africa. The attitude of the colonial powers to freedom of association, which had been ambivalent to say the least, meant that the concept had hardly had chance to take root in Africa. In accordance with this, the issues of freedom of association and collective bargaining were placed at the top of the agenda for the Lagos AFRC.

Much to the pleasure of ILO officials, who had worked hard to promote the idea, the meeting adopted a resolution describing freedom of association and collective bargaining as the “most conducive to equitable and harmonious relations between employer and worker”.⁵⁶ This unambiguous wording was in large part to the credit of David Morse, who had, during the Conference, managed to iron out almost all the differences that had

existed between the Governments.⁵⁷ Despite this success, the Office was fully aware that the discrepancy between public affirmations and the situation on the ground was nowhere as great as in the field of freedom of association. The further the process of decolonization progressed in Africa, the clearer the centrifugal forces became to which this key principle of the integrated approach to development was subject. Not only did the problems seen in Asia continue seamlessly into Africa, they took on there a quality which called the very concept of freedom of association into question as a principle of development.

The core of the problem was the conviction of many African governments that in the process of nation-building they needed to unite all the country's social forces under their leadership. The role of the trade unions, most governments believed, lay less in the free organization of interests than in consolidating the potential of the workforce and making it available to the national development effort. Another argument used by the African governments was that in most African countries the unions represented a proportion of workers that, while relatively small, was strategically well-positioned, including, for example, groups such as rail and port workers and public employees – key sectors of the economic and political system whose negotiating position was relatively strong. For this reason, many African governments argued that ensuring the unions were subject to tight state control protected the interests of the majority of the population (who earned their living from the land and not from wage labour) from the imposition of well-organized particular interests.⁵⁸ Finally, it was also significant that throughout Africa the unions had been on the front line in the struggle for independence and formed one of the best-organized sections of the nationalist movements that were now coming to power. The leaders of the new countries, many of whom, such as Sekou Toure or M'boya, had themselves been former trade union leaders, thus saw in freedom of association a right with explosive potential. Taken together, these factors resulted in a strong tendency among the governments of Africa to merge the trade union organizations active in their countries into single associations and to subject these to more or less direct control by the ruling party. Ghana had been the first country to make this move, with the passing of its Industrial Relations Act in 1958, but other newly independent African States soon followed suit.⁵⁹

In his speech to the ILC in 1962, David Morse displayed some degree of understanding for the developing countries' attempts to integrate the trade unions into the common quest for economic progress. He acknowledged that the relatively privileged position of trade unions in the developing countries meant that the responsibility borne by their officials was particularly high, and this in turn meant that a greater degree of state control might be necessary than would be desirable in industrial countries. If governments needed help in finding the right degree of control, he reminded

delegates, the Office was more than willing to provide advice and assistance. The ILO's main concern in any case was simply whether or not countries were on a path that would lead to trade union autonomy and free forms of organization in the long term, which in Morse's view meant ensuring that union officials really did represent the interests of their members and were not dictated to by the Government.⁶⁰ However, the virtue of this aim was a point on which opinions differed vastly.

Upon his return from a trip to East and Central Africa in the spring of 1964, an ILO official reported to Morse that there was no longer a single country in the region in which trade unions were able to act without extensive government interference.⁶¹ The tone within the Conference was also becoming increasingly hard-line, as exemplified by the speech of the Tanganyikan Labour Minister, Michael Kamaliza, at the ILC in 1963. Tanganyika had been one of the first African countries after Ghana to force its trade unions into one association controlled by the country's single political party. What Kamaliza said at the Conference was tantamount to a wholesale rejection of the ILO's concept of freedom of association. In his eyes, free trade union activity was emphatically not a principle of development. Starting from the idea that underdevelopment was a state of emergency, he argued that if it was justifiable to subject trade union activity to tighter control in times of armed conflict, it must also be justifiable when the nation was called upon "to defeat foes just as deadly as an armed invader". Kamaliza believed that industrial action should be treated as an act of treason. At a time when countries were fighting a "war against ignorance, poverty and disease", trade union activities had to be subordinate to national policy. Now that the fight for liberation from colonial rule had been won, he pointed out, the workers were in a position to achieve through their governments what before independence had only been attainable through strikes. Kamaliza's position was typical of that of many African governments which had learned to appreciate the value of freedom of association as a weapon in the fight against colonialism, but now believed that the organization of industrial interests was primarily a matter for the State and not something to be shaped by ideas which did not correspond to the realities of African society.⁶²

Although the tendency to make trade unions wards of the State was most marked in those countries, like Tanganyika, which could be described as being at the more radical end of the Pan-African spectrum, the desire to unify and consolidate forces for the development effort and the quest for an African solution to the continent's problems was shared by most African governments. Many of the new States' leaders simply did not believe that the ILO's concept of freedom of association offered a satisfactory response to the specific political and economic situation in Africa. The conclusions that could be drawn from this, however, varied. Trade unions could be subject to state control without necessarily having to be integrated into the apparatus of the State or the ruling party, and for the Office this was a

critical distinction. It was agreed that some measure of state influence was entirely reconcilable with the principle of freedom of association, as long as the way was kept open for the eventual development of free labour relations, but direct state control blocked this path for good.

On the level of international trade union work, however, the indications were that Africa was moving, in the eyes of the ILO, in quite the wrong direction. The ICFTU, the trade union association whose understanding of freedom of association was traditionally closest to that of the ILO, was visibly beginning to lose influence in Africa. The competition between the various international trade union associations for ascendancy in the continent had been intensifying since the end of the 1950s. In 1961, the Pan-African Movement spawned in Casablanca a powerful opponent to the previously dominant ICFTU: the All African Trade Union Federation (AATUF), an organization formed on the initiative of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco and the United Arab Republic by a number of trade union associations predominantly from the more radical States. The AATUF's distinguishing features – it could claim to represent specifically African interests, to be free of non-African influences and to operate outside the minefield of the East–West conflict – were a double blow to the ICFTU, first, because the AATUF called on its members to “disaffiliate” from all non-African trade union associations, and, second, because the communist WFTU, which had had problems establishing itself in Africa until this point, immediately recognized the value of the AATUF as a weapon against the influence of the ICFTU and recommended that all its African members join the Pan-African federation. The thinking behind this step, in the view of one ILO observer at least, was “to sacrifice formal affiliation in favour of the more subtle promotion of an exclusively Pan-African organisation into which communist-trained African sympathisers can be infiltrated”.⁶³ The ICFTU rose to the challenge in 1962 by promoting, together with the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), the establishment of the African Trade Union Confederation (ATUC). The ATUC consciously presented itself as an alternative to the AATUF. Like the AATUF, it was anti-colonial, embraced Pan-Africanism and African socialism, and claimed to be loyal to neither capitalism nor communism. The difference was that membership of the ATUC did not exclude membership of other trade union associations.

It was clear from the start where the Office's preferences lay. Ernest Bell, the ILO official responsible for worker relations, summarized the difference between the two African organizations as being “the respect for and implementation of ILO principles (A.T.U.C.) or the disregard of ILO principles (A.A.T.U.F.)”.⁶⁴ It was therefore a matter of some concern that the ATUC did not appear to be holding up well. This was mainly owing to the negative image which the ICFTU had as a decidedly Western association, and to the fact that many African trade unions saw it as a remnant of the colonial past. On top of this, the internal conflicts blighting the organization were clear

for all of Africa to see. The dispute between the AFL–CIO and the Western European associations concerning the ICFTU’s course of action, which had been going on since the 1950s, resulted in the Americans operating on largely independent lines in Africa. It was factors such as these, Ernest Bell believed, which had resulted in the “western-orientated trade union movements steadily losing ground to AATUF”.⁶⁵

This phenomenon was immediately perceptible at the second African Regional Conference, which took place at the end of 1964 in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. The wrangling between the two African trade union associations came to a head at the Conference as they fought for ascendancy within the Pan-African Movement in the city which was home to the headquarters of the OAU. On the issue of freedom of association, the AATUF clearly had the upper hand. The majority of the African delegations were united in their scepticism towards the value of this concept for Africa, and barely heard David Morse’s appeal to find a solution “which will correspond to the special conditions of each country and which will, at the same time, ensure the effectiveness of trade union movements and their association in the development efforts of their countries in conditions of freedom”.⁶⁶ While the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie spoke in moderate tones in his opening speech of the “wisdom of joining all elements of society in our efforts to build a modern nation in the modern world”, other delegates made their point more clearly. The general tenor of the contributions was that the ILO’s pluralistic concept was not appropriate to the situation in Africa. Freedom of association was depicted by representatives of the AATUF as an imperialistic concept that both hindered Africa’s development along autonomously African lines and opened the door to capitalist interests and their proxies from the international trade union movement. A whole series of speakers described the freedom of association standards as outdated and obsolete, and their criticism culminated in a demand to revise the standards or to “regionalize” them. If standards were violated as a result of the bitter need to mobilize forces for the development effort, then, as Tanzania’s Government representative so succinctly put it,⁶⁷ “the standards are wrong”.⁶⁸

The conference in Addis Ababa marked a turning point in the history of ILO Regional Conferences. To some extent it represented a watershed in the whole relationship between the Organization and its new members from the post-colonial countries. For the first time ever, the ILO was confronted with a situation in which a Regional Conference was openly – and, what is more, with the backing of a broad cross-section of its members – calling upon the Organization actively to limit the universality of one of its basic principles.⁶⁹ The powerlessness of those who attempted to resist this trend was also shocking. Apart from the Western representatives present at the Conference, not one of the Governments defended the principle of freedom

of association. Its only supporters were some Employers' representatives and the ATUC-affiliated Workers.⁷⁰

Pandora's box: tripartism under renewed fire

David Morse knew that the Office would need to promote its concept "along very intelligent lines" from now on.⁷¹ The sounds coming from Asia with regard to freedom of association were not particularly encouraging either. Although the reaction to the ILO's approach at the Asian Regional Conference in 1962 had been much less radical than in Africa, the trend that had emerged five years previously in New Delhi towards a more restrictive treatment of the trade union movements had, if anything, intensified. Two major reports on the situation of the trade unions in Malaya and Burma which the Office published in 1962 also gave cause for concern, particularly in the latter case.⁷² As in the 1950s, the freedom of association dispute did not just revolve around a normative principle, but was directly connected with the issue of the ILO's tripartite structure. What was dangerous about the situation in Africa was that it heralded a tide of new African delegates to the Conferences and Governing Body who flouted a basic requirement of the ILO's Constitution, leaving the Conference with just a minority of Employers' and Workers' representatives who were actually independent from their Governments. In 1962 Morse had expressed concern that this would deprive the Organization of an essential element in what made it effective. It would lose its entrenchment on the civil society level of its member States, which was what made the ILO stand out from all the other international organizations and was one of the most important factors behind the support its concepts received in the member countries themselves.⁷³ Now, less than two years later, his worst fears appeared to be coming true. The weakness of the pluralistic concept of society in many parts of the world was clearly reflected in the forums of the ILO.⁷⁴

The heated debates that had taken place at the end of the 1950s were another reason for the Office to fear any further erosion of its tripartite structure. A new influx of government-controlled Employers' and Workers' representatives would inevitably lead to new tensions, especially as the debate on the structure of the organization being conducted within the ILO during this period meant a lot was at stake. If the various currents within the African trade union movement were to play out their disputes in the Governing Body, critical changes might result in the balance of power within the electoral colleges of Workers and Employers there and in the Conference. By combining group autonomy and a first-past-the-post system, the voting mechanisms had, until now, always favoured the ICFTU and employers' associations affiliated to the Western-oriented International Organization of Employers (IOE). This meant that Workers' and Employers' representatives were delegated to the technical committees of ILO organs separately, on the basis of the majority vote of the electoral college. Because the ICFTU and the IOE always dominated the colleges, they were able to

fill all the posts that were up for election with their representatives. Both organizations had used this system since the reaccession of the Soviet Union to exclude socialist delegates from the technical work of the Conference and the Governing Body.

In the course of the tripartism dispute, a committee had come up with a compromise proposal for the Conference according to which, if objections were raised to the group's decisions, an independent body could nominate one or two members to each committee – a rule which generally tended to benefit the socialist States. While Western Employers were initially hostile to the “Ago Formula”, as it was called after the chairman of the committee set up to improve the working methods of the Conference, the Workers accepted it immediately.⁷⁵ However, this solution applied only to the Conference. With regard to the Governing Body (whose members were also elected by the Conference), the situation remained unchanged, with the ICFTU and the IOE clinging to their monopoly. This in turn meant that in the mid-1960s all the Employers' and Workers' seats in the Governing Body were taken by representatives from the West. During the ILO's structural debate, the socialist States and the WFTU railed against what they regarded as a totally unacceptable situation and demanded that the decision-making bodies of the Organization be reformed to represent all socio-economic systems.⁷⁶

The Office desperately needed to ensure that, in the forums where it really mattered, those who shared its understanding of the Organization's standards and way of working maintained a majority. It was now looking increasingly likely, however, that this would be impossible. What made the disputes in Africa so perilous was the fact that it would take only a few more representatives than previously to vote against the ICFTU candidates to completely reverse the balance of power, with all the seats in the Governing Body going to the WFTU.⁷⁷

The situation was similar in the Employers' camp. The head of the department concerned with employer relations, von Stedingk, warned Morse at the beginning of 1965 that many African Employers' representatives were beginning to criticize the inflexible attitude of the Western Employers towards the inclusion of Eastern representatives. Von Stedingk believed that the reasons for their discontent were at least partly political, as their Western colleagues' stubborn resistance was increasingly bringing the African Employers into conflict with the neutral position of their Governments.⁷⁸ The rift was also connected, though, von Stedingk wrote, to fundamental considerations regarding the nature of freedom of association. He predicted that even leaving aside the political aspects, the future of this concept would be turbulent. There was a growing number of African delegates who felt “that the country cannot afford battles between conflicting unions”, a fact which would weaken the Employers' support “for our notion of freedom of association” and strengthen the communist camp. Although he felt it was unlikely that the African Governments, Employers' and Workers' groups would enter into

a long-term alliance with their counterparts from the Eastern Bloc, in the short term the matter had the potential to do much damage.⁷⁹

This scenario put the Office in an extremely difficult position. It was clear that some action had to be taken against those who violated the principle of freedom of association; but, in the words of Ernest Bell, this created a situation “which will compel the ILO to take a major policy decision, whether to turn a blind eye to the deliberate violation of ILO basic standards or to stand firmly on its principles”. It was also clear that “any serious compromise on principles invariably contains the danger of an abdication of control”.⁸⁰ Permitting a further devaluation of the principle, for example, by acknowledging that a less strict form of freedom of association should apply in Africa, would be tantamount to renouncing it for good, for the principle would, *de facto*, no longer apply to the majority of the Organization’s members. On the other hand, what direct action could be taken against governments that nominated delegates from organizations which were actually under state control? If the ILO was not to lose touch with these governments and was to continue working integratively and in the long term towards the acceptance of its standards, a minimum level of cooperation had to be maintained. David Morse saw no other alternative than to respond to the challenge by intensifying the educational and promotional approach. As long as the road to freedom of association remained open, he was prepared to make concessions on how to get there.

This strategy did not meet with the unanimous approval of the ICFTU, which would have preferred the Office to make use of all the mechanisms at its disposal to put pressure on States which violated the principle of freedom of association. The trade union representatives suggested that the Organization make its offer of technical assistance dependent on compliance with certain basic principles.⁸¹ At a meeting between Morse and an ICFTU delegation led by the ICFTU Secretary-General Omer Becu, some pertinent differences of opinion became apparent. The only two points on which the parties agreed from the outset were that standard-setting should continue to be seen as the “backbone of ILO activities”, as Becu put it, and that under no circumstances should regional standards be permitted. Morse was less receptive to the trade unionists’ request that everything possible be done to ensure that in the continuing debate about the structure of the Organization tripartism was not undermined any further. Morse described the debate as a “Pandora’s box” and said that what would emerge from it remained to be seen. He also informed the trade union representatives in no uncertain terms that while he found their come-what-may insistence on compliance with ILO principles admirable, it was not very helpful in resolving the current situation. Taking a more realistic view of the options open to the Organization, Morse had decided that the ILO would step up its use of educational and promotional methods in the attempt to obtain universal recognition for the principle of freedom of association. This did



On the fringes of the AFRC in Addis Ababa, 1964: (right to left) Getahun Tessuma, Ethiopian Minister of National Development; Emperor Haile Selassie; David Morse; Robert Gardiner, Secretary-General of the UN Economic Commission for Africa

not go down particularly well with the trade union delegation – especially when the Director-General announced that wherever the ICFTU no longer had a foot in the door, the ILO would take over the training of trade union leaders itself, in the form of TAP programmes, a task which to date had been the exclusive domain of the international trade union federations and a few national ones. Becu saw this as tantamount to actually supporting those governments which placed their trade union movements under state control. Morse, however, was determined to avoid a vacuum and argued that any means of “encouraging tripartism” was a step on “the right road”.⁸²

This could well be taken as the ILO’s guiding principle in the years that followed. In his report on the Organization’s human rights work, Morse wrote in 1968 of the ILO’s need to continue its work in the area of freedom of association without being blind to the “harsh realities” of the situation.⁸³ The tripartite structure of the Organization took a few more blows in the process, but at the end of the 1960s the dispute finally began to die down. This was mainly because the ICFTU came to a compromise with the WFTU whereby, from 1968 onwards, some of the seats in the Workers’ group in the



Worker's education seminar in West Africa in the late 1960s

Governing Body always went to the WFTU. In 1971 the Western Workers even managed to win the support of many of their African and Asian colleagues for a Conference resolution calling for the tripartite structure of the Organization to be revitalized. The resolution asked governments to ensure that the Employers' and Workers' delegates they selected were truly independent, and emphasized the importance of freedom of association. This was a symbolic success at least for the Western Workers' group, especially as the resolution was passed despite opposition from Eastern Bloc representatives.⁸⁴

On the institutional level, the Office attempted to boost its "educational" work to promote the concept of freedom of association in a number of ways. More resources were put into the programme on social institutions, and workers' education was also expanded.⁸⁵ Both research carried out and seminars organized by the IILS focused more explicitly than before on industrial relations in developing countries.⁸⁶

At the same time, the Office commissioned a major study into the relationship between trade union rights and civil liberties.⁸⁷ The report attempted to tackle the problem of freedom of association from a new perspective. It concluded that the worst violations of the principle of free organization took place in those countries where civil liberties such as the right of assembly,



Workers' education: an Office-run seminar in Asia in the 1960s

the right of free expression and the right not to be subject to arbitrary arrest were commonly ignored. The approach taken by the study was prompted not least by the wave of military coups and the general transition to decidedly authoritarian forms of rule that had been seen in many countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America since the mid-1960s. In 1966 alone, for example, six governments had been overthrown in Africa, including those in Nigeria and Ghana. The shift to “guided democracy” in Indonesia under General Suharto was an indication of the road on which South-East Asia found itself. New military rulers also installed themselves in Latin America (e.g. in Argentina and Brazil), as part of what appeared to be an unstoppable authoritarian trend. A direct consequence of these developments was a deteriorating outlook for the principle of freedom of association, made perceptible in the drastic rise in complaints that reached the CFA.⁸⁸

As a result, although the Workers' Group continued to support the ILO's educational and promotional methods, it remained convinced that the Organization needed to apply more pressure in order to secure recognition for its principles. “Why help offenders?”, the question posed by the Austrian Chairman of the Workers' group in the Governing Body, Heribert Maier, in 1969, expressed the Workers' unchanged view that the ILO should make technical assistance dependent on compliance with human rights standards

such as freedom of association.⁸⁹ The Office, however, felt it simply did not have the political room for manoeuvre to take such drastic measures.

Despite everything, Morse and his supporters continued to regard freedom of association as an elementary principle of democratic modernization.⁹⁰ The discussions surrounding forced labour and freedom of association illustrated the ILO's unbroken belief in the universality of its standards and values at the end of the 1960s. At the same time, they compelled the Organization to find pragmatic solutions which would enable it to uphold these principles in the face of the problems of, and criticism from, the developing countries. In its human rights work, the ILO redoubled its efforts to prove that its standards were compatible with the development efforts of its members. David Morse wanted the activities of the Organization to make it clear that human rights were part of an overall strategy whose objective was economic and social progress. At the end of the 1960s, direct references to the integrated approach to development ceased, but the concept continued to be present in the increasingly prominent notion of the "solidarity" of human rights, the main theme of the report *The ILO and human rights* which the Director-General presented to the ILC in 1968 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the UDHR.⁹¹ At the report's core was the affirmation that the ILO regarded civil and political liberties on the one hand and the realization of economic and social rights on the other as inseparable from each other. Referring to the Declaration of Philadelphia, Morse reiterated the parity of its central values, which he defined as freedom, equality, economic security and human dignity.⁹² The structure of Morse's report could be taken as an example of his efforts to convey the fact that the ILO continued to represent a decidedly democratic concept of modernization in which economic and social development were seen as equal, inextricable and simultaneous processes. The report confirmed the universal nature of the ILO's values and was an unambiguous rejection of authoritarian solutions and gradualism with regard to human rights.

In 1968, the ILO even started to pick up a few hopeful signals that its message was getting through. A campaign launched in 1966 to improve the level of ratification of the core human rights norms actually bore fruit, which, formally at least, was an indication of an increase in members' acceptance of the universality of ILO principles.⁹³ At the same time, the calls for regional standards that had been so insistent in the middle of the decade gradually began to die down. For the Office, this was a sign that the new nations recognized and appreciated the ILO's efforts to intensify the technical, educational and promotional side of its human rights work. The Office's focus shifted even further from monitoring compliance with standards towards its operational work. Although Morse continued to regard overseeing observance of the Organization's norms as an important pillar of its human rights work, he recognized it was much more important that the ILO play an active role in creating the material conditions that

were a prerequisite for the implementation of standards.⁹⁴ For this reason, in the course of the reform of the Office, Morse set out for it a coordinated programme of human rights promotion. All the departments were urged to consider the practical implications of complying with standards, and to approach all their work from this perspective. Alongside its “educational” services, the Office came up with a range of special technical assistance packages such as the programme to combat discrimination in occupation and employment, or training and employment programmes for young people in developing countries – the latter being a direct reaction to the debates surrounding the African youth labour services. The World Employment Programme was also promoted as an active contribution to the realization of human rights, and was at the same time the highest expression of their indivisibility. Morse described the WEP as the embodiment of the ILO’s goal of realizing civil and social rights simultaneously. The expression “human rights” would always ring hollow to those denied the opportunity of gainful employment, but the WEP made reality not just of the right to work, but of freedom from forced labour, the right to equal chances in employment and the ideal of the social reconciliation of interests. In Morse’s words, it helped people to contribute to the development of their countries and to enjoy the fruits of development.⁹⁵

Conclusion

By the end of the 1960s, the optimism which had inspired the ILO at the beginning of the Technical Assistance Programme had evaporated. Maintaining a functioning organization throughout the era of decolonization had required a fair number of compromises, something which not even the series of festivities that preceded the end of David Morse's last term in office could disguise. In 1969 the Organization celebrated the 50th anniversary of its foundation, and the 25th anniversary of the Declaration of Philadelphia. That same year Morse was invited to accept the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the ILO, the crowning glory of a 22-year epoch during which he had left an indelible mark on the Organization. For a while, the celebrations and the honours bestowed on the ILO bathed it in such a positive light that its problems temporarily faded into the background.

When Wilfred Jenks succeeded Morse in May 1970, however, the festive mood had worn off and the ILO entered a period of deep crisis. Not long after Jenks took up office, his decision to elect a Soviet Assistant Director-General further worsened already strained relations with the United States and accelerated a downward spiral which ended in the American Government declaring in 1975 that it would be leaving the Organization. The years of American absence which followed weakened the ILO's financial and political standing immensely, and even after the country rejoined in 1981 the situation continued to be difficult. The rise of the neo-classical theory of economics during the Thatcher and Reagan years and the triumph of the policies of deregulation it entailed began to be felt in the international institutions too, inevitably hitting the ILO particularly hard. In respect of its development policy concepts, the Organization became something of a lone voice calling in the wilderness. Had it all been a waste of time, then? Could the ILO's efforts to shape the decolonization process as described in the preceding chapters retain any lasting impact? A review of the findings of this study may lead to a suitably nuanced answer.

Fighting for universality: from colonial particularism to the demands of development

Between the middle of the Second World War and the immediate post-war period, the ILO made a paradigmatic leap forward in its treatment of the social problems of the colonial territories. In the language of the Declaration of Philadelphia and the colonial reform opus which the Organization adopted between 1944 and 1948, the “native labour” issues of pre-war discourse became “social policy in dependent territories”. The significance of this terminological change was far-reaching. It marked nothing less than the ILO’s rejection of the colonial particularism that had characterized not only the wider environment but its own work during the period before the war. In Philadelphia, the colonies were taken out of the ghetto of the Native Labour Code and admitted to the sphere of universally applicable rights. Colonial subjects became citizens with social claims vis-à-vis the State.

This paradigm change in the ILO’s colonial work formed part of the general reform programme drawn up in Philadelphia in which the social promises of the Atlantic Charter took on a binding form. The notion that the individual had social rights of a universal nature prompted a call upon States to pursue an active economic policy guided by an overriding social objective, a vision which would provide the ideological basis for the creation of welfare states after the war. In what was deemed a “parallel operation”, an attempt was also made to apply this idea to the colonies. The colonial powers were encouraged actively to develop their territories in line with a broad social objective. It was particularly significant that the dependent territories that the ILO’s colonial reform documents called for the populations in question to be involved in the development process. Economic, social and political development were portrayed as being inseparable from one another.

The conditions under which the Philadelphia session of the ILC and those following it took place were favourable to the realization of a wide-ranging programme of reform. ILO officials such as Wilfrid Benson, the leading figure behind the programme, were able to build on the growing weight of the colonial reformist thinking that had emerged in the 1930s as a response to the social crises which had rocked many parts of the colonial world. Criticism of the prevailing colonial economic policy of *laissez-faire* had grown louder, with reformers calling for it to be replaced by a policy of active economic and social development which would benefit the colonial populations. In some isolated cases, this thinking had even taken hold within the colonial bureaucracies. More and more colonial politicians were beginning to see a policy of development as a way – indeed, in the face of political and social unrest, increasingly as a necessary means – of safeguarding their rule over the colonies in the long term. This led to the first cracks appearing in the particularistic colonial doctrine of the inter-war period.

The universalistic force of the development idea was actually nourished by indirect rule and other concepts which banished “the natives” to a separate, inferior sphere. Development thinking defined a common social realm that was governed by the same laws all over the world and permitted the application to the colonies of remedies that had been used to tackle social problems in Europe. This rejection of particularism made urban life and industrialization a valid goal and legitimized the demand for “modern” social institutions such as trade unions.

The Second World War had a catalysing effect on this new thinking. The defeats suffered by the colonial powers in Asia in particular opened the eyes of many in the metropolises to the “feet of clay” on which the European claim to rule over non-European peoples stood. The loss of South-East Asian possessions to the Japanese military machine shattered imperial confidence and, for the people in the colonies, seriously undermined the myth of “white supremacy”. The shock waves which these events triggered in the metropolises led to the realization that the foundations of post-war colonialism would have to be relaid. In this respect, the ILO’s plans for reform provided an opportunity for the colonial powers to demonstrate to the colonial populations their willingness to change. Embracing the ILO’s reform documents was tantamount to promising that the colonies, too, would profit from the democratic victory. Agreeing to the reforms also allowed the colonial powers to present themselves to their now much stronger US ally, which made no secret of its anti-colonial leanings, as progressive and willing to break with the past. The “American scare” was an important motive behind the actions of all the colonial powers, especially in the case of those governments-in-exile whose return to their old positions of authority depended directly on the good will of the American Administration. The broad support which the ILO’s proposals for colonial reform found among the colonial powers was thus born of two main factors: it reflected the growing influence of colonial reformist development thinking on the official mind and it was also a result of the propaganda value the metropolises saw in a colonial “fresh start” on the basis of social rights. These were the reasons why the Allied officials involved in post-war planning were generally receptive to the ILO’s call to ensure that the promised “people’s peace” was followed by a “people’s peace in the colonies”.

Although the colonial reform documents issued by the ILO between 1944 and 1948 represented a clear break with the past, they still reflected the limits of the universalistic discourse of the time. While the programme of action laid out in the Conventions and Recommendations on colonial social policy corresponded in terms of content to principles which the Declaration of Philadelphia proclaimed to be universally valid, in formal terms it was still a separate undertaking which treated the colonies as a realm unto themselves. Furthermore, the colonial powers refused to do away with the “colonial clause” in the ILO Constitution which left it up to

the signatories of international labour standards to decide if and to what extent the provisions of such standards would apply to their dependent territories. The continued existence of this double standard was a clear indication that the colonial powers were still not ready for the wholesale application of metropolitan norms to the colonies. Many colonial politicians continued to believe that Africans and Asians were simply not suited to an industrial, urban way of life, and held that promoting the establishment of social structures based on the European model was not the right way to go about tackling the problems of the colonies. Another reason for the colonial powers' reluctance to deem ILO standards to be fully applicable to the colonies was the fear that doing so would encourage the colonial populations to make demands on social policy which the metropolises were neither willing nor able to meet. In the period after the Second World War, the overriding goal of colonial development policy was the exploitation of the economic resources of the colonies for European reconstruction. Enabling the colonial populations to enjoy the same social standards as the home country was not something the colonial powers were willing even to contemplate – not least because of their keen awareness of the political dimension to the universalistic approach.

Their reservations were particularly evident in the area of trade union freedoms, an issue on which the attitude of the colonial powers was especially ambivalent. Although trade unions were encouraged, both the colonial bureaucracies and the officials on the ground did their utmost to limit their activities to such an extent that they could be guaranteed not to grow into a political threat. All these factors explain why, despite the ILO's success in introducing the colonies – notionally at least – into the spectrum of universal social standards, within the context of its actual norms the “non-metropolitan territories” continued to represent a world apart, or, in other words, a sphere to which less stringent rules applied.

The completion of the colonial reform opus at the end of the 1940s coincided with the beginning of a new era for the ILO. Independence for India and other Asian countries heralded a period during which the scales of ILO membership began to tip in favour of the world outside Europe. The newly independent States were not about to just sit back and observe proceedings. They made vocal demands for the reform of the ILO, calling for equal representation within the power structures of the Organization and insisting that it abandon its Eurocentric perspective by adapting its programme of work and concentrating much more than previously on the problems of the new nations. They wanted the ILO to help them overcome their social problems by actively supporting their economic development efforts and, even more importantly, by providing assistance with industrialization. India and the other newly independent countries deemed the ILO's primary duty to be to help them to continue and to conclude a struggle for independence which had now been transferred to the economic sector.

The man who took over the post of Director-General of the ILO in 1948, David Morse, was particularly open to demands such as these. Under Morse's leadership, the profile of the Organization changed rapidly and fundamentally. On his initiative the ILO launched, at the end of the 1940s, a programme of technical assistance. The concept behind this programmatic departure was founded essentially on two basic assumptions. First, Morse believed that increasing productivity was the key to solving the economic problems of the developing countries, and was convinced that the ILO could make an important contribution to this, in particular by offering programmes that would develop labour potential. Second, he thought that by participating in the economic and social development of areas that had once been under colonial rule, the ILO would play an important role in securing victory for the West in the global fight against communism. In his eyes, the Technical Assistance Programme (should stay) possessed the same significance for the developing countries as the Marshall Plan – which, as US Under Secretary of Labor, he had played an instrumental part in implementing – did for Europe. Morse's ideas in this area were a direct continuation of Truman's Point IV Program, which marked the United States' move to an active policy of development against the backdrop of the increasingly fierce ideological battle between East and West. The ILO's Technical Assistance Programme, then, came about at a time when the decolonization process and the increasingly global reach of the Cold War combined to sharpen the willingness of the international community to pay attention to the needs of the developing world.

Despite the modest funds available to the TAP in the 1950s, the operational shift in the Organization's activities became a political success. Paradoxically, the ILO's new "technical" orientation was actually a stabilizing factor when, with the accession of the Soviet Union, the East-West conflict entered the Organization's political bodies. The TAP had always been a good vehicle for scoring political points with the United States, even – or especially – when relations between the ILO and the US Government began to cool in the Eisenhower era; but the Soviet Union supported the Organization's development activities in principle too, not least in a strategic attempt to court the sympathy of the developing countries. What Morse and his colleagues viewed as their most significant success, however, was the overwhelming approval conferred on the new face of the Organization by those nations for which the TAP had really been designed. As Morse had hoped, the TAP won the ILO a whole new "clientele" in the form of the developing countries.

The ILO's move into operational activities, however, was always about more than providing technical assistance for economic development. What Morse and his colleagues were really offering to the developing countries was a comprehensive model of democratic societal modernization in which economic development was just one aspect among many. The "other side

of the coin”, or the backbone of the specific, integrated approach to development propagated by the ILO, were the Organization’s norms and principles, which in the mind of the Office represented a point of reference for the countries of the “Third World” that would provide the economic development process with both a means and an end. This study has shown that the integrated approach to development can be interpreted as an early version of modernization theory, which like the ILO held that the decolonization process needed to result not just in industrialization, but in the transformation of society as a whole, in every aspect from social structures to mentalities.

Modernization theorists believed that the developing countries were following a metahistorical path which was itself a reflection of an idealized image of the route to development taken by the capitalist, industrialized nations of the West. The problems of the developing countries thus became the problems of the European or North American past and, equally, the “vanishing point” of modernization was defined with a picture of the American present in mind. The Office’s appeals to the developing countries to use the norms and principles of the ILO as a code of practice for the modernization process were based on the same lines of thinking. The proponents of the integrated approach to development believed that it offered universal solutions to universal problems. This applied as much to technical standards governing occupational health and safety or social security as it did to the basic principles of the ILO Constitution. Both represented the answers which the industrialized European countries had found in an earlier phase of their own modernization process to the problems of social upheaval that had accompanied industrialization, and as such were now available to those countries where the phenomena of the European past were being repeated. Furthermore, the Office was convinced that adherence to basic ILO principles such as freedom of association or freedom from forced labour would ensure that the modernization process progressed in a way that was both democratic and peaceful – another conviction based on its specific interpretation of the success of the industrialized Western capitalist countries, where freedom of the individual at work and the balancing of the interests of workers and employers were seen as having been the distinguishing features of the democratic path to prosperous societies. This also allowed the ILO to draw a clear distinction between its approach and authoritarian models of development such as that embodied by the Soviet Union. The ILO’s humanitarian traditions and the position it took at the beginning of the Cold War thus merged in the integrated approach to development. By combining technical assistance and standards in one universalistic model of progress, Morse and the ILO were registering more than an interest in the economic and social development of the new nations. The particular added value of the ILO’s

contribution to the development discourse of the 1950s and 1960s was its specifically liberal-democratic bias.

The ILO's reinvention of itself as an agency of technical assistance also played a major role in decolonizing development thinking. While discussions in Philadelphia on the issue of development had been conducted from a predominantly colonial perspective, the focus was now on independent countries which, for their part, welcomed the ILO's technical function as an active contribution to their attainment of complete independence on the economic level. The thinking behind the integrated approach to development was post-colonial even with regard to the remaining colonial territories in that it made no distinction between colonies and independent countries. The path to modernization the ILO promoted was essentially universalistic. ILO officials were clear about the fact that the Organization's concepts were of equal value to all underdeveloped areas, regardless of their political status.

However, this view contrasted starkly with the attitude of the colonial powers, which showed no inclination whatsoever to allow the ILO to extend its operations to their territories. They rejected the ILO's offer of technical assistance for the same reasons they had fought to preserve the colonial double standard in the colonial reform debates of the mid-1940s. They wanted colonial development to take place in accordance with their rules, which meant first and foremost that the economic interests of the metropolises would be protected and that political control would remain exclusively in their hands. The colonial powers were keen to avoid at all costs any further "internationalization" of colonial policy and the increased accountability they feared it would bring – especially in the light of the growing strength of independence movements in the post-war colonies and the colonial powers' tendency in many places to resort to defending their claim to power by force of arms. The forum which the UN offered to critics of colonialism only served to reinforce the colonial powers' distrust of, and intensify their sensitivity to "interference" by, international organizations. As a result, in Africa in particular, the ILO found itself banging on closed doors in the 1950s. The colonial powers resisted all the Organization's attempts to establish itself on the continent with a steely resolve that put ILO officials into something of a quandary. On the one hand they were determined that Africa had to be included in their universalistic concept, but on the other neither Morse nor his supporters wanted to risk open conflict with the colonial powers. In the early days of the Technical Assistance Programme the ILO was too dependent on the support of the major European players, which continued to dominate the Governing Body, and after the accession of the Soviet Union there were equally valid reasons not to start a major dispute with the colonial powers, given that Britain and France constituted an important balancing force in the East–West conflict that had begun to dominate ILO Conference dynamics.

As a result, the Office's policy on Africa remained hesitant and, at times, over-cautious, and in the course of the 1950s became the subject of growing criticism among the Organization's members, in particular the new nations and the Workers' group. From the middle of the decade, the impulses received from the latter in particular gradually began to bring about change. The ICFTU, the Western-aligned federation of trade unions, was instrumental in forcing the Office to play a more active role in Africa, not least in a bid to secure its own position on the continent. At the same time, the Office's bargaining position was strengthened by the progress decolonization was making in Asia and North Africa and the loss of imperial confidence in the metropolises themselves. Towards the end of the decade its demands became bolder and more resolute, and the responses of the colonial powers more conciliatory – even if they were still delivered through gritted teeth. The opening of an African field office in 1959 symbolized the end of the long road the ILO had travelled to get into Africa and improved the chances of its being able to bring its development concept to bear there.

Right up until this late point, the ILO's colonial work had been taking place in a vacuum. The colonial powers' dogged resistance to its offers of technical assistance and the fact that its normative work had come to an early conclusion with the completion of the colonial reform opus in 1948 put a clear limit on the amount of influence it was able to exert. This endowed the meetings of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories with particular significance as this was the only opportunity the ILO had in the 1950s actually to take part in the debate on colonial social policy. Through its strategic selection of the topics the experts were to discuss, the Office made extensive use of the COESP as a medium to convey its own views. At the same time, because of the consistently high proportion of COESP members that came from the colonial administrations, the Committee's meetings offered an insight into the discursive change taking place among colonial social policy-makers during this period, with a broad universalistic consensus emerging as time went by.

The emphatically particularistic position of South Africa set its representatives on the COESP apart on almost every issue. The majority of the experts agreed that the laws of social change were as valid in Africa (the COESP's main area of focus) as they were in Europe or other parts of the world. The methods they prescribed to ease the transition from traditional rural ways of life and work to those of the urbanized, industrial modern age thus corresponded to those employed in the metropolises. In principle, the experts disapproved of systems of migrant labour, approved of "stabilization", and called for active social policy, family wages, housing and the establishment of vocational training centres.

This universalistic consensus was not free of anomalies, however. Running through the findings of the COESP were significant doubts as to whether the "backwardness" of the continent actually permitted the immediate

implementation of all the measures proposed by the ILO. These reservations even extended to the realization of full trade union freedoms, with the experts concluding that the “stage of development” Africa had reached required certain restrictions to be imposed on trade unions for a transitional period. The findings of the COESP were thus a double-edged sword in terms of the universal validity which the Office claimed for its concepts. On the one hand, the reports of the experts were proof that the universalistic spirit of the reform *opus* adopted in Philadelphia and at the Conferences that followed it now had broad support. On the other, the COESP’s findings contributed to the arsenal of arguments which the colonial powers used in the 1950s to support their claim to retain exclusive control over the development process in Africa and to justify the preservation of the colonial double standard. The experts did not dispute the fact that Africa was following a historically predetermined path into the modern age, but argued that the scale of the obstacles to be overcome on this path justified some level of authoritarian direction by those in possession of the necessary knowledge and experience. To put it bluntly, the findings of the COESP thus helped to sustain the ideological smokescreen which the colonial powers had erected around their claim to political control. The COESP’s statements tied in with the universalistic rhetoric strategically employed by the colonial powers, provided them with legitimization in their capacity as “development dictatorships” and validated their opposition to the Office’s attempts to bring its democratic approach to modernization to bear.

The ILO’s universalistic concepts were strengthened, however, by the parallel rise of human rights thinking. The Conventions adopted by the ILC between the end of the 1940s and the late 1950s made many of the essential principles of the Declaration of Philadelphia binding under international law and reinforced their universal validity. The discussions surrounding the abolition of penal sanctions, discrimination and forced labour in particular reflected the immense symbolic value of the human rights discourse. None of the parties involved wanted to forgo the credibility on the international stage associated with endorsing human rights, which made it difficult for governments to reject the notion openly. This and the huge political charge of the human rights discourse lent it a momentum which at times brought about some unexpected alliances. In the battle of the systems between East and West, and in skirmishes between the new nations of Asia and Africa and the colonial powers, human rights were viewed by both sides as a reliable means of anchoring their position on the moral high ground.

The human rights debates also gave the ILO an indication of the increasingly contradictory positions that existed within the Organization’s forums with regard to the principles of Philadelphia. The socialist States clearly represented a concept of law which deviated from the liberal values of the Declaration of Philadelphia in many ways. The discussion surrounding the issue of freedom of association was a particularly striking example of

the fierce debates conducted on the Organization's basic principles after the accession of the Soviet Union. The notion of freedom of association was more closely linked than any other to the idea of a democratic path to modernization and can even be described as the heart of the integrated approach to development. The reaccession of the Soviet Union, however, forced the ILO to make a fundamental policy decision in precisely this area. In the end, in order to maintain its universality, the Organization had to compromise on tripartism, one of its main structural principles and one closely related to freedom of association.

During the third phase explored in this study, 1960–70, African independence raised a series of new challenges for the ILO. The number of developing countries within the Organization's membership was growing rapidly, which forced it to adapt its activities to correspond better with the needs and wishes of the new majority. At the beginning of the 1960s the Office initiated a wide-ranging debate on the reform of the structure and programme of the Organization. The increasing politicization of the Conference that had resulted from the accession of a large number of post-colonial States made this a matter of some urgency for ILO officials. The Office perceived the attempts of the African and Asian countries to make the ILO into an arena in which to confront the remnants of colonial rule as an existential threat to the Organization. It felt that any further politicization of the debates, in particular on the scale that would result if post-colonial resentment were turned into ammunition in the Cold War, had the potential to paralyse the ILO and bring down its institutional architecture. Against this backdrop, the South African crisis of 1963 brought the ILO to the verge of collapse.

The African countries elevated the apartheid State's membership of the Organization to a question of the very values and principles of the ILO, and actively sought a showdown. South Africa's departure from the Organization was a symbolic victory for the new nations, confirming that their influence within the international community had grown in line with their number. To some extent, even the ILO emerged from the crisis stronger than it had been before, not least because Morse had managed to present it as an organization that sided unequivocally with those attempting to fight racial discrimination, while still insisting that any action taken had to remain within the framework of the ILO Constitution. His management of the crisis improved the Office's standing throughout the ILO's membership, and the outcome of the situation had the additional benefit of enabling apartheid to be tackled without having to worry about diplomatic niceties. This sharpened the ILO's profile and afforded its most fundamental principles new clarity and definition – particularly with regard to human rights.

The South African episode gave the Office another incentive to draw the attention of the developing countries to the technical functions of the ILO. With the North–South conflict beginning to make itself felt, the Organization redoubled its attempts to promote itself as an institution whose

main priority was the well-being of its poorer members – not always an easy task. In the altercations concerning the world economic order which began to dominate international forums in the 1960s, the ILO could do little more than offer its services as a neutral mediator between diverging interests. On some issues, such as the developing countries' move to set up UNIDO, which posed a real challenge to the ILO's own activities in the area of industrialization, it had no other choice than to side with the industrial nations. To compensate, it tried harder than ever to convince the developing countries of its usefulness in tackling the internal structures of underdevelopment.

With the developing world facing a general economic and social crisis and the dawning recognition that the growth-centred approaches of the past had failed, the ILO was able to hone its image as an agency of development. In the course of the 1960s, employment increasingly became the ILO's key to formulating its specific contribution to the UN's First Development Decade. By calling on the developing countries to make employment policy a priority in their national plans, the Organization attempted to increase interest in the social aspects of the development process, which had, at best, played a subordinate role in the approaches favoured thus far. The ILO believed that creating productive employment could be a fail-safe way out of the social turmoil accompanying the economic efforts of many developing countries. Many ILO officials thought it would help to alleviate the devastating effects which the combination of population growth and rural exodus was having on rural areas and cities alike, and in addition give the population a chance to enjoy the fruits of economic progress. For David Morse and others in the Office, then, the ILO's contribution to the development decade amounted to nothing less than the salvation of the development idea itself. In their eyes, making the developing countries mindful of the social dimensions of the modernization process had the potential to prevent this process from being irreversibly associated with impoverishment and political instability. The ILO's growing involvement in activities connected with employment eventually culminated, at the end of the 1960s, in the launch of the World Employment Programme, the first example of a comprehensive development strategy to concentrate primarily on the problem of poverty. The WEP was thus a pioneer project within the UN system, which followed the ILO's lead in the 1970s with a range of similar programmes, and it enabled the ILO to consolidate its position as an agency of technical assistance.

In the area of human rights standards, however, the difficulties facing the ILO were greater. During the 1960s, the decade in which the process of political decolonization more or less came to an end, the integrated approach to development became the subject of intense conflict which forced the ILO to reaffirm – to itself as much as to anyone else – the universal nature of its principles. The model favoured by the ILO came under fire from the newly independent States almost as soon as the decade dawned. The new nations' avowals that they would assume wholesale the obligations which

the colonial powers had taken on in their names, and, even more pointedly, their eagerness to ratify the ILO's core human rights norms, turned out to be meaningless. The problems lay on the level of the practical implementation of the standards. The ILO's objection to the discrepancies between the rhetoric and the situation on the ground led very early on to criticism being voiced of the ILO's standards themselves – criticism that was much more fundamental than any previously raised and went right to the heart of the integrated approach to development. The developing countries increasingly began to claim that implementing some of the ILO's basic principles to the letter was actually a barrier to development. Many governments argued that underdevelopment could be defined as a state of emergency comparable to war, which warranted the deployment of all societal forces under strong governmental leadership. The authoritarian model of development which this “state of emergency” justified was not easily reconcilable with the ideals promoted by the International Labour Office. The further the debate progressed, the more the ILO's attempts to safeguard its principles were dismissed as attempts to scupper the developing countries' legitimate interest in more rapid economic development, and the principles themselves branded as an instrument of “neo-colonial” control. The controversy surrounding the issue of African youth labour services was an example of the discursive change that this decade marked. The ILO's condemnation of youth labour services as a modern form of forced labour for economic purposes caused outrage, especially against the backdrop of the debate on employment policy being conducted at the same time. Its criticism of the practice was interpreted as an attempt to hinder the African States on a matter that was essential to economic progress – the integration of young people into the economy. The acrimony of this debate also had roots in the colonial connotations of the issue: as forced labour was regarded as a typically “colonial crime”, the newly independent nations were doubly resentful of the accusations.

The principle of freedom of association was contested equally fiercely. The discussions surrounding it were basically a continuation of the Asian debate of the 1950s, but here too, objections to the principle became more fundamental. Many governments believed that the national development effort and the resulting state of emergency did not permit the expression of particular interests. The role of trade unions (and, to a lesser extent, employers' associations) was thus considered to be not so much to represent the interests of a particular social group as to concentrate that group's potential for the common economic advancement of the nation. The general trend observable in the 1960s towards the establishment of authoritarian regimes in the developing countries represented an additional obstacle to the realization of trade union freedoms. The tendency in the developing world to subject trade unions to rigid state control and to force them to merge into one central association also resulted in further erosion of the

principle of independence underlying the tripartite structure of the ILO. The Organization somehow had to deal with the fact that the majority of its members held the principle of freedom of association in partial or total disregard.

Against this background, the ILO searched hard for ways to take account of the development demands of its members without having to compromise on human rights standards. The discussions surrounding forced labour had also shown, though, that even within the Office itself there were increasingly radical differences of opinion on whether the two could or even should be reconciled. Some of the economists in the Office went so far as to venture that an authoritarian approach appeared to promise greater success and more rapid development than the democratic one hitherto favoured. However, externally at least, the ILO stood firmly by its principles, even at the end of the Morse era. The concept of the “solidarity of human rights” renewed the ILO’s postulate that the values of the Declaration of Philadelphia gave it the basis for a universally valid model of progress. The Office did take account of the complexity of the situation by incorporating the integrated approach to development more into its promotional and educational work, but the ILO’s standards, which reflected its ideals of free labour and democratic labour relations, remained the guiding force behind its actions, even if the underlying values at times came under intense fire.

The ILO as actor and forum: establishing a moral discourse

What conclusions, then, can be drawn from this history of the ILO’s attempts to deal with decolonization and its consequences? An analysis of the hard historical facts does seem to indicate that the ILO must be regarded as having failed in its project of steering the decolonization process on to a democratic path to modernization. Why did this happen? One critical factor was the ILO’s early loss of the Archimedean point which would have allowed it to define, with unmistakable clarity, a universalistic model of development based on liberal democratic values and relevant to both the colonial and the post-colonial worlds. It had found this point for a moment in Philadelphia, where the liberal democracies – including the European colonial powers – agreed upon common values on which to build the post-war order, and where the concept of social human rights, the basis of the Declaration, made it clear that the will and intention of the signatories was to find a universally valid response to the crises of the past. However, leaving aside the fact that the colonial powers’ willingness to include their dependent territories in these promises had been half-hearted, to say the least, from the start, the political and economic conflicts of the post-war period soon obscured the clarity of this concept, for reasons that lay both within and outside the Organization.

First, to the extent that the ILO's predominantly Western orientation was reduced after the reaccession of the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s, the values entrenched in the Declaration of Philadelphia could no longer be deemed an ideal shared, in theory, by all the members. From this point on, violations of some of the Organization's core principles could not be interpreted solely as deviations from the path to a common goal. The compromises entered into with regard to the principle of tripartism, for instance, are an excellent illustration of the fact that it was the universal validity of the values themselves that was now increasingly being called into question.

Second, the reality of late colonial rule contributed to blurring the clarity of these values. The cutbacks and curtailments to which the makers of late colonial social policy subjected the model of societal democratization in particular seriously hampered the transition to independence in many cases. This also had consequences in so far as the new elites generally remained beholden to the discursive and institutional framework left behind by the colonial rulers, often sharing their distrust of societal democratization because of the political pluralization that would be the inevitable result.

Third, the universalistic postulate suffered lasting damage as a result of the enduring economic inequalities within the international post-war order. The North-South divide often served the new national elites as justification for pursuing their development efforts under an authoritarian banner. It contributed to a process in which the reference points of the rights discourse shifted more and more from the national to the international level. The more plausibly the leaders of the new nations could argue that the causes of the political, economic and social crises plaguing the post-colonial countries lay in the structural disadvantages they faced in the international economic system, the more decisively the inherent value of the democratization of society (as propagated by the ILO) could be rejected.

These three main factors, then, significantly limited the ILO's room for manoeuvre and reduced its chances of gaining a level of acceptance for its concepts that would have allowed them to come fully to fruition. Nonetheless, as this study has shown, both as a forum and as an actor the ILO introduced some significant impulses into the decolonization process. First and foremost, the ILO provided an arena in which anti-colonial criticism could be articulated with regard to economic and social policy and in which post-colonial nations could formulate the demands they placed on the world community. In the corridors and meeting rooms of the Organization, the transition to a new world order was clearly perceptible, a world order into which many new States and, accordingly, new values and new alliances had been introduced. It also became clear that the Office's part in all this was anything other than passive. In the run-up to the colonial reform proposals of Philadelphia and during the entire core phase of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, ILO officials were busy attempting to bring their own designs to bear on the late colonial projects of the

European powers and the transition of colonial peoples into independence. Their actions were not politically neutral, but always deeply rooted in the political and historical context of the time, as demonstrated by the beginnings of the Technical Assistance Programme under David Morse against the backdrop of the Cold War.

By the same token, though, at no time were ILO officials simply agents of the dominant States within the Organization's membership. On the contrary, they were actors in their own right with considerable personal agency. The concepts through which the Office attempted to influence the policies of the ILO's member States were, essentially, drawn up within the Organization. They reflected constant efforts by ILO policy-makers to integrate existing trends, fine-tune them for their own purposes and then, together with allies in and outside the Organization, to put them to work in pursuit of those ends. The work which took place in preparation for the colonial reform programme of Philadelphia and the drawing up of an integrated approach to development are prime examples of this. The frequent adjustments made to each of these approaches are evidence of the (narrow) limits restricting the scope of action of international agencies in the absence of instruments of real power, but at the same time demonstrate their ability to adapt creatively to the political environment.

It would, then, be short-sighted to measure the ILO's success or failure by nothing other than the degree to which the Organization was able directly to assert its own concepts and programme. By leaving the Eurocentrism of its early years behind it and becoming a truly globally oriented and globally active organization, the ILO played its own part in the decolonization of the international order. In the area of human rights and development, it made an important practical and intellectual contribution to the post-war, post-colonial order of States, in particular by helping to establish a moral discourse of global responsibility and mutual dependency. This discourse provided a clear frame of reference which allowed both areas under late colonial rule and newly independent nations to formulate their demands for equality and support in the international system.

In this respect, the question raised at the beginning of this study regarding the emancipatory potential of the ILO's concepts becomes particularly interesting from a post-colonial perspective. As this study has shown, in the course of the dissolution of colonial rule the significance attached to these concepts was, in effect, turned on its head. Decolonization, especially after the Second World War, was spurred on not least by the rise of the human rights idea. The moment independence was obtained, though, demands became obligations which the new holders of power assumed vis-à-vis their populations. From here on the nationalist elites often found that the ILO's standards lost their emancipatory force. Initially regarded as an obstacle to the rapid and thorough development of national resources, in the course of the 1960s they were treated more and more as a burdensome

part of the colonial legacy, and shortly afterwards even denounced as a tool in the hands of the former colonial powers to ensure that established structures of dependency continued into the post-colonial age. From the end of the 1960s onwards, an increasingly culturalistic, essentializing note crept into the debate, with attacks by the non-European world on the “Western” character of human rights becoming ever more frequent. Dissociation from Western paternalism, and from the Western-inspired individualism that was reflected in the first two generations of human rights and thus in the values of the Declaration of Philadelphia, became a widespread emancipatory postulate in the post-colonial world.

Of course, the culturalistic narrative represents only one dimension of the saga. Neither the genesis nor the implementation of the concepts and standards drawn up by the ILO since Philadelphia can be attributed solely to the power-political constellations in the international system of the post-war period; they were also the result of a complex dialogue between a range of different protagonists and interests. Although this dialogue was rarely balanced, the debates on issues such as discrimination and forced labour exemplified the ways in which, regardless of the actual balances of power within the bodies of the Organization – which, for most of the time under discussion here, did indeed favour the Western highly industrialized States – the direction and ultimately the results of the discussions could be influenced. As has been shown, the human rights and development discourses developed a momentum of their own. The final form taken by a standard was always the result of input from a large number of stakeholders with a wide range of different motives. Neither the colonial powers nor the post-colonial governments were able to steer the discussions of human rights and development issues entirely in the direction they would have liked. Most importantly, however, even when the debate inside the ILO surrounding the adoption of a particular standard was over, these discourses always remained open for appropriation by social groups in and outside the Organization, which would then themselves enter into dialogue with the colonial powers, and later the post-colonial elites, on how best to interpret and apply the standard in question. In this double sense, the history of the development of the ILO, its norms and its models during the phase of decolonization is embedded in complex historical contingencies and does not fit into simple dichotomic paradigms such as universal versus particular or Western versus non-Western. This is not, however, to deny the Western provenance of the idea of a modern order which inspired the ILO’s standards and the Office’s approach to the problems of the post-war period, nor indeed the ideological potential of this idea in legitimizing claims to political and economic power in the international system.

In the end the ILO’s adherence to universalistic principles – regardless of the dispute surrounding their historical or geographical origin – has always been a source of strength to the Organization. The fact that there

are still very few governments today prepared openly to oppose the ILO's core standards on the one hand attests to the Organization's continuing integrative force and on the other shows that human rights standards, once established, provide a stable and enduring point of reference. Despite the oscillations which the ILO's position in the system of international organizations has undergone since the 1960s, the fact that its activities are rooted in a base of fixed values has been a significant factor in the Organization's ability to assert itself even in times of crisis.

It can, then, be seen as a distant echo of the era of decolonization that in 1998 the ILO managed to adopt a Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in which member States committed to a core inventory of human rights standards as a consequence of membership alone and regardless of whether or not they had ratified them. The Conventions in which the rights in question are laid down include those concerning discrimination and freedom of association, and both instruments banning forced labour. In addition, the realization of these freedoms is defined as an integral part of a "global strategy for economic and social development". The steadfastness reflected in the 1998 Declaration and more recent ILO documents on the social aspects of globalization is the very factor which gave the ILO's principles in every phase of the decolonization process and beyond their extraordinary emancipatory force.¹ The norms and values of the ILO remained a fixed point of reference for those political and social movements that were acting outside the apparatus of state power. Not only did the ILO's standards help under colonial conditions to make the legitimacy claims of governments subject to certain measurable criteria, they also provided a concept of social rights which enabled opposition groups after independence to challenge the legitimacy of post-colonial elites' claims to power. ILO standards could be taken as a yardstick of social justice and buttressed demands for political and societal participation. Although the ILO could not force countries either to accept or to apply its standards, it integrated governments in a discourse on human rights and social development that could not easily be waved away.

Appendix I: Selection of Important Conventions and Recommendations, 1930–70

Conventions

- No. 29: Forced Labour Convention (1930)
- No. 50: Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention (1936)
- No. 64: Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention (1939)
- No. 65: Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939
- No. 82: Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
- No. 83: Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
- No. 84: Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
- No. 85: Labour Inspectorates (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
- No. 86: Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1947
- No. 87: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948
- No. 98: Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949
- No. 104: Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955
- No. 105: Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
- No. 107: Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957
- No. 111: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958
- No. 117: Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962

Recommendations

- No. 35: Forced Labour (Indirect Compulsion) Recommendation, 1930
- No. 36: Forced Labour (Regulation) Recommendation, 1930
- No. 46: Elimination of Recruiting Recommendation, 1936
- No. 58: Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Recommendation, 1939
- No. 59: Labour Inspectorates (Indigenous Workers), 1939
- No. 70: Social Policy in Dependent Territories Recommendation, 1944
- No. 74: Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1945
- No. 91: Collective Agreements Recommendation, 1951
- No. 104: Indigenous and Tribal Populations Recommendation, 1957
- No. 111: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Recommendation, 1958
- No. 127: Co-operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966
- No. 136: Special Youth Schemes Recommendation, 1970

Appendix II: Ratification of Core Human Rights Standards by Country and Date of Ratification (Selection)

Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1931)
Netherlands (1933)
France (1937)
Belgium (1944)
Indonesia, Sri Lanka (1950)
India (1954)
Egypt, Burma (Myanmar) (1955)
Portugal, Soviet Union¹ (1956)
Ghana, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan (1957)
Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon,
Cameroon, Congo, Mali, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Syria, Togo, Chad,
Central African Republic (1960)
Libya, Mauritania, Niger (1961)
Algeria, Tanzania, Tunisia (1962)
Burundi, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda (1963)
Kenya, Laos, Zambia (1964)
Singapore (1965)
Cambodia (1969)
Angola (1976)
South Africa (1997)
Malawi (1999)

Not ratified by (selection):

United States

- Came into force:² 1932
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 175

Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939 (No. 65)

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1943)

Ghana, Malaysia (1957)
Nigeria (1960)
Tanzania (1963)
Kenya (1964)

Not ratified by (selection):

Belgium, France, Netherlands, South Africa

- Came into force: 1948
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 32

**Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention,
1947 (No. 82)**

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1950)
France (1954)
Belgium (1955)

- Came into force: 1955
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 4

**Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories)
Convention, 1947 (No. 83)**

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1950)

Not ratified by:

Belgium, France, Netherlands, South Africa

- Came into force: 1974
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 2

**Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories)
Convention, 1947 (No. 84)**

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1950)
France (1954)
Belgium (1955)

- Came into force: 1953
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 4

Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1949)
Netherlands (1950)
Belgium, France (1951)
Philippines (1953)
Burma (Myanmar) (1955)
Soviet Union (1956)
Egypt, Tunisia (1957)
Guinea (1959)
Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Syria, Togo, Chad, Central African Republic (1960)
Mauritania, Niger (1961)
Algeria, Jamaica (1962)
Trinidad and Tobago (1963)
Ghana (1965)
Portugal (1977)
South Africa (1996)
Indonesia (1998)
Cambodia, Malawi (1999)

Not ratified by (selection):

India, United States

- Came into force: 1950
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 150

Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1950)
France (1951)
Pakistan (1952)
Belgium (1953)
Egypt (1954)
Soviet Union (1956)
Ghana, Indonesia, Morocco, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia (1957)
Guinea (1959)
Nigeria (1960)
Gabon, Malaysia, Senegal (1961)
Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Tanzania (1962)
Uganda (1963)
Kenya, Mali (1964)
Portugal (1964)
Malawi, Singapore (1965)
South Africa (1996)

Not ratified by (selection):

India, United States

- Came into force: 1951
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 160

**Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers)
Convention, 1955 (No. 104)**

Ratified by (selection):

Niger, Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya (1962)
Central African Republic (1964)

Not ratified by (selection):

Belgium, United Kingdom, France, South Africa

- Came into force: 1958
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 25

Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

Ratified by (selection):

United Kingdom (1957)
Egypt, Ghana, Jordan (1958)
Netherlands, Portugal, Tunisia (1959)
Nigeria, Pakistan (1960)
Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Senegal, Somalia (1961)
Cameroon, Jamaica, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania (1962)
Burundi, Uganda (1963)
Kenya, Central African Republic (1964)
Zambia (1965)
Morocco (1966)
France (1969)
United States (1991)
South Africa (1997)
Indonesia, Malawi (1999)

- Came into force: 1959
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 169

**Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)
Convention, 1958 (No. 111)**

Ratified by (selection):

Portugal, Tunisia (1959)
Egypt, Guinea, India, Philippines (1960)

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Libya, Madagascar, Pakistan, Soviet Union (1961)
Burkina Faso, Niger (1962)
Mauritania, Morocco (1963)
Mali (1964)
Malawi (1965)
Chad (1966)
Senegal (1967)
Algeria (1969)
Angola (1976)
Mozambique (1977)
France (1981)
South Africa (1997)
Sri Lanka (1998)
Indonesia, Britain, Zimbabwe (1999)

Not ratified by (selection):

United States

- Came into force: 1960
- Total number of ratifications (2011): 169

Notes

Introduction

1. Frantz Fanon: *The wretched of the earth* (New York, Grove, 2004; first publ. 1961).
2. For an account of the period leading up to the establishment of the ILO and the early days of the organization, see A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organisation* (London, Macmillan, 1970), pp. 1–49.
3. The Office has expanded from a couple of hundred officials in the inter-war period to a regular staff of some 1,700 people today. The name of its head was changed from Director to Director-General by decision of the 29th Session of the ILC (General Office Instruction No. 26, 28 Oct. 1946).
4. This arrangement changed as the result of a structural reform at the end of the 1980s, and the Governing Body nowadays consists solely of elected representatives. Ten seats are still reserved for States “of chief industrial importance” but are occupied on a rotational basis.
5. For an overview of the history of human rights and different approaches to it, see P.G. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); M.R. Ishay: *The history of human rights: From ancient times to the globalization era* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 2004); L. Hunt: *Inventing human rights: A history* (London, Norton & Co., 2007).
6. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007).
7. E. Borgwardt: *A new deal for the world: America’s vision for human rights* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2005); H. Hagtvad Vik: *The United States, the American legal community and the vision of international human rights* (unpublished thesis, University of Oslo, 2009).
8. Two recent studies aim to highlight this strategy; see R. Burke: *Decolonization and the evolution of international human rights* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), and F. Klose: *Menschenrechte im Schatten kolonialer Gewalt: Die Dekolonisierungskriege in Kenia und Algerien* (München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009, forthcoming in English from the University of Pennsylvania Press). A detailed and lucid analysis of their “optimistic” view of the significance of international organizations held by the two authors can be found in J. Eckel: “Human rights and decolonization: New perspectives and open questions”, in *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010), pp. 111–35.
9. On the history and emergence of development thinking, see the introduction in D.C. Engerman and C. Unger (eds): “Towards a global history of modernization”, in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2009); see also H.W. Arndt: *Economic development: The history of an idea* (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1987); G. Rist: *A history of development: From Western origins to global faith* (London, Zed, 2002).
10. On the emergence of a “global community” of international organizations since the nineteenth century, see especially A. Iriye: *Global community: The role*

- of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world (Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 2002). On the development of internationalism in the period before the First World War, see especially M.H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds): *The mechanics of internationalism: Culture, society and politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001). For a cursory review of the development of intergovernmental international organizations in the twentieth century, see D. Armstrong, L. Lloyd and J. Redmond: *From Versailles to Maastricht: International organisation in the twentieth century* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996).
11. P. Kennedy, *The parliament of man: The past, present and future of the United Nations* (New York, Penguin/Allen Lane, 2006; E. Luard: *History of the United Nations*, 2 vols (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982–89).
 12. A summary can be found in Sunil Amrith/Glenda Sluga, “New Histories of the United Nations”, in: *Journal of World History* Vol. 19, No. 3 (2008), 251–74. Beside the academic endeavours treated here, a “history of ideas” approach is spearheaded by a series of major intellectual history projects initiated by the UN itself and various specialized agencies (including the ILO). As most of those responsible for launching the intellectual history programme were former officials of the organizations in question, it is not surprising that such studies assume as a starting premise the significance of the contribution made by international organizations. The starting point for, and a good introduction to, the United National Intellectual History Project (UNIHP) is L. Emmerij, R. Jolly and T.G. Weiss: *Ahead of the curve? UN ideas and global challenges* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, Ind., Indiana University Press, 2001); more recent contributions relevant to the following study include R. Jolly et al.: *UN contributions to development thinking and practice* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, Ind., Indiana University Press, 2004) and Roger Normand/Sahra Zaidi, *Human Rights at the UN. The Political History of Universal Justice*, (Bloomington/Indianapolis, Ind., Indiana University Press, 2008). Information about the UNIHP can be found on <http://www.unhistory.org>; about the ILO Century Project on <http://www.ilo.org/century>. Hyperlink reference not valid.
 13. J. Van Daele: “The International Labour Organization in past and present research”, in *International Review for Social History* (2008), Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 485–511.
 14. See especially G. Rodgers et al.: *The ILO and the quest for social justice, 1919–2009* (New York/Geneva, Cornell University Press/ILO, 2009). Some older accounts of “insiders” relevant to this study include D.A. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO and its role in the world community* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1969); G.A. Johnston: *The International Labour Organisation: Its work for social and economic progress* (London, Europa, 1970); F. Blanchard, *L’Organisation Internationale du Travail: de la guerre froide au nouvel ordre mondial* (Paris, Seuil, 2004). The “outsiders’ view” is provided, for example, by V.-Y. Ghebali: *The International Labour Organization: A case study on the evolution of UN specialized agencies* (Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989); J. McMahon: “The International Labour Organization”, in E. Luard (ed.): *The evolution of international organizations* (London, Praeger, 1966), pp. 177–99; E.B. Haas, *Beyond the nation state: Functionalism and international organization* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1964). The work of Robert Cox in this context is a rather special case. The majority of his sharp and sometimes quite critical reflections on

- the ILO were published during the 1970s by Cox in his capacity as a renowned scholar in political sciences at Columbia University. See especially R. Cox: "ILO: Limited monarchy", in: R.W. Cox and H.K. Jacobson (eds): *The anatomy of influence: Decision making in international organization* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 102–38; idem: "Labor and hegemony", in *International Organization* (1977), Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 385–424. There can be hardly a doubt, however, that his work had been inspired by the more than two decades he had served the Organization in various positions from the late 1940s until 1971, when he resigned from the post of the Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies.
15. Alcock: *History of the ILO*. The ILO commissioned Alcock to produce this work on the occasion of the Organization's 50th anniversary in 1969.
 16. See in particular the compilation of essays in Jasmien Van Daele/Magaly Rodríguez García/Geert van Goethem/Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *ILO Histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and its impact on the world during the twentieth Century* (Bern et al., Peter Lang 2010); also J. Van Daele, "Engineering social peace: Networks, ideas, and the founding of the International Labour Organization", in *International Review of Social History* (2005), Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 435–66; L. Rodríguez-Piñero: *Indigenous peoples, postcolonialism, and international law: The ILO regime, 1919–1989* (Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2005). The broad spectrum of recent scholarship on the ILO can also be gleaned from looking at the topics of the contributions on the website of the ILO's Century Project: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/century/information_resources/papers_and_publications.htm
 17. See, for example, R. Keohane: *International institutions and state power: Essays in international relations theory* (Boulder, Colo., Westview, 1989).
 18. See, for example, B. Reinalda: "Organization theory and the autonomy of the International Labour Organization: Two classic theories still going strong", in B. Reinalda and B. Verbeek (eds): *Autonomous policy making by international organizations: Purpose, outline and results* (London/New York, Routledge, 1998), pp. 42–62. Reinalda's text is informed by a reinterpretation of two classic (functionalist) studies on the ILO by Ernst B. Haas and Robert Cox: R. Cox: "ILO: Limited monarchy", in R.W. Cox and H.K. Jacobson (eds): *The anatomy of influences: Decision making in international organizations* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 102–38; Haas: *Beyond the nation state*.
 19. F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996). See also idem: "Modernizing bureaucrats, backward Africans, and the development concept", in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds): *International development and the social sciences: Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997), pp. 64–93; idem: "Introduction", in F. Cooper and L.A. Stoler (eds): *Tensions of empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1–45.
 20. Emmerij et al.: *Ahead of the curve*, pp. 1–15.
 21. P. Haas: "Introduction: Epistemic communities and international policy coordination", in *International Organization* (1992), Vol. 46, pp. 1–36.
 22. On the genesis of modernization theory, see N. Gilman: *The mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, Md./London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); M.E. Latham: *Modernization as ideology: American*

- social science and “nation building” in the Kennedy era (Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
23. F. Cooper and R. Packard: “Introduction”, in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds), pp. 14 ff.
 24. The three-dimensional approach pioneered by the British historian John Darwin (*Britain and decolonization: The retreat from empire in the postwar world*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988) now colours all recent general works on decolonization, even if the relative weight attributed to each dimension varies. See especially M. Shipway: *Decolonization and its impact: A comparative approach to the end of colonial empires* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2008); R. Betts: *Decolonization: The making of the contemporary world* (London/New York, Routledge, 1998); and J. Springhall: *Decolonization since 1945: The collapse of European overseas empires* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). Of the older literature, see also R. Holland: *European decolonization: An introductory survey* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1981). The wealth of literature in English and French also offers case studies of individual colonial empires, regions or countries. On the decolonization of the British Empire, see W.D. McIntyre: *British decolonization, 1946–1997: When, why and how did the British Empire fall?* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). On French decolonization, see R. Betts: *France and decolonisation 1900–1960* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); C-R. Agéron (ed.): *Les Chemins de la décolonisation de l’empire colonial français* (Paris, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1986); T. Chafer, *The end of empire in French West Africa: France’s successful decolonization?* (Oxford, Berg, 2002).
 25. Most important among them is Luard: *History of the United Nations*, Vol. 2: *The age of decolonization 1955–1965*.
 26. S. Moyn: *The last utopia: Human rights in history* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2010).
 27. Burke: *Decolonization and human rights*; Klose: *Menschenrechte im Schatten*. See also many of the contributions in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.): *Human rights in the twentieth century* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011), and M. Mazower: *No enchanted palace: The end of empire and the ideological origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 2009)
 28. P.G. Lauren, *Visions seen*; M. R. Ishay, *The history of human rights*. For an overview of the literature in the field, see K. Cmiel: “The recent history of human rights”, in *American Historical Review* (2004), Vol. 109, No. 1, pp. 117–35; R. Afshari: “On historiography of human rights: Reflections on Paul Gordon Lauren’s *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen*”, in *Human Rights Quarterly* (2007), Vol. 29, pp. 1–67.
 29. For a good cross-section of the debate between “universalists” and “culturalists”, see the contributions in A.A. An-Na’Im (ed.): *Human rights in cross-cultural perspectives: A quest for consensus* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). A more recent study that contains an in-depth engagement with cultural relativism in human rights is R. Afshari: *Human rights in Iran: The abuse of cultural relativism* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
 30. For a concise overview of recent literature, see C. Unger: “Histories of development and modernization: Findings, reflections, future research”, in *H-Soz-u-Kult* (<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2010-12-001>); N. Cullather: “Development? It’s history!”, in *Diplomatic History* (2000), Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 649–65.

31. For a positive view, see A. Staples: *The birth of development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization changed the world 1945–1965* (Kent, O., Kent State University Press, 2006); D.H. Lumsdaine: *Moral vision in international politics: The foreign aid regime 1949–1989* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1993). Hefty criticism from a post-structuralist perspective can be found in A. Escobar: *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1995). Also sceptical is Rist: *A history of development*.

Prologue: Separate worlds – The ILO and “native labour”, 1919–39

1. Albert Thomas (1878–1932), born in Champigny-sur-Marne (France), was a reform socialist, co-editor of *L'Humanité* and disciple of Jean Jaurès. He served as French armaments minister from 1916 to 1918 and from 1920 to 1932 as first Director of the International Labour Office. Thomas was the charismatic father figure of the ILO and played an influential role in defining its structures and areas of activity. See the biography by Thomas's successor, E.J. Phelan: *Yes and Albert Thomas* (London, Cresset Press, 1936), which is limited to his time with the ILO. See also B.W. Schaper: *Albert Thomas: trente ans de réformisme social* (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1959), trans. as *Albert Thomas: Thirty years of social reform*, ILO Century Project (Geneva, ILO, 2009).
2. The incident is described in Phelan: *Yes and Albert Thomas*, pp. 209, 222.
3. Britain's plans for the Empire foresaw a gradual increase in autonomy, “self-government” and ultimately independence. France, on the other hand, promised its colonies *association* – more integration with the mother country. Both of these promises for the future (neither of the powers regarded the political emancipation of the colonies as an imminent development) were based on a paternalistic vision of the present. See especially R. von Albertini: *Dekolonisation. Die Diskussion über Zukunft und Verwaltung der Kolonien 1919–1960* (Cologne, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1966), pp. 101–22 and 323–57.
4. Early in the war, England and France had entered into some secret agreements to this end, the most important of which was the Sykes–Picot Agreement of May 1916 governing the division of the Ottoman Empire, which with its implications for colonial policy (in respect of Palestine) was also the most momentous.
5. Although, as an associate organization of the League of Nations, the ILO had an observer on the Mandate Commission, the Commission itself was so powerless that the ILO's influence via this channel was also very limited.
6. V.-Y. Ghebali: *The International Labour Organization: A case study on the evolution of UN specialized agencies* (Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989), p. 143.
7. Part of the reason why it was so hard for member States such as Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia to exert influence was the fact that, before the Second World War, they hardly ever managed to send full delegations to the International Labour Conference.
8. The United States did not join until 1934, under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The membership of the Soviet Union, which established relations with the ILO that same year, was exclusively the result of its accession to the League of Nations. Moscow had no involvement in the Organization's work, nor did it send delegations to the ILC.

9. The IFTU was an organization of trade unions with reform socialist leanings limited mainly to Western Europe. It was little more than a loose grouping of isolated national associations, dominated from 1933 onwards by the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the French Confédération Général du Travail (CGT). Until 1945 it had barely any non-European members, let alone colonial ones. In the period between the wars, the IFTU competed with the communist-dominated Red International of Labour Unions (RITU). The IFTU had an office in Geneva which served as an organizational centre for many of the Workers' groups at the ILC. See G. van Goethem: "Conflicting interests: The International Federation of Trade Unions (1919–1945)", in A. Carew et al. (eds): *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 73–165.
10. A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organisation* (London, Macmillan, 1970), p. 33.
11. *OB* (1936), Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 18 ff.
12. India's exceptional position in the ILO reflected its treatment by the League of Nations. At the time, Britain's support of India's acceptance into these organizations was interpreted as an attempt to obtain another "British" vote in the committees concerned. India was not a dominion, nor was it, by League of Nations criteria, an independent State. Up to 1929, until which point it was not unusual for India to be represented at the Conference by British delegates, its delegations were effectively dictated to by the British delegation and appeared in the list of participants in the Conference, which was otherwise arranged alphabetically, after the British Empire. After 1929, however, Indian delegations were made up only of Indians. They also became more independent. Indian representatives – Sir Atul Chatterjee being one example – were elected to preside over the Conference and chaired the Governing Body. During the 1930s, India's importance within the ILO grew dramatically. On India's early role, see also P.P. Pillai: *India and the International Labour Organisation* (Patna, Patna University, 1931); L. Sundaram: "India and the International Labour Organisation", in A. Zimmern (ed.): *India analysed* (London, Gollancz, 1933), pp. 67–90.
13. The British, French and Dutch Workers' delegations to the ILC contained advisers from the colonial territories on various occasions. The Belgian, French and Dutch Employers, on the other hand, called upon advisers only from the ranks of the European companies active in the colonies. See ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories* (Geneva, 1944), pp. 56 ff., nn. 2 and 3.
14. A. Sarraut: *La Mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris, Payot, 1923). See also von Albertini: *Dekolonisation*, pp. 307–23.
15. On the early development initiatives of the metropolises, see also D.K. Fieldhouse: *The West and the Third World: Trade, colonialism and dependence* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), pp. 70–75.
16. ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 1–30.
17. The Ugandan political scientist Mahmood Mamdani proposes that on a political level, European colonial rule bore all the hallmarks of the future South African apartheid regime. Regardless of differences in official colonial doctrines, Mamdani sees all colonial societies as having been separated into a European realm of "citizenship", which was reserved for the colonial masters and a small circle of "assimilated" natives, and a realm of colonial "subjects" which was governed by "tradition". See M. Mamdani: *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996).

18. F. Lugard: *The dual mandate in British tropical Africa* (London, Blackwood, 1922).
19. F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 25–107.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 38 ff. On forced labour in African territories under French rule, see B. Fall: *Le Travail forcé en Afrique occidentale française, 1900–1946* (Paris, Karthala, 1993).
22. One example of taxes payable directly as labour were the institutions of *heerendiensten* and *particuliere landerijn* in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). *Heerendiensten* were minor communal services, such as the maintenance of roads, which were allotted to the inhabitants of certain districts by the colonial administration. The second type prescribed that the owners of some concessioned plantations on Java were entitled to a certain amount of labour to be provided for free. In theory, both institutions represented alternatives to payment of taxes, but in practice their only purpose was to provide labour for companies that would not otherwise have had enough at their disposal. See ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 34 ff.
23. See Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, pp. 27 ff.
24. To some extent, the League of Nations' mandate to the ILO represented a watershed in the international anti-slavery campaign. Since the abolition of slavery by the final act of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, an international public had been trying to define the grey area of coercion which separated slavery from the idealized zone of "free labour". The abolition of slavery in the colonies in the course of the nineteenth century, which was exploited to the full for propaganda purposes, often turned out in practice to be little more than legal formalism. The definition of slavery remained narrow: where there were no longer legal statutes in place permitting the possession of one person by another, the labour regime was deemed by definition to be "free". The debate surrounding the brutal regime of forced labour in the Belgian King Leopold II's "free" state of Congo at the turn of the twentieth century had for the first time prompted a shift of the border between acceptable and non-acceptable further from slavery into the realm of "free labour". By concentrating exclusively on the legal statute of slavery and the slave trade, however, the League of Nations' Slavery Convention remained firmly rooted in the tradition of the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement. Thus when the ILO was asked to take international action to promote "free labour" it was venturing into an area that was not clearly defined and whose borders were still the subject of much controversy. On the fight against slavery and the way it related to "free labour", see the articles in F. Cooper, T.C. Holt and Rebecca Scott (eds): *Beyond slavery: Explorations of race, labor and citizenship in post-emancipation societies* (Chapel Hill, NC/London, University of North Carolina Press, 2000); on the general debate on "free" and "unfree" labour, see the articles in T. Brass and M. van der Linden (eds): *Free and unfree labour: The debate continues* (Amsterdam, Peter Lang, 1997).
25. On the ideological precursors to the idea of international labour standards, see J.W. Follows: *Antecedents of the International Labour Organization* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951); the reminiscences of the ILO insider James Shotwell: *The origins of the International Labour Organization* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1934); and Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 37–49. On the idea of international labour standards in the past and present, see also the report by one of their most prominent advocates, Werner Sengenberger: *Globalization and social*

progress: The role and impact of international labour standards, a report prepared for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Bonn, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2002).

26. During the first years of its existence, the ILO was mainly concerned with industrial labour. Its focus simply did not extend to agricultural labour, which effectively meant that it ignored a large part of the world outside Europe, including the territories under colonial rule, where agriculture was the dominant form of occupation. Although in the 1920s the Office managed, de jure, to extend the scope of international standards to agricultural and non-physical labour, the norms continued de facto to be directed almost exclusively at industrial labourers.
27. The notion of human rights that were anterior to the State did not feature in the ILO's standard-setting between the wars. The idea that workers had inalienable and universally valid "social" rights did not establish itself on an international level until later, essentially during the Second World War. On the human rights debate in the period between the wars, see P.G. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 105–39.
28. The only other exception are the ILO's seafaring Conventions, which are adopted at special labour Conferences attended only by maritime member States.
29. A summary of the different positions can be found in J. Goudal: *Esclavage et travail forcé* (Paris, A. Pedone, 1929). Goudal was the head of the ILO's Native Labour Section.
30. By the time the first Forced Labour Convention came to be negotiated, Thomas had a long personal history of commitment to the struggle against slavery and forced labour. He had protested against forced labour in the French Congo, where conditions were similar in many respects to those in the neighbouring Belgian Congo, even before the First World War.
31. Quoted in Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 86.
32. For the debate, see *ibid.*, pp. 81–93.
33. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 87.
34. The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), was eventually adopted with 93 votes in favour and 63 abstentions. The document is to be found in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 173–82.
35. K.K. Norsky: *The influence of the International Labour Organization on principles of social policy in non-metropolitan territories* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 56–62.
36. The clauses had been consciously formulated to make sure that no member of the ILO was compromised at home by the provisions of a Convention for colonial territories, which could easily have been the case if labour institutions which were common practice in most countries had not been listed explicitly among the permitted forms of compulsory labour.
37. ILC, 25th Session (1939), record of proceedings (RoP), p. 304.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
39. See Chapter 6, "The Penal Sanctions Convention: The last colonial standard".
40. Norsky: *The influence of the International Labour Organization*, pp. 88–103.
41. Forced Labour (Indirect Compulsion) Recommendation, 1930 (No. 35); Forced Labour (Regulation) Recommendation, 1930 (No. 36); both in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations*, pp. 183–86.
42. Recommendation No. 35, Section I.

43. This provision targeted the practice of recruiting Asian (especially Indian and Chinese) contract labourers to work in Asia, Africa or the Caribbean that had been in use since the nineteenth century – essentially since the abolition of slavery.
44. It laid down, for example, that forced labour must not imperil the food supply of the community concerned by extracting from them too many agricultural workers, and recommended that degrading forms of labour such as porter duties and the carrying of passengers not be used “where animal or mechanical transport is available”.
45. See ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 27–42.
46. G.A. Johnston: *The International Labour Organisation: Its work for social and economic progress* (London, Europa, 1970), p. 235.

1 “The Promise of a New Earth to Till”: The ILO’S Colonial Work in Exile, 1940–43

1. R. Betts: *Decolonization: The making of the contemporary world* (London/New York, Routledge, 1998), p. 19. On the significance of the Second World War for decolonization, see also ch. 2, “Mobilization, rejuvenation, liquidation, colonialism and global war”, in R. Holland: *European decolonization: An introductory survey* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1981), pp. 37–89; M. Shipway, *Decolonization and its impact: A comparative approach to the end of colonial empires* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2008), pp. 61–87.
2. The German Reich had announced its intention to leave the ILO and the League of Nations in 1933 (the step became effective in 1935). Italy followed in 1938. Although the ILO initially attempted to maintain a policy of neutrality after war broke out in 1939, the non-membership of the Axis powers and the fact that all the Western democracies were members made its position relatively clear.
3. A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organisation* (London, Macmillan, 1970), pp. 158 ff. See also the memoirs of Edward J. Phelan: “Some reminiscences of the International Labour Organisation”, in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* (1954), Vol. 43, No. 171, pp. 241–70.
4. John Winant (1885–1947), born in New Hampshire, served as Governor of New Hampshire from 1925 to 1926 and from 1933 to 1935. An advocate of progressive social legislation, he was spokesman for the new Social Security Board set up under Roosevelt. He was Director of the International Labour Office, 1939–41; American Ambassador in London, 1941–45; and American delegate to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), 1945–46.
5. Frances Perkins reports on a discussion with Roosevelt in August 1940 in which the President declined the ILO’s request for asylum in the United States since he felt that Congress, where isolationist feelings were still widespread at the time, would not accept the Organization on US territory. See F. Perkins: *The Roosevelt I knew* (New York, Viking, 1946), pp. 344 ff.
6. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 159. McGill University’s internationalist and liberal orientation made it the obvious candidate to take in an organization such as the ILO. One of the “fathers” of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, John P. Humphrey, was the secretary of the university’s law department from 1937 to 1946.
7. One indication of the Office’s dilemma was the issue of its French staff. In order not to risk a complete break with the Vichy Government for the time being, the

- plan was to leave the French staff behind in Geneva. Those French members of the Office who were opposed to Vichy, such as Adrian Tixier, head of the Office's social security division, went with the rest of the staff to Montreal. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
8. See Jenks (legal adviser to the Office) to Benson, 30 Aug. 1940, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 9. Free France was to be regarded as a colonial power as long as the loyalties of the French possessions remained unclear. While most governors turned towards Vichy after the French defeat, the position of others was undecided. A third group was on the side of Free France from the beginning. See J. Eisenberg, L., *Laquelle était la vraie France? France and the ILO during the Second World War*, in J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez García, G. van Goethem and M. van der Linden (ed.). *ILO histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and its impact on the world during the twentieth century*, 2010, Peter Lang, Bern et Al., pp.341–64.
 10. See Benson's personnel file: ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson 1921–1946. His first chief, the colonial expert Harold Grimshaw, believed Benson to be a man capable of playing a prominent role in either an academic or a practical setting.
 11. *Dawn on Mont Blanc* was Benson's third published novel. His first two, *As you were* (1929) and *The foreigner in the family* (1930), were both published by the Hogarth Press, the publishing firm owned by Leonard and Virginia Woolf.
 12. Thomas saw Benson's behaviour as "most reprehensible", and determined to punish him accordingly: "for the gross disservice which you have rendered the Office, I have decided to inflict upon you a severe reprimand": Albert Thomas to Wilfrid Benson, 30 June 1930, in ILOA P/B 1176 (J1): Wilfrid Benson.
 13. This is evident from a 1937 report by Weaver on Benson's areas of work, in ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson.
 14. The Fabian Society, founded in 1884, was dedicated to attaining socialism by way of reform. The name refers to the Roman general Fabius Maximus, whose tactic of delaying the battle until the most favourable moment won him the nickname of Cunctator ("the Delayer"). The Labour Party was formed out of the Society's merger with the trade unions in 1900. Members of the Society included George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Leonard Woolf, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb; it has attracted many other prominent figures from the British left up to the present day.
 15. Many members had links with the leaders of the nationalist movements in India and other parts of the British Empire. See P.S. Gupta: *Imperialism and the British labour movement 1914–1964* (London, Holmes & Meier, 1975).
 16. There are references to this in ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson.
 17. Benson was forced to turn down this offer. His position as an employee of an international organization precluded his being an official member of a party organization. See Benson's report to the ILO, Sep. 1940, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 18. This attitude of Benson's is clear from his first reports, in which he reviews the final months of colonial work in Geneva before the Office retreated into exile. See Benson's reports to the ILO, Sep., Oct. and Nov. 1940, *ibid.*
 19. Union-organized strikes affecting strategically important functions of the colonial economy were seen, for example, in Northern Rhodesia in 1935, in the ports of Mombasa (Kenya) and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanganyika), and among railway workers in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1939. See F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 58–65.

20. On this, and socio-economic aspects of British decolonization in general, see the excellent introduction to the primary source edition by A.N. Porter and A.J. Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonisation 1938–1964*, Vol. 1: *1938–1951* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1987), pp. 12–25.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 14. See also documents nos 1, 2, 3 and 6 in the same volume on the preparations and statements of the West Indian Royal Commission.
22. Another critical publication revealing the dire conditions in the Caribbean was the report by the historian and social critic W.M. Macmillan: *Warning from the West Indies* (Harmondsworth, Faber & Faber, 1938). Macmillan too was a member of the Fabian Society. On the role of the unrest in the Caribbean in the thinking of British colonial politicians, see also H. Johnson: “The West Indies and the conversion of the British official classes to the development idea”, in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* (1977), Vol. 15, pp. 56–60.
23. M.W. Hailey (Lord Hailey): *An African survey* (London, Oxford University Press, 1938). Malcolm W. Hailey (1872–1969) was himself a long-serving official in the Indian Civil Service who from 1924 to 1934 had been the Governor of Punjab and the United Provinces. From the 1930s, when he carried out his African survey during a three-year period of travel and research, until well into the 1950s, when he published new editions of the survey, Lord Hailey was seen as the leading colonial expert on Africa.
24. Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonisation*, Vol. 1, pp. 19 ff.
25. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, pp. 73–107.
26. ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories* (Geneva, 1944), pp. 32–42.
27. D. K. Fieldhouse: *The West and the Third World: Trade, colonialism and dependence* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), p. 86.
28. Benson’s report, Aug. 1940, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
29. Benson’s report, Sep. 1940, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
30. *Ibid.* The words were underlined.
31. Memorandum, “International Labour Organisation: war time policy in British colonial dependencies” (Wilfrid Benson), 30 Oct. 1940, in PRO CO 859/39/2, Secret Social Service: International Labour Organisation: Wartime policy in the colonial empire, memorandum by International Labour Office (Wilfrid Benson), 1940.
32. Benson’s first impression of de Vleeschauwer was that of a man with “a well-stocked armoury of generalisations”. The minister had referred to Africans as children who needed the parental guidance provided to them in Belgian Congo. He dodged the question of a potential signing of the Convention on repeated occasions. See Benson’s report, May 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
33. The Bureau included figures such as Leonard Woolf, Julian Huxley and W.M. Macmillan, among others. One of the most interesting members was the West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis, who had a key influence on the CO’s thinking on development policy in the period immediately after the war.
34. At this time the main influence on the group was the biologist and writer Julian Huxley (1887–1975), who would later become the first director of UNESCO.
35. For the memorandums and Benson’s summary of them, see Benson’s report, May 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
36. Benson’s comments, *ibid.*
37. Only Britain and, to a lesser extent, France had extended isolated parts of regular Conventions to their colonial territories before 1940, as the Committee of

- Experts at the ILC in 1938 had noted. Quoted from Governing Body (GB), 91st Session (1943), RoP, Annex D, Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories, p. 136.
38. Benson's report, May 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 39. Benson's report, Dec. 1940, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 40. Benson's report, Jan. 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 41. Edward J. Phelan (1888–1967), was born in Co. Waterford (Ireland) and trained as a lawyer. As a member of the Intelligence Division of the British Ministry of Labour (MOL) from 1916 he played a major role in preparations for the establishment of the ILO. In 1919 he was secretary of the British delegation in Versailles, and served from that year as head of the Office's Diplomatic Section. From 1933 he was Assistant Director of the Office; from 1938 Deputy Director; from 1941 to 1946 Acting Director; and from 1946 to 1948 Director-General.
 42. Weaver (International Labour Office, Montreal) to Benson, 14 May 1941, in ILOA PF, Z 8/3/32: Correspondence with Mr Benson 1941–1944.
 43. These weaknesses were the main motivation for the setting up of the Beveridge Commission. In 1943 the Commission came up with a plan for the development of the British welfare state which was to form the blueprint for reforms introduced by the Labour Government under Attlee after 1945.
 44. In the cases of the Netherlands, Belgium and France, the situation was further complicated by the fact that ties with their colonial possessions had become looser anyway following the occupation of the mother countries, meaning that when relations were re-established after the war, the metropolises would be facing an increased level of colonial autonomy. Benson felt that the British Empire, however, was more stable, and not just because of the political circumstances. He found that in comparison with those of the other colonial powers, the British Empire was more efficiently managed, more professional on the ministerial and bureaucratic levels, and subject to a higher degree of parliamentary control, and that its colonial leaders displayed a higher degree of loyalty. See Benson's report, May 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Correspondence with UK: Mr Benson Reports.
 45. *Ibid.*
 46. Adrian Tixier and Jef Rens were the main figures in the Office demanding that Phelan come down clearly on the side of the Allied democracies. Rens, a Belgian, had been a trade union officer, was a member of the Resistance, and during the war worked in cooperation with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the foreign secret service. After the war he became a key figure in the ILO, serving as Deputy Director-General from 1948 to 1965. See Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 161 ff.
 47. Roosevelt's "Four freedoms" speech of 6 Jan. 1941, in S. Rosenman (ed.): *The public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols (New York, Random House, 1938–50), Vol. 9, p. 672.
 48. For a balanced analysis of the relationship between FDR's foreign policy concepts and American isolationism in the period between the wars, see D.K. Adams: "The concept of parallel action: FDR's internationalism in a decade of isolationism", in D. Rossini (ed.): *From Theodore Roosevelt to FDR: Internationalism and isolationism in American foreign policy* (Keele, Keele University Press, 1995), pp. 113–31.
 49. On the significance of the Atlantic Charter (Joint Declaration of the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, 14 Aug. 1941) see P.G. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 141–43.

50. Rosenman (ed.): *The public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 9, p. 672.
51. *Constitution of the International Labour Organisation*, Preamble.
52. Cited in Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, p. 143.
53. On the positive attitude towards the ILO of Frances Perkins, Roosevelt's Labor Secretary throughout his term of office from 1933 to 1945, see Perkins: *The Roosevelt I knew*, pp. 337–46.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Vichy France fought a losing battle to have the ILO transferred to a neutral country and eventually left the Organization. From 1943 the Conseil de la Libération officially took up the French seat in the Governing Body. De Gaulle made Tixier his representative. See Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 164.
56. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, pp. 139–65.
57. ILC (1941), RoP, p. 1.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 11 ff.
59. ILO: *The ILO and reconstruction* (Montreal, 1941).
60. These demands reflected trends in economic and social policy that had emerged in many places in Europe and North America under various auspices since the world economic crisis. Under Harold Butler's leadership in the 1930s, the ILO had moved beyond the framework of labour standards in the strict sense and extended its standard-setting work to other issues of social policy, such as employment strategies. See N. Haworth and S. Hughes, A shift in the center of gravity: The ILO under Harold Butler and John G. Winant, in Van Daele: *Writing ILO Histories* 293–312.
61. See ILO: *The ILO and reconstruction*, pp. 2 ff.
62. Churchill was aware of the dangers that recourse to the right of self-determination laid down in the Atlantic Charter could have with regard to the preservation of the Empire. As a result he tried repeatedly to emphasize that the Atlantic Charter was valid only for Europe. For Roosevelt, on the other hand, on whose initiative these passages had been included in the Charter, there was no question that they also applied to the colonies. On the reception of the Atlantic Charter, see Lauren, *The evolution of international human rights*, pp. 144 ff.
63. Greenidge to Ernest Bevin, 29 Aug. 1941, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, New York, 1941.
64. See Hibbert (CO) to Leggett (MOL and head of the British delegation in New York), 19 Sep. 41, *ibid.* Hibbert believed that certain elements of the CO would have welcomed a declaration.
65. This, at least, is how Benson judged the situation in September 1941; see Benson's report, Sep. 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
66. Benson's report, Nov. 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
67. Quoted *ibid.* The article in *The New Leader* appeared on 22 Nov. 1941.
68. ILC, Special Session (1941), RoP, p. 33.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
70. Benson's report, Sep. 1941, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
71. ILC (1941), RoP, pp. 39, 38.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 115 ff.
73. Trade unions from the Dutch East Indies were among the very few non-Western or colonial associations that had been members of the IFTU since the beginning of the 1930s. The only other such associations to have been permanently represented came from India. See G. van Goethem: "Conflicting interests: The

- International Federation of Trade Unions (1919–1945)', in A. Carew et al. (eds): *The International Confederation of Trade Unions* (Berne, Peter Lang, 2000), p. 115.
74. ILC (1941), RoP, pp. 112 ff.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
 76. After going into exile in 1940, the IFTU was more or less a subdivision of the TUC, whose Secretary-General Walter Citrine had headed the IFTU since the 1930s. Jacobus H. Oldenbroek (1898–1970), on the other hand, as Deputy Chairman of the International Union of Transport Workers, was part of a parallel system of sector-specific international trade secretariats which existed independently from the IFTU and attempted to maintain its independence during the war. Oldenbroek had good links with the American trade unions and during the war worked in cooperation with the OSS. See van Goethem: "Conflicting interests", pp. 153 ff. For a short biography of Oldenbroek, see *ibid.*, p. 559.
 77. ILC, Special Session (1941), RoP, p. 21.
 78. Press release by the Office, 27 Oct. 1941, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, New York, 1941.
 79. Betts: *Decolonization*, pp. 19–27.
 80. According to the historian A.J.P. Taylor, quoted in Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonisation*, Vol. 1, p. 25.
 81. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, pp. 148 ff. On the consequences of the Japanese occupation of South-East Asia for the process of decolonization, see Shipway, *Decolonization and its impact*, pp. 68–75.
 82. Benson's report, Feb. 1942, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 83. Benson's report, Jan. 1942, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 84. *Ibid.*
 85. *Ibid.*
 86. M. Mazower: *The dark continent: Europe's twentieth century* (London, Allen Lane, 1998), p. 267.
 87. On the epochal paradigm change that took place during the war and laid the foundations for the rise of the European welfare states after the war, see *ibid.*, ch. 6, "Blueprints for the Golden Age", pp. 267–307.
 88. Mark Mazower has pointed out that these plans for a renewal of democracy were limited to domestic politics and, in the main, excluded the colonies. Apart from the Netherlands, the attitude of the metropolises to their empires was one of extreme indifference, and interest in the plight of the colonial populations "barely perceptible": *ibid.*, p. 285.
 89. *Ibid.*
 90. A reference to the East End of London which, as a result of various factors, had in the late nineteenth century come to stand for poverty, overcrowding, disease and criminality; yet another proof of the intellectual trend among reform-oriented groups to call for the colonies and their social problems to be treated in a way similar to that deemed appropriate for "backward" areas at home.
 91. *The Times*, 13–14 Mar. 1942, annexed to Benson's report, March 1942, in ILOA NL 1–25, Mr Benson Reports.
 92. *The Economist*, 7 Mar. 1942, *ibid.*
 93. R. von Albertini: *Dekolonisation. Die Diskussion über Zukunft und Verwaltung der Kolonien 1919–1960* (Cologne, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1966), p. 199.
 94. Emergency Committee (EC), 5th Session (1942), RoP, p. 7.
 95. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 28 ff.
 96. *Ibid.*, pp. 14 ff.

97. The British MOL had asked for the opinion of the CO, which replied that there was no cause for concern and it would be able to stand up to an investigation on the points in question. On many aspects, the Office's paper corresponded to the policy of the British Government, and even where it did not the resolution would in any case have no consequences under the current wartime conditions. Opposition would only be counter-productive, the CO concluded. See Hibbert (CO) to Leggett (MOL), 11 Apr. 1942, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, 1941, New York.
98. Benson was given the task of carrying out this study there and then: Weaver to Benson, 30 Apr. 1942, in ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson.
99. Benson's report, April/May 1942, in ILOA NL 1-25, Mr Benson Reports.
100. In his attempt to get the British to agree, Benson was even prepared to accept temporary wartime limitations by the British Government of the Forced Labour and Penal Sanctions Conventions. This was because, since the beginning of the war, the British had resorted to forced labour on a massive scale and effectively suspended the Conventions for the duration of hostilities. See ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 24 ff.
101. "The Minister concluded that for various reasons, of which the chief is the lack of urgency, he was not willing to use the powers delegated to him to ratify the Convention," wrote Benson in his report of April/May 1942 (ILOA NL 1-25, Mr Benson Reports). In the same report Benson complained about de Vleeschauwer's parading as "King Log of the Congo".
102. Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, pp. 25 ff.
103. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, p. 149.
104. On this see Holland: *European decolonization*, pp. 52 ff.
105. On the attitude and interests of the United States with regard to the Empire during the Second World War, see the still valid study of W. Roger Louis: *Imperialism at bay: The United States and the decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977).
106. W. Roger Louis and R. Robinson: "The United States and the liquidation of the British Empire in tropical Africa, 1941-1951", in: P. Gifford and W.R. Louis (eds): *The transfer of power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1982), p. 32.
107. Memorandum from Carter Goodrich, "Tentative suggestions for adapting the International Labor Organization for greater usefulness", May 1942, in NARA, RG 174.3.1 (general records of the Secretary, Frances Perkins), B 13: ILO and conferences, 1940-1945.
108. ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 81 ff.
109. Benson to Hibbert (CO), 13 Nov. 1942, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference USA, 1941, New York.
110. The IPR was a scientific institution with various branches within and outside the United States. It had been a pioneer of Western research on East Asia since its establishment at the beginning of the 1920s and, more recently, of research into social problems in the Pacific region. When the United States entered the war, the IPR put its resources and expertise at the disposal of the Allied war effort. In the McCarthy era during the 1950s many of its staff were accused of being communist sympathizers, which caused it significant financial problems. See P.F. Hooper: "The Institute of Pacific Relations and the origins of Asian and Pacific studies", in: *Pacific Affairs* (1988), Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 98-121.

111. Benson to Hibbert (CO), 13 Nov. 1942, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, 1941, New York.
112. The formulation “through the development of a local sense of social responsibility” was a circumlocution for participatory models of social policy as opposed to the paternalism of indirect rule. The main objective behind it was the development of trade unions.
113. Benson to Hibbert (CO), 13 Nov. 1942, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, 1941, New York.
114. Notes by Hibbert (CO), 16 Nov. 1942, in PRO CO 859/59/11, International Labour Conference, USA, 1941, New York.
115. Notes by Orde-Brown (CO), *ibid.*
116. Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, pp. 25 ff.
117. Speech by Viscount Cranborne in the House of Lords, 3 Dec. 1942, quoted in GB, 91st Session (1943), RoP, Annex D, Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories, p. 137.
118. Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
120. US foreign policy circles were suspicious of the term “partnership” for the additional reason that, in their opinion, it suggested an exclusive relationship between junior and senior partners. The notion of “trusteeship”, on the other hand, also implied international responsibility, as the idea was that the trustee was given its “ward” by the international community. The Labour Party’s adoption of this terminology, however, was very hesitant. Its official terminology emphasized the future “equal status” between the mother country and the colonies. See ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 39 ff.
121. In the same year, Kenya went from being an exporter to an importer of maize, as a result of production being changed to concentrate on goods important to the war effort: Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, p. 23.
122. The activities of the “Indian National Army” under former Congress leader Subhas Chandra Bose, which, with Japanese support, conducted military operations against the British from within Burma, and the simultaneous “Quit India” campaign of the predominantly anti-Fascist Congress under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru, were only the most extreme manifestations of an imminent loss of control (*ibid.*). On mobilization for the war effort and resistance in British Africa and the part of the continent ruled by de Gaulle’s Free France, see Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, pp. 124–41, 156–70.
123. Porter and Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, pp. 28 ff., 39–45.
124. See Fieldhouse: *The West and the Third World*, pp. 84 ff.
125. Netherlands Information Bureau: *The Netherlands East Indies* (London, 1943), quoted in ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, p. 63.
126. Jan Christian Smuts: “The British colonial empire”, in *Life*, 28 Dec. 1942, pp. 11–14, quoted *ibid.*
127. “Belgian Congo: Discours prononcé par le gouverneur général Ryckmans à la séance d’ouverture du Conseil du Gouvernement”, Nov. 1943, quoted *ibid.*, p. 64.
128. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, p. 177.

129. The original text of de Gaulle's Brazzaville speech appears as an appendix to C. de Gaulle: *L'Unité* (Paris, 1956), pp. 477–80; available in translation at: www.charles-de-gaulle.org (accessed 12 Nov. 2007).
130. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, p. 178.
131. Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society: An International Colonial Convention (London, 1943), quoted in ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, p. 68.
132. M.W. Hailey (Lord Hailey): *Great Britain and her dependencies* (London, Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 29 ff.
133. Benson to Phelan, 8 Jan. 1943, in ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson.
134. Weaver (ILO) to Phelan, 29 Jan. 43, *ibid.*

2 A charter for the Colonies: The Colonies at the Philadelphia Conference, 1944

1. M. Mazower: *The dark continent: Europe's twentieth century* (London, Allen Lane, 1998), p. 267.
2. Jay Winter has described this phase of post-war thinking (which he sees as culminating in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948) as one of the great "utopian moments" of the twentieth century. J. Winter: *Dreams of peace and freedom: Utopian moments in the twentieth century* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 99–121.
3. The USSR had been expelled from the League of Nations in December 1939 in the wake of its attack on Finland. It had, however, not participated in any ILO meetings since 1937, and the Governing Body decided not to expel it formally but to suspend the permanent seat in the Governing Body to which it was entitled as one of the eight main industrialized nations. See A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organisation* (London, Macmillan, 1970), pp. 157 ff.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
6. The Hot Springs conference dealt with the setting up of what would become the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
7. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 174.
8. At the same time, individual trade union representatives actively approached their governments to demand that the ILO's position be strengthened, threatening that otherwise the international trade union movement would fight alone, and accordingly more confrontationally, to be involved in the establishment of a just post-war order. The leading role of the trade union representatives in and outside the Office in strengthening the ILO's post-war position is emphasized in J.D. French: "The Declaration of Philadelphia and the Global Social Charter of the United Nations 1944/1945", in W. Sengenberger and D. Campbell (eds): *International labour standards and economic interdependence* (Geneva, ILS, 1994), pp. 19–27.
9. Memorandum from Schevenels and Hallsworth to Phelan, 29 Oct. 1943, quoted in Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 176.
10. See GB, 91st Session (1943), RoP, pp. 58 ff. and 142.
11. *Ibid.*, Annex D, Standards of social policy in dependent territories, pp. 135–38.
12. The areas targeted in particular were minimum age for work, protection of women, general principles of remuneration and mechanisms for setting wages,

- wage protection, labour aspects of land policies, encouraging saving, general principles of social security, working hours, prohibition of discrimination, labour inspection, freedom of industrial organization, the advancement of trade unions and mechanisms for mediation in industrial disputes. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
 14. The document noted, for example, that forced labour was experiencing a renaissance in Africa and that the cost of living had risen in those colonies contributing to the war effort. Territories in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean that were dependent on imports had been hit particularly hard. A third problem examined in detail in the report was the worsening of race conflicts in industry, the result of a more open employment policy during the war. As a larger workforce was needed, occupations were opened up that had previously been subject to racial restrictions. A classic example of this was South Africa. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
 15. Memorandum from Benson to Phelan, 1 Nov. 1943, in: ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson, 1921–1946.
 16. M. Stewart: *The ILO and Great Britain 1919–1969: The story of fifty years* (London, HMSO, 1969), pp. 23–30.
 17. See GB, 91st Session (1943), RoP, p. 138.
 18. Memorandum from Benson to Phelan, 1 Nov. 1943, in ILOA P/B 1176: Wilfrid Benson.
 19. GB, 91st Session (1943), Annex D, Standards of social policy in dependent territories, pp. 135–38.
 20. Memorandum on ILC, 26th Session (1944), RoP, p. 6.
 21. W. Benson: “A people’s peace in the colonies”, in *International Labour Review* (1943), Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 141–68. The title of the article quotes Ernest Bevin, British Minister of Labour in Churchill’s War Cabinet and later Foreign Secretary in the Labour Government under Clement Attlee.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
 27. This formulation referred to a statement by Lord Hailey, quoted *ibid.*, p. 155.
 28. Alcock, *History of the ILO*, pp. 99–108.
 29. Benson: “A people’s peace in the colonies”, p. 154.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. According to a list written by Benson in November 1943, the recipients of the memorandum “The ILO and colonial progress” were Leonard Woolf (Labour Party Imperial Advisory Committee), Lord Hailey, Sir Alan Pim (Political and Economic Planning), Rev. H.M. Grace (Conference of British Missionary Societies), Arthur Creech-Jones and Rita Hinden (Fabian Colonial Bureau), H.B. Kemmis (TUC Colonial Committee), C.W.W. Greenridge (Secretary-General of ASS), J.S. Furnivall (IPR South-East Asia specialist based in London), Dr Margaret Read (Colonial Department of the University of London’s Institute of Education) and members of the exiled governments of the occupied countries – Count de

- Briey (Belgian colonial ministry) and Hans van Mook and N.S. Bloom (Dutch colonial ministry). The paper also went to the relevant figures in the MOL and the CO. See ILOA NL 1000 Native Labour – Non-metropolitan Territories division – Consultation of colonial experts.
36. Memorandum from Benson, "The ILO and colonial progress," July 1943, *ibid.*
 37. Arthur Creech-Jones to Benson, 18 Sep. 1943, *ibid.*
 38. Rita Hinden to Benson, 23 Aug. 1943, *ibid.*
 39. "I don't like the growing tendency to treat indirect rule as another name for African self-government": Leonard Woolf to Benson, 2 Sep. 1943, *ibid.*
 40. Rev. Grace to Benson, 28 Aug. 1943, *ibid.*
 41. Furnivall to Benson, 30 Aug. 1943, *ibid.*
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. Memorandum from Pim to Benson, 22 Oct. 1943, *ibid.*
 44. Benson: "A people's peace in the colonies", p. 155.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
 46. *Ibid.*
 47. Benson's notes on the meeting, 28 Sep. 1943, *ibid.*
 48. *Ibid.*
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. Phelan to Weaver, 2 Dec. 1942, *ibid.* Benson saw his transfer to Montreal as a blatant demotion and a gross undervaluation of his work in previous years. The post of head of the Indigenous Labour Service was absolutely not what he had imagined. In a desperate letter to Phelan he demanded to be allowed to participate in the London meeting and the forthcoming Conference as a direct envoy from the Director, and asked for a promotion within the Office to a post where he would report directly to the Director. He also stated that he had the impression the Office was not taking the content of his proposals seriously enough or was disregarding them. If his demands were not met, he wrote, his presence in Montreal would no longer make sense, and he threatened to resign. At first, Phelan was against making any concessions whatsoever, but was persuaded by Weaver to give ground on the issue of accountability at a future Conference and to agree to upgrade Benson's position in the future. See Benson to Phelan, 26 Nov. 1943; Weaver to Phelan, 29 Nov. 1943; Phelan to Weaver, 2 Dec. 1943, *ibid.*
 51. Notes on Benson's draft, 2 Mar. 1944, in ILOA NL 1000: Social policy in dependent territories.
 52. The venue was the idea of Roosevelt's Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins, who chose it because of its double symbolism. First, as the place where the American Declaration of Independence had been proclaimed, it was an eminently appropriate location for a formal declaration on the post-war programme of the ILO. Second, Philadelphia was also the cradle of the American workers' movement. Perkins to Carter Goodrich, 18 Dec. 1943, in Frances Perkins Papers (FPP), B 61, International Labor Office.
 53. From around this time, "dependent territories" was the accepted circumlocution for the colonies. From 1947 they became "non-metropolitan territories".
 54. G.A. Johnston: *The International Labour Organisation: Its work for social and economic progress* (London, Europa, 1970), p. 235.
 55. See White House (anon.) to John Winant (Ambassador in London), 18 Sep. 1943, in FPP, B 61, ILO.
 56. Frances Perkins's speech in Montreal, 14 Mar. 1943, in FPP, B 54, ILO.

57. Roosevelt told Stalin he thought it “extremely important that your government participate in the Conference and in the future activities which I envisage for the ILO”: Roosevelt to Stalin, 18 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*
58. Quoted in the New York business magazine *Fortune* (Sept. 1944): “What is the ILO?”, pp. 160–227 at p. 223.
59. V.-Y. Ghebali: *The International Labour Organization: A case study on the evolution of UN specialized agencies* (Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989), p. 62.
60. ILC, 26th Session (1944), Montreal, RoP, p. 13.
61. On the significance of the Philadelphia Conference and the Declaration of Philadelphia, see, among other sources, Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 171–87; Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 61 ff.; French: “The Declaration of Philadelphia”. On the Philadelphia Conference in the context of the history of human rights, see Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 154–59. See also the essays in the volume that appeared to mark the 50th anniversary of the Declaration and the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Organization, ILO (ed.): *Visions of the future of social justice: Essays on the occasion of the ILO's 75th Anniversary* (Geneva, 1994).
62. Echoing the Constitution of 1919, the Declaration reiterates that labour is not a commodity; that freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress; that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; that tripartism is an elementary peacekeeping element in the war against want and that only social justice can guarantee lasting peace.
63. Declaration of Philadelphia, Section II.
64. *Ibid.*
65. In detail, (a) full employment and the raising of standards of living, (b) job satisfaction, (c) training and mobility of labour, (d) a minimum wage and a just share for workers in “the fruits of progress”, (e) collective bargaining and participation, (f) social security, basic income and comprehensive medical care, (g) health and safety at work, (h) maternity protection and child welfare, (i) adequate nutrition, housing and facilities for recreation and culture, (j) equality of educational and vocational opportunity. *Ibid.*, Section III.
66. *Ibid.*, Section I.
67. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, p. 158.
68. Social Policy in Dependent Territories Recommendation, 1944 (No. 70), in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 550–64.
69. In detail, the areas mentioned by Recommendation No. 70 are public health, housing, nutrition, education, the welfare of children, the status of women, conditions of employment, the remuneration of wage earners and independent producers, migratory labour, social security, standards of public services and general production. *Ibid.*, p. 552.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 551.
71. ILO: *Social policy in dependent territories*, p. 159.
72. Charles Taussig, adviser to the US Government delegation, ILC, 26th Session (1944), RoP, p. 227.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 234.

76. The draft Recommendation (undated), in PRO CO 859/99/3, Social Services, International Labour Conference 1944, Item V on the Agenda.
77. Minutes of a conference in the Ministry of Labour and National Service, 22 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*
78. Comments by Orde-Brown (n.d.), in PRO CO 859/99/3, Social Services, International Labour Conference 1944, Item V on the Agenda.
79. Comments by Cohen (n.d.), *ibid.*
80. Comments by Seel (n.d.), *ibid.*
81. Comments by Caine, 16 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*
82. In March, for example, Rita Hinden had deemed strong British leadership of support for the recommendation to be extremely important. For Hinden, as for many other critics of official colonial policy, the ILO had opened the way "by setting forth boldly the minimum standards to which we should aspire". See R. Hinden, "The ILO and colonial progress", in *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*
83. Memorandum of the Committee on Special Issues in the Ministry of Information and Political Warfare, 18 Mar. 1944, in PRO FO 371/39300, Foreign Office: International Labour Office, 1944.
84. Leggett to Lloyd (CO), 24 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*
85. Stanley to Bevin, 29 Mar. 44, in PRO CO 859/99/3, Social Services, International Labour Conference 1944, Item V on the Agenda.
86. Discussion in the War Cabinet, 50th meeting (1944), 17 Apr. 1944, *ibid.*
87. Tomlinson to Bevin, 8 May 1944, in PRO FO 371/39302, Foreign Office: International Labour Office, 1944.
88. Indeed, during the war the Belgian Congo became the newest "arsenal of democracy". At the instigation of the United States it was drawn economically into the war and provided uranium for the first atom bombs and other raw materials important to the war effort. However, this increased Belgium's fears of the role the United States would play in the Congo once the war was over. Some people saw the stationing of American troops in the Congo and the growing activities of American firms there during the war as an indication of the anti-colonial influence that might be asserted after hostilities had ceased. See G. Mollin: *Die USA und der Kolonialismus. Amerika als Partner und Nachfolger der belgischen Macht in Afrika 1939–1965* (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1996), pp. 31–135.
89. Tomlinson to Bevin, 8 May 1944, in PRO FO 371/39302, Foreign Office: International Labour Office, 1944, p. 237.
90. Memorandum from Carter Goodrich (n.d., around April 1944), "Agenda and comment on agenda items", in FPP, B 80, Miscellaneous documents.
91. David Holland argues that anti-British feeling in the United States had waned in the course of the joint war effort. The experience of their own policy of occupation in the Pacific during the war had also made the Americans more sympathetic to the colonial dilemmas of their wartime allies. The military establishment in particular had recognized the future value of its new bases and grown more sceptical about the political rights of Asians. All in all, the Americans were thinking increasingly in strategic categories, with the effect that Washington now preferred the security of colonial rule to the alleged volatility and unpredictability of independent African and Asian countries. R. Holland: *European decolonization: An introductory survey* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1981), pp. 55 ff.
92. ILC, 26th Session (1944), RoP, p. 232.

93. One of the United States' main priorities in Philadelphia was to prevent an international agreement being made that would oblige national governments to pursue active employment policies. Blocking the advances of the British dominions, Australia and New Zealand, in this regard took up most of the American delegation's attention: memorandum from Carter Goodrich (n.d., c. April 1944), "Agenda and comment on agenda items", in FPP, B 80, Miscellaneous documents.
94. See, for example, the speeches of the Mexican Government representative, Mesa, and the Chilean Workers' representative, Barra Villalobos, ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, pp. 192 ff, 238.
95. What China wanted most, and called for repeatedly, was a permanent seat on the Governing Body, in which it was supported by the United States.
96. Only two delegations, the British and the Dutch, included representatives from the colonial territories within the Workers' group.
97. ILC, 26th Session (1944), RoP, p. 227.
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 227 ff.
99. Quoted in Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 186.
100. Text of President Roosevelt's speech to the delegates of the Philadelphia Conference, Washington, DC, 17 May 1944, in FPP B 61, ILO, 1944.
101. On the circumstances surrounding the establishment and the short life of the WFTU in its united form, see A. Carew: "A false dawn: The World Federation of Trade Unions (1945–1949)", in *idem et al. (eds): The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 165–87. On the intellectual basis which united the WFTU, see V. Silverman: *Imagining internationalism in American and British labor 1939–1949* (Urbana/Chicago, Ill., University of Illinois Press, 2000).
102. The conflicts did not go away. The British, French, Belgian and Dutch associations in the WFTU often found themselves involved in conflicts of interest between the WFTU's anti-colonial position and their loyalty towards their own governments. See Carew, "False dawn".

3 A New World with New Ideas: The ILO and the Quest for a Colonial Post-War Order, 1945–48

1. For positive view of the Declaration's impact, see R. Burke *Decolonization and the evolution of international human rights* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
2. Labour won the election in July 1945, while the war in the Pacific was still going on.
3. See T.H. Marshall: *Class, citizenship and social development* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963).
4. F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 216.
5. P. G. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 193 ff. at p.194.
6. The full text of the Charter can be found in P. Kennedy: *The parliament of man: The past, present and future of the United Nations* (New York, Penguin/Allen Lane, 2006), pp. 313–41.
7. Chapters XI and XII of the Charter, *ibid.*, pp. 300 ff.
8. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, p. 191.
9. Cited in Kennedy: *The parliament of man*, p. 331.

10. For the first time in the history of the Pan-African Movement, Africans were as well represented in Manchester as the groups from the United States and the Caribbean which had previously dominated the movement. The participants also included a number of protagonists of future independence movements, including Kwame Nkrumah, the future Ghanaian head of state, and Jomo Kenyatta (later President of Kenya). On the history of Pan-Africanism, see I. Geiss: *The Pan-African Movement: A history of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1974).
11. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
12. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, p. 4.
13. Another key Resistance figure was the Norwegian Government delegate, Pal Berg. Léon Jouhaux, one of the great leaders of the French trade union movement, had been released only a few months previously from a German concentration camp.
14. The nomenclature changed again in 1945, when the term “non-metropolitan territories” replaced that of “dependent territories”. This corresponded to the language used in the UN Charter of 1945 and was first taken up by the ILO in 1946. As it described only the geographical position, it was a further step towards a politically non-binding term for areas under colonial rule.
15. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, p. 169.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 174 ff.
19. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, Appendix VIII, *Dependent territories*, p. 402.
20. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, p. 171.
21. O. Pohrt: *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung zwischen Einheitswunsch und Kaltem Krieg. Der Weltgewerkschaftsbund (WGB) von der Gründungsphase bis zu seiner Spaltung (1941–1949)* (Regensburg, S. Roderer, 2000), p. 257.
22. The Employers’ main arguments were the “impracticality” of the proposed measures, the lack of time and the alleged lack of preparation. See the plenary discussion and that in the Paris Conference Committee, ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, pp. 401–24; *ibid.*, Appendix VIII, *Dependent territories*, pp. 168–77.
23. The different colonial philosophies of the individual powers gave them different priorities. The French, for example, were hesitant about the use of the term “dependent territories”, as they saw these territories as an integral part of the French Empire, or believed at least that they should be progressively integrated.
24. The Dutch and Belgian plans that followed FIDES also foresaw comparatively smaller sums. See D.K. Fieldhouse: *The West and the Third World: Trade, colonialism and dependence* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), pp. 85 ff.
25. He referred in particular to France’s colonial social and economic plan and the adoption of the African Code du Travail of June 1945. At this point, no other colonial power had come up with such far-reaching reform proposals. See Hauck’s speech in ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, pp. 189 ff.
26. The British delegate Edwards embraced in particular the following passage of the Declaration of Philadelphia: “All policies designed to apply to dependent territories shall be primarily directed to the well-being and development of the peoples of such territories and to the promotion of the desire on their part for social progress”, *ibid.*, pp. 172 ff.
27. Recommendation No. 74 contained eight sections dealing with the following areas: (1) wages and thrift, (2) labour aspects of land policies, (3) social security,

- (4) placing of workers, (5) hours and holidays, (6) powers of labour inspectors, (7) conciliation, (8) health and safety in employment. See the text of the Recommendation in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 579–91.
28. Holidays with Pay Convention, 1936 (No. 52), *ibid.*, pp. 346–50.
 29. See the debates in the Committee, in ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, Appendix VIII, *Dependent territories*, pp. 407 ff.
 30. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, p. 191.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 197 ff.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
 35. All the Latin American Governments voted for the Committee's draft on this issue, as did all the Workers' representatives. The Latin American Employers, on the other hand, displayed solidarity with their colleagues from the colonial metropolises. The Committee's draft was also supported by South Africa, mainly because the South African Union had made 12 days of holiday a legal requirement and was thus worried about being put at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis the dependent territories. See the speeches of the Mexican Employers' representative and chairman of the Employers' group in the Governing Body, Yllanes Ramos, and that of the South African Government representative, Smits, *ibid.*, pp. 192 ff., 196.
 36. ILC, 27th Session (1945), RoP, Appendix VIII, *Dependent territories*, p. 405.
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
 39. This at least was how the Australian Workers' delegate put it: *ibid.*, p. 407.
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. ILC, 29th Session (1946), RoP, p. 161.
 44. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, pp. 212 ff.
 45. E. Luard: *History of the United Nations*, Vol. 2: *The age of decolonization 1955–1965* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), pp. 176 ff.
 46. Lauren: *The evolution of international human rights*, pp. 209 ff.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
 48. See J. Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, drafting and intent* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), especially pp. 157–239.
 49. M. Shipway, *Decolonization and its impact: A comparative approach to the end of colonial empires* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2008), pp. 75–81.
 50. On the theory of the "second colonial occupation of Africa", see J. Hargreaves: "Toward the transfer of power in British West Africa", in P. Gifford and W. Roger Louis (eds): *The transfer of power in Africa: Decolonization 1940–1960* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 131 ff.
 51. A.N. Porter and A.J. Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization 1938–1964*, Vol. 1: *1938–1951* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1987), p. 47. For the other colonial powers, see Fieldhouse: *The West and the Third World*, pp. 87 ff.
 52. As Porter and Stockwell note, this was undoubtedly a reason for the relatively late agreement between India and the Labour Party concerning a schedule for independence: Porter and Stockwell: *British imperial policy and decolonization*, Vol. 1, p. 48.

53. The massacre carried out by the French immediately after the end of the war on Algerian demonstrators in Sétif was just the (highly symbolic) beginning. During a victory parade in Sétif (East Algeria) organized by Free France to mark the end of the war, anti-French demonstrations erupted among the Arab population in which demands for political independence were mixed with protests about the continuing social divide along ethnic lines which existed inside Algerian society. The French authorities responded to this manifestation of the Arab population's new assertiveness with force of arms. The following uprising and its crushing by French troops cost around 45,000 people their lives.
54. Although the often brutal reality of Japan's occupation policy had little in common with its promises of an "East Asian co-prosperity sphere" and the end of white rule in Asia, its victory over the "white powers" in the first phase of the war, the improved offers of collaboration made under the impression of impending defeat towards the end of the war and above all the laying of the foundations for national armies were important impulses for the independence movements in South and South-East Asia that the colonial rulers were confronted with on their return. On the significance of the Japanese occupation in South-East Asian decolonization after the Second World War, see Shipway: *Decolonization*, pp. 68–75.
55. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, pp. 259.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
58. Kennedy: *The parliament of man*, p. 323.
59. A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organization* (London, Macmillan, 1970), p. 188.
60. See G. Schild: *Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks: American economic and political postwar planning in the summer of 1944* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).
61. One of the Soviet Union's last attempts to prevent the ILO from taking part centred on the nationality of the Director. The delegation from the USSR argued that persons from countries that did not belong to the United Nations (Ireland had remained neutral and was therefore not a member) should not be allowed to attend. The ILO delegation's trip to San Francisco was far from smooth: they were accommodated in a hotel miles from the conference, right up until the last minute it was not clear whether they would get invitations to the conference and they were not invited to official receptions or to the formal closing session. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 189 ff.
62. The others were the FAO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
63. See Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times*. (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 110–58.
64. However, the East–West conflict did creep into the Organization to some degree from 1946–47 onwards as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria were members of the ILO and remained so after becoming part of the communist camp. As a result, the anti-colonial positions held by the USSR's delegation in the General Assembly or within UN committees were brought into the ILC.
65. CO (anon.) to the British delegation on the Trusteeship Council, 6 May 1947, in PRO CO 537/2076, Relations between the Trusteeship Council and the Economic and Social Council and specialised agencies.
66. Benson's move to the United Nations was, not least, a late result of the fact that since his transfer to Montreal in 1943 his hopes of a promotion within the Office

had still not been fulfilled. Nor did General-Director Phelan make any attempt to keep him in the Office when he announced his departure. This was mainly because of the lack of significance Phelan attached to the colonial question in general, evidenced for instance in his farewell speech at the 1948 ILC in San Francisco, where he mentioned the majority of his staff during the war years by name, but not a single person who had worked on colonial issues, including section head Weaver and Benson. See ILOA P/B 1176, Benson's personnel file; correspondence between Phelan and the Chairman of the Governing Body, Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, dated Jan. 1947, in ILOA PF Z 12/1/2, Chairman of the Governing Body (General correspondence) Sir Guildhaume Myrddin Evans (1946–48); Phelan's farewell speech to the ILC, in ILC, 31st Session (1948), Geneva, RoP, pp. 223–26.

67. To tie in with the terminology used by the UN, the Committee used the term “non-self-governing territories” in the text of the resolution instead of the terms “dependent territories” or “non-metropolitan territories” which the ILO had been using since 1944.
68. The proposed Convention covered a total of 16 areas: (1) general principles, (2) forms of cooperation aimed at laying the foundations of social policy, (3) the main problems of social policy, (4) participation of the population in non-self-governing territories, (5) the improvement of standards of living, (6) agricultural problems, (7) the general principle of non-discrimination, (8) non-discrimination with regard to pay, (9) labour policy in relation to education policy, (10) industrial training, (11) the position of women, (12) freedom of association, (13) conciliation in collective bargaining, (14) the establishment of labour inspectorates, (15) the duties of labour inspectors, (16) the implementation of labour legislation: ILC, 29th Session (1946), Montreal, RoP, Appendix VIII, *Social policy in dependent territories*, pp. 498 ff.
69. These were the Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3), the Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 6), the Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921 (No. 15), the Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921 (No. 16), the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14), the Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925 (No. 17), the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation), 1925 (No. 19), the Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929 (No. 27), the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934 (No. 41), the Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45), the Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1936 (No. 58) and the Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1937 (No. 59). *Ibid.*, p. 491.
70. The reports are collected and summarized in ILC, 30th Session (1947), Geneva, Special Report III, *Non-metropolitan territories: Commentary on the replies of the governments and amended version of the texts proposed as a basis for discussion*.
71. Benson to Phelan, 1 Nov. 1943, in ILOA P/B 1176, Benson's personnel file.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Catholic Citizen*, Dec. 1946, quoted *ibid.* Other organizations, mainly from Britain, also called for more women to be represented.
75. The COESP was made up predominantly of former and current colonial officers, European academics and representatives of religious missions. It also contained a South African, a Chinese and two North American representatives. GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, pp. 14 ff.

76. The experts themselves had recommended in their report that "one or more representatives of the 'Native populations'" should be included in the Committee. The GB's acceptance of the report can be interpreted as tacit approval of this. See Belloch to Phelan, 24 June 1947, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1944–54.
77. See the correspondence between Benson on the one hand and the CO and MOL on the other from 1944 to 1946, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories 1944–54.
78. ILC, 29th Session (1946), RoP, pp. 164–5.
79. Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 82), in ILO: *International labour conventions and recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 703–12 at p. 704.
80. Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 83); Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 84); Labour Inspectorates (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 85); Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1947 (No. 86); all *ibid.*, pp. 713–40.
81. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 256.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 255 and 262.
83. See Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, pp. 21–261.
84. Complementary measures proposed to this end included planning industry close to where workers lived, relocation and repatriation in accordance with jobs, the more efficient organization of businesses to enable them to make the best possible use of existing labour resources, introducing improved methods of agriculture in the countryside and setting up local industries in the countryside. GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, Appendix I, *Report of the First Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, London, 17–26 Mar. 1947.
85. Blom was actually just representing the delegate originally nominated, Honig, who was the speaker of the Netherlands East Indian rubber industry association and a member of the Dutch council for the East Indies, Suriname and Curacao: ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1944–54.
86. At the ILC in 1947, for instance, Gemmill denied on principle that Africans should have the same access to qualified positions. Only Europeans had a right to "occupations which we and we alone have established and developed"; the indigenous population had "no right whatsoever" to such jobs. In his eyes, "the real solution of the problem is separation of the races". Gemmill's utterances before the Conference caused the South African Workers' representative to brand his position that of "fascists and Nazis". This was the last time that South Africa selected a Workers' representative who came from a trade union organization which also admitted African members. Starting from the following year, which was the year the official policy of apartheid was introduced in the wake of the victory of the National Party, only representatives of exclusively white unions were nominated. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, pp. 262 ff., 281.
87. GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, Appendix I, *Report of the First Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 218.
88. The concept of family wages obviously carried the deeply gendered image of a male breadwinner with a wife (and children) to feed, implying the clear-cut separation of the realms of production and reproduction. In the context of

the colonial debate, family wages were a key concept in the attempt to create a modern working environment and modern societies in general. As such it was above all used by reformers as an alternative to the migrant labour system. Family wages meant making it possible to maintain a family at the place of work, which in the system of migratory labour was a responsibility normally shouldered by the rural communities of origin.

89. GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, Appendix 1, *Report of the First Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 219.
90. ILO: *Conventions and Recommendations*, p. 706.
91. The exact title of this section was "Non-discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, belief, tribal association or trade union affiliation": *ibid.*, p. 708.
92. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 265.
93. Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947, Article 18, para. 3. See. ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 708 ff.
94. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 265.
95. Meeting in MOL, 4 June 1947; Vevey (MOL) to Grossmith (CO), 26 June 1947, in PRO LAB 13/285, Correspondence relating to status of women arising from proposed ILO Convention on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1947.
96. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 267.
97. See Belloch's reports to Phelan from Ceylon (25 July 1946) and Malaya/Singapore (21 Aug. 1946), in ILOA PF Z 1/1/1/15: Correspondence with Mr Belloch, 1946–48.
98. The differences between the various colonial philosophies held by the metropolises were clearly recognizable at this meeting and coloured the demands made by the unions. While the groups from territories under French rule called for progressive assimilation and finally complete integration into the mother country on the basis of equal rights, the long-term goal of the associations from British territories was full political independence and separation from the Empire. Their understanding of union rights was that they were a form of democratization from the ground up and a complementary measure to political emancipation. See Cooper: *Decolonization and African society*, p. 223.
99. GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, pp. 17 ff.
100. ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 273.
101. *Ibid.*, Appendix VI, pp. 454 ff.
102. As Conventions required a two-thirds majority to be passed, the Employers were in a relatively strong position. In the end, though, their efforts were in vain, as the overwhelming majority of Government delegates did not want to see the Convention fail. For more details on the debate, see *ibid.*, pp. 268–76.
103. ILC, 26th Session (1944), RoP, p. xi.
104. Minutes of a meeting between officials of the CO and the MOL chaired by Grossmith (CO), 10 Jan. 1946, in PRO LAB 13/150, 27th International Labour Conference 1945, Report V: *Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions)*, 1945.
105. ILC, 29th Session (1946), RoP, p. 49.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
108. ILC, 31st Session (1948), RoP, pp. 237–41.
109. See L.N. Birla and P.P. Pillai: *India and the ILO* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1946).

110. ILC, 29th Session (1946), RoP, pp. 56 ff.
111. "India's Membership in the ILO", memorandum by the Indian Council on World Affairs, 15 Sep. 1947, in NARA, RG 174.3.4 (Assistant Secretary for International Labor Affairs), B 43, ILO, 1945–48.
112. India was followed by China, which provided 6 per cent. In terms of population, India and China accounted for almost half the people represented by the Organization. All figures *ibid*.
113. *Ibid*.
114. This was a Japanese official who held a cabinet post in the League of Nations Secretariat.
115. "India's Membership in the ILO", memorandum by the Indian Council on World Affairs, 15 Sep. 1947, in NARA, RG 174.3.4 (Assistant Secretary for International Labor Affairs), B 43, ILO, 1945–48.
116. Sir Girja Bajpai, envoy of the Indian High Commissioner in Washington: Bajpai to Phelan, 6 Dec. 1944, in ILO PF Z 8/1/4/3, Appointment of an Asian Assistant Director, 1944–48.
117. A total of seven candidates were put forward over the years. The first Indian proposals did not meet with the approval of the Director, but the Indian Government did not feel able to part with the candidates Phelan would have liked, which included Lall himself. After a while the Chinese got involved in the dispute too, and via their representative in the Governing Body, Li Ping-heng, offered to put forward a Chinese candidate if no suitable Indian figure could be found. The ultimate appointment, of Rao, was an internal one. Rao had previously been head of a subdivision of the Office. For more on the whole dispute, see ILO PF Z 8/1/4/3, Appointment of an Asian Assistant Director, 1944–48.
118. ILC, 29th Session (1946), RoP, p. 57.
119. Myrddin-Evans to Phelan, 24 Dec. 1947, Phelan to Myrddin-Evans, 31 Dec. 47, both in ILO PF Z 8/1/4/3, Appointment of an Asian Assistant Director, 1944–48.
120. Harold Butler (1884–1951), born in London, England, was one of the founding fathers of the ILO. Serving as Secretary-General of the first ILC in Washington, DC, in 1919, Assistant Director of the ILO from 1919 to 1932 and Director from 1932 to 1938, he was then made Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford. He held various government positions during the war, and was Chairman of the ILO's Fact-Finding Commission on Freedom of Association in 1950.
121. S. Bose: "Instruments and idioms of colonial and national development. India's historical experience in comparative perspective", in: F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds): *International development and the social sciences: Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997), pp. 45–64 at p. 47.
122. The memorandum "Economic Development for India", which was named the Bombay Plan after the place where it was drafted, called for a "considerable measure of intervention and control" over key industries and infrastructure.
123. The last two decades of British rule in particular had brought great hardships to India, but also had provided new ammunition to those fighting for Indian independence. The world economic crisis, which had hit the Indian colonial economy very hard, centred as it was on the export of raw materials; the supply shortages and famines of the war years; and finally the reintegration of approximately 2 million Indian soldiers into society had all served to strengthen

- Congress politicians in the conviction that had been current since the turn of the century that the root of the economic and social misery on the subcontinent lay in colonial rule. Final confirmation came in the form of the conditions for the transfer of power, whereby Nehru had to agree to a debt moratorium for the country, which had become a creditor to Britain during the war.
124. Along with the metropolitan powers France and Britain, the independent countries India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Siam (Thailand), New Zealand, Australia and the United States, and two countries on the brink of an independence that had already been negotiated – Ceylon and Burma – the following dependent territories were represented at the Conference: Singapore, the Malayan Union, Indochina, Cochinchina, Cambodia, Laos, the French territories in India, New Caledonia and the Dutch East Indies.
 125. Asian Regional Conference (ARC) 1 (1947), RoP, p. 3.
 126. *Ibid.*
 127. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 128. ARC 1 (1947), RoP, p. 4.
 129. The concomitant demand that the problems of agriculture be addressed was, of course, partly motivated by domestic political considerations. Emphasizing the significance of the countryside in the development of a post-colonial society was a means of appeasing those forces in Congress which were sceptical about, if not downright hostile towards, the transformation of India into an industrial society, and which saw the future of the country, continuing the tradition of thought promoted by Mahatma Gandhi, in rural forms of life and economy. This group was, however, only a minority in comparison with the “modernizers”, who like Nehru saw India’s future in systematic industrialization under the socialist banner. See Bose: “Instruments and idioms of development”, pp. 47–52.
 130. See the various resolutions adopted at the Conference, ARC 1 (1947), RoP, Appendix VII, pp. 263–92.
 131. *Ibid.*, RoP, p. 5.
 132. *Ibid.*, Appendix VII, pp. 293–98.
 133. See notes dated 15 Dec. 1947 by the American representative, William S. Tyson, on discussions of this issue with the Chairman of the Governing Body, Myrddin-Evans, and with the Assistant Director-General of the Office, Jef Rens, in NARA, RG 174.3.4 (Assistant Secretary of International Labor Affairs), B 48, General correspondence, 1945–70.
 134. “New Delhi Preparatory International Labor Conference”, memorandum from William Tyson (delegate of the American Department of Labor) to David A. Morse (Under-Secretary of Labor), 15 Dec. 1947, in NARA, RG 174.3.4 (Assistant Secretary of International Labor Affairs), B 43, ILO, 1945–48.

4 Principled Development: The Beginnings of the Technical Assistance Programme (TAP)

1. J. McMahon, “The International Labour Organization”, in E. Luard (ed.), *The evolution of international organizations* (London, Praeger, 1966), pp. 177–99 at p. 178.
2. David A. Morse (1907–90) was born, and died, in New York. He graduated from Rutgers University and the prestigious Harvard Law School (where he studied under Felix Frankfurter); from 1933 to 1939 he worked at the Department of

the Interior and later at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), one of the authorities that came into existence under Roosevelt's "New Deal", involved in particular in the arbitration of industrial disputes in various sectors. After working from 1939 to 1941 as an attorney in New York, he volunteered for the army in the wake of Pearl Harbor and in 1942 was head of General Eisenhower's Manpower Division in the preparatory phase of the invasion of Sicily. From 1943 to 1945 he was head of the labour departments of the Allied military Government in Italy, of the Supreme Allied Headquarters (SHAEF) in London during preparations for the occupation of Germany and finally of the Group Control Council of the Allied military Government in Germany under General Clay, based in Frankfurt-upon-Main. Morse's main task in these posts was to plan how to implement the decrees of the various military governments regarding the dissolution of Italy's corporatistic labour organizations and the German Workers' Front (DAF), and to oversee the reorganization of democratic labour relations in the two countries. In 1945–46 he was general counsel to the NLRB and acting director for labour issues in the American military Government, and from 1946 to 1948 Under Secretary of Labor under President Harry Truman, charged with building up a section for international affairs within the department. In 1948 he was Acting Secretary of Labor for a few days following the death of Lewis B. Schwellenbach. From 1948 to 1970 Morse was Director-General of the ILO; from 1970 to 1973 he was an adviser to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and thereafter returned to his work as an attorney. All the details concerning Morse's life prior to his appointment as Director-General of the ILO were compiled by the author from the David A. Morse Papers (DAMP) held by the Seeley G. Mudd Rare Manuscript Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

3. According to Morse, the strongest advocates of appointing an American Director-General, in particular vis-à-vis the British Government, which had demonstrated that it had its own ambitions with regard to Phelan's successor, were Truman himself and the American unions. Truman had personally insisted that Morse run for the post ("we think it's important to our world relations, East-West situation, that you do"). Oral history interview with David A. Morse, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo., conducted by James R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library, 25 July 1977 (hereinafter OHIM 2), p. 125.
4. The labour attaché programme was run under the auspices of the State Department. Labour attachés were normally chosen from the ranks of the AFL on the advice of Morse and his successor as Under Secretary of Labor: *ibid.*, p. 26 ff.
5. Morse played a leading role in the establishment of an Interdepartmental Group on Foreign Social Policy and provided the impetus for the setting up of a Trade Union Advisory Committee on International Affairs in conjunction with the State Department in 1946. Within this context he did the preparatory work in 1947 for the talks that Under Secretary and later Secretary of State Dean Acheson held with representatives of the American labour union federations AFL and CIO to gain their support for the ERP and the implementation of the Truman doctrine in Greece. The AFL was easily won over, but the CIO, a member of the WFTU, was in a difficult position, expecting strong resistance from the communist federations within the WFTU. Morse put the CIO's eventual decision to display support for the Truman doctrine and the ERP down to his skills as a mediator and to the trust that the heads of the CIO had in him. The decision did indeed have far-reaching effects for the WFTU, rapidly accelerating the process of decline that it was already undergoing as a result of the Cold War. For Morse's

- retrospective reflections on this, see OHIM 2, pp. 60–101. On the test that the Marshall Plan proved to be for the WFTU, see A. Carew, “A false dawn: The World Federation of Trade Unions (1945–1949)”, in idem et al. (eds): *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, Peter Lang, 2000).
6. See Morse’s reflections on his appointment to the leadership of the ILO in his diary entry of 1 Apr. 1957, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
 7. Morse officially took up office on 6 Sept. 1948. *OB* (1948), Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 189.
 8. As Under Secretary of Labor, Morse had also created a position in the Department which was solely responsible for relations with the ILO, an area which had previously fallen within the competence of various different sections: OHIM 2, p. 25.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
 10. In September 1948 Morse held extensive talks with the French President Vincent Auriol and the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. These focused above all on the post-war position of the ILO, held by all parties to be in need of improvement. See the records of the talks with Auriol, 9 Mar. 1948, in DAMP, B 1, F 10, Vincent Auriol; with Bevin, 9 Nov. 1948, *ibid.*, F 11, Ernest Bevin.
 11. ILC, 32nd Session (1949), Report I: *Report of the Director-General*, p. 3.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. Missions were also sent to Cuba, the United States, Venezuela, Canada, Ecuador, Turkey and Britain, in most cases, including in the United States, to help with the introduction of social security systems. G.A. Johnston, *The International Labour Organisation: Its work for social and economic progress* (London, Europa, 1970), pp. 115 ff.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. The ERP was announced just days before the 1947 ILC, which passed a resolution expressing the Organization’s support of it: ILC, 30th Session (1947), RoP, p. 590.
 17. GB, 107th Session (1948), RoP, pp. 20–2.
 18. ILC, 32nd Session (1949), RoP, p. 259.
 19. “Technical Assistance to Underdeveloped Areas”, memorandum by Morse, 1 Apr. 1949, in ILOA MF Z 6/1/7, Technical assistance to underdeveloped areas (Part 4 of President Truman’s speech).
 20. Transcribed version of the article in *Trud*, 22 Sept. 1949, in DAMP, B 1, F 26, Criticism of International Labour Office, 1948–52.
 21. Toledano was also a leading figure in the WFTU.
 22. In his first months in office, Morse remained in close contact with the State Department about this and other issues, especially the implementation of the Marshall Plan. A steady exchange of information took place between them. See the correspondence in DAMP, B 72, F 5, Dean Acheson.
 23. One of Morse’s first official actions was to organize, together with Averell Harriman, a meeting with Léon Jouhaux and the French socialist Finance Minister and former Premier Paul Ramadier. During the discussion, Morse explained the essential significance of the Marshall Plan, from the American perspective, as an anti-communist measure. By the end of the meeting, the French had agreed to cooperate: OHIM 2, p. 110.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. Truman’s speech on 20 Jan. 1949, quoted from ILOA MF Z 6/1/7, Technical Assistance to Underdeveloped Areas (Part 4 of President Truman’s speech). See also F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds): *International development and the social*

- sciences: Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997), pp. 8 ff. On the creation of the Point IV Program in the early stages of the Cold War, see R. Packenham: *Liberal America and the Third World: Political development ideas in foreign aid and social science* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 43–9.
26. Marshall to Morse, 24 Nov. 1948, in DAMP, B 6, F 23, Marshall, George M.
 27. Other organizations deemed suitable were the World Health Organization (WHO) and the FAO. The ILO was regarded as being the furthest advanced of all the international organizations in terms of technical assistance. Wendell Hayes (director of the State Department section responsible for relations with the UN on economic and social matters) supplied Morse with an internal memorandum anticipating the Point IV Program and emphasizing the fundamental importance of the role that international organizations would play in it. “Expert assistance through international organizations”, memorandum by Hayes, 20 Dec. 1948, in ILOA MF Z6/1/7, Technical Assistance to Underdeveloped Areas (Part 4 of President Truman’s speech).
 28. See Morse to Tobin (Secretary of Labor), 24 Jan. 1949, Morse to William Green (AFL), 25 Jan. 1949, Morse to Elbert Thomas (senator and many times American delegate to ILC), 4 Feb. 1949, *ibid*.
 29. Morse to Acheson, 31 Jan. 1949, in DAMP, B 72, F 5, Dean Acheson.
 30. *Ibid*.
 31. Acheson to Morse, 17 Feb. 1949, *ibid*.
 32. On the resistance to and reservations about the TAP, see Morse’s recollections in OHIM 2, pp. 145 ff.
 33. See Carew, “A false dawn”.
 34. GB, 109th Session (1949), RoP, pp. 61–4.
 35. The first of these institutions, created at the beginning of 1947, was the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE). It was followed just over a year later by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA).
 36. ECOSOC, Resolution No. 180/VIII, 4 Mar. 1949, Technical Assistance for Economic Development.
 37. The main sticking point was the allocation of competence within the programme. The ILO’s biggest difficulties were with ECLA and ECAFE, which were both planning similar ventures. See MF Z 14/1/3, UN general files.
 38. See UN General Assembly Resolution 304 (IV), 16 Nov. 1949; for the approval of the Governing Body of the ILO to participate in EPTA, see GB, 110th Session (1950), p. 114.
 39. See, for example, Morse’s discussions with the High Commissioner for Ceylon in the British capital, Corea, with the ILO correspondent P.P. Pillai in Delhi, and with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Shi Chie. Memorandum by Morse, 30 Sep. 1948, in DAMP, B 1, F 19, Mr Pillai; memorandum by Morse, 23 Oct. 1948, in DAMP, B 1, F 20, Wang Shi Chie.
 40. Rao to Morse, 4 Feb. 1949, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/18, Correspondence with Mr Rao.
 41. ILC, 32nd Session (1949), Geneva, Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 3.
 42. ILC, 32nd Session (1949), RoP, p. 1. See similar comments by Government, Employers’ and Workers’ representatives from countries including Ceylon, Mexico, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and the Philippines.
 43. See Morse’s notes on discussions with the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the Mysore meeting of the Governing Body in December 1949, in DAMP, B 23, F 3, Mission to India.

44. See especially the section "The ILO and Asia" in ARC 2 (1950), RoP, Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, pp. 137–53.
45. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, p. 81.
46. The Pakistani Employers' representative, for instance, called for a more far-reaching structural reform, claiming that in the light of the weight of Asian countries in the Organization, Asia should have half the seats in the Governing Body for it to be fairly represented (rather than one-tenth as was then the case): *ibid.*, p. 45.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
49. The Soviet Union was automatically excluded from the Conference, not being a member of the ILO. There had never been any talk of China, where the Communist Party under Mao had recently come to power, taking part.
50. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, p. 55.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
52. Resolution concerning the ILO programme of technical assistance to Asian countries, in ARC 2 (1950), RoP, Appendix VI, p. 276.
53. Morse had travelled through various countries in southern Asia before the start of the Conference. Six years later he was still shocked by what he saw there, noting in his diary: "My trip to India ... keeps coming constantly to mind. It was the first time that I have ever seen mass poverty and indifference to life. When I left my ship at Bombay at dawn and saw the city awakening I was shocked: I saw men, women and children left from sleeping in the gutter – can this be truth in the middle of the 20th century? And as I traveled through India...it all became even more incredible. I have seen people dying of starvation in the open streets with their fellow men sleeping next to them indifferently ...I have never seen such indifference to life." Diary entry, 1 May 1956, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
54. Morse's speech to the ARC in Nuwara Eliya (Ceylon), 24 Jan. 1950, in ARC II (1950), RoP, pp. 153 ff.
55. On the evolution of the ILO's Technical Assistance Programme from insider's perspectives: Johnston, *The ILO*, pp. 114–29; D.A. Morse, *The origin and evolution of the ILO and its role in the world community* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 45–56, 61–5.
56. The precise amount ranged from 40 to 50 per cent. In 1961, for example, it was 47 per cent: ILO: *A great adventure of our time: Technical cooperation and the ILO* (Geneva, 1962), p. 36. Between 1950 and 1960, 55–65 per cent of resources devoted to technical assistance went into labour potential. See ILO: *The role of the ILO in the promotion of economic growth and social progress in developing countries* (Geneva, 1961), table VII, p. 40. The table shows the slightly different categories of tasks allocated to the ILO within the framework of the EPTA. The area of "human resources" is divided into "Labour market organization (including vocational training)" and "Productivity and the development of rational working methods".
57. OHIM 2, p. 144.
58. Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 243–51.
59. Immediately after the war, the British Caribbean-born economist W. Arthur Lewis came up with a universal dual theory of economic development. Together with Gunnar Myrdal and Benjamin Higgins, he was the most high-profile representative of the first generation of development economists. The approach of

- all the “founding fathers” of development economics was based on economic growth. Lewis called for state planning in support of the process. This mix of state (economic) planning and market mechanisms was one of the main characteristics of his approach. On the first generation of development economics, see H.W. Arndt: *Economic development: The history of an idea* (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 49–87.
60. R.W. Cox: “ILO: Limited monarchy”, in R. W. Cox and H.K. Jacobson (eds): *The anatomy of influence: Decision making in international organizations* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 115 ff.
 61. Arndt: *Economic development*, pp. 66–8.
 62. Cooper and Packard (eds): *International development*, p. 7.
 63. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO*, p. 49.
 64. Morse’s speech in Cairo, 16 Dec. 1953, in DAMP, B 9, F 19, Jef Rens, 1948–53, 1955–59.
 65. The strongest reservations came from the Workers’ group. For obvious reasons, they were keen proponents of the ILO’s standard-setting activities. After all, the success of the Trade Union International until this point was mainly based on its achievements in this area. The success story of the ILO’s standard-setting since the First World War was inextricably linked to trade union victories in the ILO. The Workers were also worried that technical assistance would weaken the tripartite structure of the ILO by forcing it to resort to external sources of financing. See Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 219.
 66. ILC, 32nd Session (1949), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 3.
 67. For the debate and Morse’s reply, see ILC, 32nd Session (1949), RoP, pp. 25–254, 255–64.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
 69. *Ibid.*
 70. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
 71. Anon., memorandum to the ILC, 34th Session (1951), in ILOA MF Z 8/1/2, Meetings of the Chiefs of Divisions: Notes, documents, minutes, etc., 1949–58.
 72. See ILC, 33rd Session (1950), RoP, Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 4. “Productivity” was also the topic of a number of statements made by Morse within the framework of the Manpower Programme, and the ILO released a whole series of publications on the subject in the first years of the TAP. Productivity was also down to be a priority topic in the 1953 report of the Director-General to the Conference. At the same time, the first pilot projects within the TAP aimed at increasing productivity were already under way, for example, in the machine construction and textile industry in India. For a good overview of the work at that time, see memorandum by Morse, “ILO activities in the field of productivity”, 10 Oct. 1952, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/2 Meetings of the Chiefs of Division: Notes, documents, minutes, etc., 1949–58.
 73. *Ibid.*
 74. Memorandum by Morse, “Memorandum on the Report of the Director-General to the 34th Session of the International Labour Conference”, 14 Oct. 1950, *ibid.*
 75. *Ibid.*
 76. On the origins of modernization theory, see esp. N. Gilman, *The mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, Md./London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); M.E. Latham, *Modernization as ideology: American social science and nation building in the Kennedy era* (Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2000); D.C. Engerman et al. (eds): *Staging growth: Modernization,*

- development, and the global Cold War* (Amherst, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). In the broader context of American modernizing thinking see David Ekbladh, *The great American mission: Modernization and the construction of an American world* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010)
77. W.W. Rostow, *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1960). On the reference to the communist challenge, see Nils Gilman's excellent essay, "Modernization theory: The highest stage of American intellectual history", in Engerman et al. (eds): *Staging growth*, pp. 47–81.
 78. The industrialism school started to form at the beginning of the 1950s. Its most prominent representatives were the American sociologists Wilbert Moore and Clark Kerr. On the thinking behind industrialism, see Clark Kerr's influential essay, "Changing social structures", in W.E. Moore and A.W. Feldman (eds): *Labor commitment and social change in developing areas* (New York, Social Science Research Council, 1960), pp. 348–59.
 79. Memorandum by Morse, "Memorandum of the Report of the Director-General to the 34th Session of the International Labour Conference", 14 Oct. 1950, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/14, Meetings with chiefs of divisions.
 80. Minutes of a press conference held by Morse in New Delhi, 12 Nov. 1957, in ILOA MF Z 10/3/11, Fourth Asian Regional Conference, 1956–57.
 81. Memorandum by Morse, "Memorandum on the Report of the Director-General to the 34th Session of the International Labour Conference", 14 Oct. 1950, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/14, Meetings with chiefs of divisions.
 82. Wilfred Jenks (1909–73) was born in Liverpool, England, and studied law in Cambridge and Geneva. He was legal adviser to the International Labour Office from 1931 and the main author of the Declaration of Philadelphia. He served from 1949 to 1970 as Deputy Director-General of the ILO and from 1970 to 1973 as Director-General. From the mid-1950s, Jenks was the main person responsible for the ILO's work in Africa.
 83. Memorandum by Jenks, "Relations with Middle Eastern countries, 1952–1969", 19 Feb. 1952, in ILOA MF Z 1/164/1/1, Correspondence with Mr Wilfred Jenks.
 84. Rens to Morse, 29 Dec. 1953, in DAMP, B 9, F 19, Jef Rens, 1948–53, 1955–59.
 85. *Ibid.*
 86. *Ibid.*
 87. Ghebali: *The ILO*, p. 256.
 88. *Ibid.*
 89. In 1959 the figure stood at approximately 10 per cent, of which only 1 per cent was distributed via the UN system or the World Bank. The total amount of world aid donated in 1959 (not including Eastern European sources) stood at around US\$3.8 billion, of which only US\$374 million was distributed by the entire UN system. Of this, US\$266 million was handed out by the World Bank, US\$36 million by the rest of the UN family. Figures from ILO: *The role of the ILO in the promotion of economic growth*, p. 7.
 90. See the introduction to European development policy by H.-I. Schmidt and H. Pharos: "European development policy", in *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2003), pp. 387–94 at pp. 390 ff.
 91. In 1959 the ILO had over US\$2.9 million at its disposal for technical assistance, taking into account both EPTA money and the regular budget. Between 1950 and 1959 it spent about US\$20 million on technical assistance, using both EPTA money and the regular budget. Figures from ILO: *The role of the ILO in the promotion of economic growth*, p. 7.

92. The ILO received just over US\$25 million between 1950 and 1960 under the EPTA; the FAO received US\$68 million, the WHO US\$45 million and UNESCO US\$35 million: *ibid.*, p. 14.
93. In other cases, for example in India, where planning agencies already existed, the Organization would start directly with the establishment of vocational training centres and provide them with teacher trainers and material in the hope of handing them over to the host country as soon as possible: *ibid.*, p. 49.
94. The programme grew out of an idea that was raised during a meeting of the Committee of Experts on Indigenous Labour in La Paz, Bolivia, in 1951. It was first implemented in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru and later extended to Argentina, Chile, Columbia and Venezuela. On the Andean Indian Programme, see Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 251; J. Rens: *Le Programme andin. Contribution de l'OIT a un projet-pilote de coopération technique multilatérale* (Brussels, E. Bruylant, 1987).
95. See various notes by David Morse on the Andean Programme in DAMP, B 1, F 7 Andean Programme, 1954–61.
96. See ILO: *Technical assistance* (Geneva, 1954).
97. ILC, 37th Session (1954), RoP, pp. 55 ff., 102, 117, 145.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
100. See Chapter 5.
101. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 239 ff.
102. Morse had been engaged in tough negotiations with the Soviets since 1953 before it became clear in 1954 that the USSR would return to the Organization without any special conditions. However, the Soviet Union did manage to contrive admission of the Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Belarus as independent members, which strengthened its position. Morse's negotiations with the Soviet leaders are recorded in ILOA MF Z 5/1/64/1, Re-admission USSR, 1954, 1961. See also Cox: "Limited monarchy", pp. 105 ff.
103. On the disputes over the ILO's principles and standards which followed the accession of the Soviet Union, see Chapter 6.
104. See C. Dannehl: *Politics, trade and development: Soviet economic aid to the non-communist Third World, 1955–1989* (Davis, Calif., Dartmouth, 1992).
105. Even in the last years of Truman's presidency, the climate of cooperation between Morse and the US Government had become decidedly cooler. This was mainly a result of the pressures put on American officials of international organizations during the McCarthy era. For one thing, they had to provide written confirmation of their loyalty to the American Government. In 1953 Morse refused McCarthy's men entry to the ILO when, as had already occurred at the UN and UNESCO, they attempted to subject the American staff of the Office to questioning. The episode led to much bad feeling, and Morse felt let down by the American Government. See Morse's exchanges with Thacher Winslow, head of the ILO's Washington office, in DAMP, B 12, F 16, Thacher Winslow, 1948–54. Neither Morse nor Winslow had high hopes of the Eisenhower Government either. Initial rumours that Eisenhower was considering appointing the anti-union entrepreneur William McGrath as Secretary of Labor caused Wilson to write in a letter to Morse that if this were the case, the Eisenhower administration could prove to be a "fate worse than death" for the ILO. Thacher Winslow (Washington Branch Office) to Morse, 21 Jan. 1953, in DAMP, B 12, F 16, Thacher Winslow, 1948–54.
106. See Chapter 6.

107. Minutes of Morse's meeting with Eisenhower and Dulles, 30 Mar. 1953, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/32: Meetings of the Director-General, notes, minutes, 1951–57.
108. Memorandum by Phil Kaiser (Assistant Secretary of Labor), "Use of the International Labor Organisation in pursuance of United States foreign policy", 6 Apr. 1953, in NARA RG 174.5 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs), B 20, General correspondence, 1953–67.
109. See an undated memorandum from the Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, written between 1956 and 1957, on "Why the ILO is important to the United States", *ibid.*
110. See the two memorandums from the Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, with the joint title "Political objectives of the United States in relationship with the ILO", 10 Feb. 1959, 3 May 1960, *ibid.*
111. Aamir Ali, who was responsible for the ILO's relations with employers, saw "relatively wide mistrust" towards the Office among this group, which he believed put their continued cooperation at risk. Memorandum by Aamir Ali (ILO), "Relations with employers", 6 Dec. 1951, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/15, Reports, agendas, relevant papers, 1948–64.
112. The attitude of the American Employers highlighted the hostility towards international cooperation that had developed in American society in the 1950s. The US Employers' representatives used the ILC to present themselves as sworn enemies of the ILO, with their only agenda item sometimes being an attempt to persuade their government to leave the Organization. Their attacks were largely motivated by domestic politics, and they accused the ILO of using socio-political standards to try to bring "socialism" into the United States through the back door. See E.C. Lorenz: *Defining global justice: The history of US international labor standards policy* (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 167–76.
113. The communist seizure of power in Beijing reinforced this trend. From 1949 the Nationalist Government of China, based in Taiwan, had its own seat on all UN committees. The fall of the Chinese mainland also marked the disappearance of one major potential recipient of technical assistance without a direct colonial past.
114. Ghebali: *The ILO*, p. 243.
115. ECOSOC, Resolution No. 180/VIII, 3 Apr. 1949, Technical Assistance for Economic Development.
116. On the origins of Lewis's concepts and the colonial roots of development economics in general, see F. Cooper: "Modernizing bureaucrats, backward Africans, and the development concept", in Cooper and Packard (eds): *International development and the social sciences*, pp. 64–93 at p. 68.
117. Including, for example, Paul Tschoffen, former Belgian Colonial Minister; Baron Frederick van Asbeck, Professor of International Law and Comparative Constitutional Law in Non-Metropolitan Territories at Leiden University, former member of the Mandate Commission and a minister in the Government of the Dutch East Indies; and Sir Atul Chatterjee, former High Commissioner for India in London and one of the first non-European speakers of the Governing Body of the ILO in the 1930s.
118. Benson, "Report on mission to specialized agencies 23/3–9/4/1949", in United Nations Archives, New York City (UNA), RAG 2/77/2, Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Colonial Territories, Specialized Agencies, 1946–56.
119. *Ibid.*

120. Ibid.
121. Another important event was the election victory of the National Party in South Africa, which in 1948 introduced a strict policy of segregation which became known as apartheid. From this point on, the UN's criticism of South Africa did not let up, which unsettled Britain in particular, who feared that developments might have consequences for the white settler colonies in East and Central Africa which would sooner or later cause difficulties for the British themselves.
122. E. Luard: *History of the United Nations*, Vol. 2: *The age of decolonization 1955–1965* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), pp. 23–37.
123. In the case of the Netherlands, which relied more than the other colonial powers on American capital for its development efforts, Washington's refusal to support the colonial war in Indonesia, which resulted in the flow of US money drying up, was doubly paralysing. See M. Frey: "Control, legitimacy, and the securing of interests: European development policy in South-East Asia from the late colonial period to the early 1960s", in *Contemporary European History* (2003), Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 398–402.
124. D.K. Fieldhouse: "Decolonization, development, and dependence: A survey of changing attitudes", in P. Gifford and W. Roger Louis (eds): *The transfer of power in Africa: Decolonization 1940–1960* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 483–515 at p. 487.
125. See the addresses of the Government representatives of Britain, France and the Netherlands, in ARC 2 (1950), RoP, pp. 13–16, 47 ff. 58 ff.
126. Ibid., p. 15.
127. Ibid., p. 66.
128. A few years later, the Dutch Ambassador to the UN, Schurmann, remarked in a discussion with Jef Rens that the Netherlands' contributions to technical assistance after the end of colonial rule had always partly been an attempt "to keep a foot in the underdeveloped world": Rens to Morse, 28 Mar. 1958, in DAMP, B 9, F 19, Jef Rens, 1948–53, 1955–59.
129. John Kent, *The internationalization of colonialism: Britain, France and black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 338.
130. Ibid.; see also F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 362–69.
131. Notiz Lloyd (CO), 5 Dec. 1955, in PRO CO 859/814, ILO Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Fourth Session, 1954–56.
132. Watson to Tennant, 20 Feb. 1953, in PRO CO 859/365, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952–53.
133. For this reason, grants to individuals from colonial countries who were specialists in the social sector to pursue further education in Geneva, Switzerland, or other Western countries were made a special item in the ILO's annual budget for 1951, in order to highlight the value placed on this field of activity. See Aamir Ali (Deputy Director-General of the ILO) to Morse, 6 Dec. 1951, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/15, Reports, agendas, important papers 1948–64.
134. Memorandum by Gavin, "The achievements of the ILO in Africa" (n.d.; probably end 1956), in ILOA NL 159, African Labour Survey. Until 1956 the ILO's work in sub-Saharan Africa boiled down to one small project in the Italian trust territory Somalia (which consisted mainly of producing a general report on

working conditions). In Liberia, an independent state, ILO experts had provided advice on personnel development and labour legislation. In the British colonies Gold Coast (Ghana) and The Gambia, vocational trainers recruited and partly financed by the ILO were involved in the establishment of industrial structures. In addition, 21 people from various countries were schooled, in cooperation with the UN, in the setting up of cooperatives, and 25 training grants were awarded to administrative staff from the social sector, trade union leaders and employers' representatives from the colonial territories. The ILO awarded some research grants to be used for work in the social and labour sectors to students from Nigeria and other British territories. See the Office's list (1956), *ibid.*

135. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 243.

5 At Arm's Length: The ILO and Late Colonial Social Policy

1. The report on the first meeting of the COESP includes a short history of the Committee: GB, 102nd Session (1947), RoP, Appendix II, *Report of the First Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 135.
2. Morse to Bletloch, 23 Sep. 1948, in ILOA PF Z 1/1/1/15, Correspondence with Mr Bletloch.
3. Bletloch to Morse, 12 Oct. 1948, *ibid.*
4. Morse to Bletloch, 14 Dec. 48, *ibid.*
5. Myrddin-Evans was concerned that an African member of staff was "almost bound to start off with views about colonial policy" that went against British interests. Myrddin-Evans to Morse, 22 Feb. 1949, in ILOA MF Z 1/25/1/8 (J.2), Correspondence between the Director-General and Sir Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans, 1948–59.
6. Myrddin-Evans to Morse, 25 Feb. 1949, *ibid.*
7. Biographical information on Robert Gavin in ILOA MF Z 8/1/47, Non-Metropolitan Territories Division, 1949–55.
8. Myrddin-Evans was in favour of the appointment "for keeping a certain balance in the office by introducing someone who has been trained on the employers' side". He was supported by John Forbes Watson, the British Employers' representative and spokesman of the Employers' group in the Governing Body. Myrddin-Evans to Morse, 28 Mar. 1949; Forbes Watson to Morse, 17 July 1949, *ibid.*
9. Gavin to Morse, 14 Dec. 1949, *ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Morse to Lie, 11 Sep. 1948, in ILOA MF Z 14/1/3, UN General Files.
14. Benson, "Report on mission to specialized agencies 23/3–9/4/1949", 11 Apr. 1949, in UNA RAG 2/77/2, Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Colonial Territories, Specialized agencies, 1946–56.
15. Benson to Viktor Hoo (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations), 15 Apr. 1949, in UNA RAG 5/3/1, Department of Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, Office of the Assistant Secretary-General (Dr Viktor Hoo), 1946–54.
16. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, pp. 120 ff.
17. Jenks to Hill (head of the Political Section of the Trusteeship Department of the UN Secretariat), 30 Mar. 1950, in UNA DAG 5: Department of Political Questions, Decolonization and Trusteeship.

18. Benson to Hill, 22 Apr. 1950, *ibid.*
19. The final straw for the WFTU, whose unity had long been under threat from the escalating East–West conflict, came with disputes about the implementation of the Marshall Plan. See A. Carew: “A false dawn: The World Federation of Trade Unions (1945–1949)”, in A. Carew et al. (eds): *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 165–87.
20. There were major differences between the various metropolitan federations and their trade union policies. The British TUC tried to promote apolitical unions, while the work of the French CGT, which had affiliations to the Communist Party, was very political. The young trade unions in the French possessions were, as a rule, branches of the CGT, while the British encouraged independent union confederations. Despite these differences, they all shared a basic loyalty (more critical in some cases than in others) to the colonial policy of their respective mother countries. The CGT, for instance, approved of the Sétif massacre, just as the Dutch NVV defended the police actions of the Dutch army in Indonesia in 1947. See O. Pohrt, *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung zwischen Einheitswunsch und Kaltem Krieg. Der Weltgewerkschaftsbund (WGB) von der Gründungsphase bis zu seiner Spaltung (1941–1949)* (Regensburg, S. Roderer, 2000), pp. 254–77.
21. Since 1944 the AFL had been pursuing its own foreign policy through the formally independent Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC). Under the leadership of Jay Lovestone, the former Secretary-General of the American Communist Party since turned fanatical anti-communist, the FTUC saw its post-war duty as being to steer the trade union movements in Europe on to an anti-communist course. The FTUC focused initially on Italy, France and Germany, but it also had a global network of agents and rapporteurs at its disposal, and at the beginning of the 1950s began to take an increased interest in Asia and Africa. The work of the FTUC was paid for partly by the AFL–CIO (as it was known after the two organizations merged in 1955), but also increasingly by the CIA. The FTUC was, at times, more extreme in its anti-communism than the US Government, and was a permanent thorn in the side of other ICFTU associations such as the TUC (a TUC official described the members of the FTUC in the mid-1950s as “practitioners of communism in reverse”). On the role of the AFL–CIO as an agent of American foreign policy in the Cold War, see the somewhat lurid but highly informative and entertaining biography of Lovestone by the journalist Ted Morgan: *A covert life: Jay Lovestone, communist, anti-communist and spy-master* (New York, Random House, 1999), esp. pp. 156–259.
22. The British TUC had been actively involved since the 1930s in spreading the British model of union work in the colonies. On the recommendation of the TUC, the colonial administrations started after the war to employ more and more officials to deal locally with issues of labour and social policy. TUC executives also sat on official committees such as the CO’s Labour Advisory Committee. These close links with the official colonial policy of the Empire made the TUC guard its exclusive position within the British colonies jealously, vis-à-vis both the Americans and the ICFTU in general. See Anthony Carew: “Conflict within the ICFTU: Anti-communism and anti-colonialism in the 1950s”, in *International Review of Social History* (1996), Vol. 41, pp. 147–81.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. The ICFTU office in Geneva was for years a type of unofficial secretariat for the Workers’ group in the Governing Body.

26. Oldenbroek to all ICFTU members, 26 Oct. 1953, in George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Md. (GMMA), RG 18–007: AFL–CIO International Affairs Department, International Labor Organization's activities, 1946–85.
27. WHO and UNESCO and certain regional ECOSOC commissions. For example, Brunei and Sarawak, North Borneo, Burma, Ceylon, Hong Kong, Indochina, the Malayan Union, Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies had been associated members of ECOSOC's regional commission on Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) since 1947. In the case of the ILO, colonial representation was governed by Article 3(3) of the constitution, which laid down in a very permissive fashion that representatives from non-metropolitan territories may be appointed to advise delegates at the Conference. Roberts to Morse, 28 June 1952, in ILOA MF Z 11/2/9/1(J1), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.
28. Ibid.
29. Oldenbroek to all ICFTU members, 26 Oct. 53, in GMMA RG 18–007, AFL–CIO International Affairs Department, International Labor Organization's activities 1946–85.
30. The initiative received very little governmental backing. Walther Reuther, President of the CIO, asked Labor Secretary James P. Mitchell for support but his request fell on deaf ears. Morse's report, which had been published earlier, had fully convinced Mitchell that changes to the ILO Constitution were unnecessary. Reuther to Mitchell, 12 Nov. 1953, Mitchell to Reuther, 25 Nov. 1953, *ibid.*
31. GB, 123rd Session (1953), Appendix V, *The ILO and non-metropolitan territories: Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office*, p. 103.
32. None of the five colonial Conventions of 1947–48 was yet in force, as none of them had received the required two ratifications. Britain was the only colonial power to have signed all five, while none of the other colonial powers had signed any at all. See ILO: *List of Ratifications by Conventions and by State* (Geneva, 2000), pp. 93–6.
33. GB, 123rd Session (1953), Appendix V, *The ILO and non-metropolitan territories: Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office*, p. 103.
34. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 70.
35. Jenks to Morse, 20 Dec. 1951, in ILOA MF Jenks Comprehensive File.
36. The spokesman of the Workers' group, Albert Roberts, made sure to emphasize that the matter was a "desirable, important and urgent one" for the Workers. See GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 36.
37. Watson to Gavin, 19 Jan. 1952, in ILOA NL 1002: Native Labour – Non-Metropolitan Territories Division – Committee of experts on social policy in non-metropolitan territories, 2nd session (general).
38. Ibid.
39. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 70.
40. Watson to Myrddin-Evans, 24 Jan. 52, in PRO LAB 13/863, ILO, Consultation with Colonial Office on (1) Proposals for work of 2nd Session of Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, (2) Enquiry financed from Technical Assistance Programme funds should be undertaken into factors affecting East African labour. To be considered at 115th Session of Governing Body.
41. Ibid.

42. On the internal structure and policies of the CCTA, see J. Kent: *The internationalization of colonialism: Britain, France and black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 263–86.
43. The South Africans believed that the whole proposal was a particularly ingeniously engineered initiative by the Office itself. The South African Labour Secretary, Lee, was convinced that all the proposals that ended up before the Governing Body that had apparently come from an individual country or the Workers' group had "in fact been organised and arranged by the staff of the Organisation". The suspicions of the South Africans were compounded "by their distrust of Mr Gavin". Lee (South African Department of Labour) to Martin (CO), 21 Mar. 1952, in PRO CO 859/364, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Minutes of a meeting between Gavin and representatives of the CO and MOL, 6 May 1952, *ibid.*
46. The ministerial officer responsible for social and ILO-related matters in the French Overseas Ministry, Guelfi, accused Britain of having "sold the pass to the ILO" after the country had approved Gavin's West Africa mission without consulting the CCTA first. Watson to Tennant (MOL), 25 Feb. 1953, in CO 859/367, International Labour Organisation, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Third Session, Lisbon, 4–19 Dec. 1953.
47. Report by Gavin, "Technical labour policies in West-Africa", 1/1953, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa: General.
48. Watson to Tennant (MOL), 25 Feb. 1953, in PRO CO 859/367, International Labour Organisation, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Third Session, Lisbon 4–19 Dec. 1953; Watson to Guelfi, 14 Feb. 1953, in PRO CO 859/348, International Labour Office, Visit of officials to West Africa, 1953.
49. British powers of persuasion were not called for within the CCTA only when the country aired the idea of minor concessions to the ILO. Before Gavin's departure in December 1952, Watson also wrote to the governors of the West African territories to assure them that Gavin was trustworthy and would "take particular care that he and his colleagues do not act in any way unreasonably". London had agreed to the mission only after the ILO had promised that it did not intend to hand out advice, express criticism or act as a fact-finding commission, but simply to collect information for a general report. It had made clear to the Office that a discussion of the state of industrial relations in the report would be "open to very strong objections". Shortly before his departure, Gavin had to promise again that the trip would take place without much publicity, and that if he ever did appear in public, for example, on the radio, "utmost care will be taken to ensure that the broadcasts contain no 'inflammatory' material". Watson to the West African governors, 15 Dec. 1952, Gavin to Watson, 16 Dec. 52, PRO CO 859/348, International Labour Office, Visit of officials to West Africa, 1953.
50. Gavin to Morse, 21 Nov. 1952, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–59.
51. When the matter came back on to the agenda two years later, the Office was made aware yet again that the CCTA's answer was still no. After Office officials had aired the possibility of a COESP meeting on African territory at the COESP gathering in Lisbon at the end of 1953, certain representatives of CCTA advised the representatives of the Office not to mention the field office idea, because

- this would be unlikely to have any effect “except to prejudice the possibility of an African meeting”. Report of the UN observer at the COESP meeting 6 Jan. 1954, in UNA RAG 5/3.1, Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, ILO Committee on Social Policy, Lisbon, 1953.
52. The Workers demanded more willingness on the part of the colonial powers to ratify Conventions, increased representation of the colonies in ILC delegations and observer status for politically advanced territories. GB, 123rd Session (1953), RoP, p. 43.
 53. Jenks to Morse, 23 Dec. 1953, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/13 (J.2), Correspondence between the Director-General and Mr Jenks, 1948–55.
 54. *Ibid.*
 55. Jenks to Morse, 22 Jan. 1954, *ibid.*
 56. Jenks to Morse, 23 Dec. 1953, *ibid.*
 57. Henry (Secretary-General of the CCTA) to Morse, 8 Dec. 1954, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–59.
 58. Another reason for this lay in the ILO’s attempts to protect its own sphere of competence against encroachment by the Office. Memorandum by Gavin, “The ILO and the C.C.T.A.”, 24 Oct. 1957, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–59.
 59. GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, pp. 23 ff.
 60. Britain and France, like other Western European members, were more willing than Washington to accept Soviet membership even if it meant compromising the tripartism that was one of the basic elements of the ILO’s Constitution. They held the integration of the Soviet Union and the universality of the Organization to be more important than keeping its tripartite principles intact. For more on this see Chapter 6.
 61. The underlying dispute between the AFL and the TUC at this time surrounded the question of which trade union movements should be supported in Africa. While the TUC was determined to stick to its approach of taking things slowly and creating “real” trade unions from the ground up whose activities were entirely apolitical, the AFL tended, in the name of the fight against communism, also to support groups whose activities had a political element or whose work was even predominantly political – that is, anti-colonial. The AFL’s main priority was to acquire partners capable of forming a protective bastion against communist influences. See Carew: “Conflict within the ICFTU”. On the conflicts between the ICFTU and the AFL–CIO in Africa from the mid-1950s, see the biography of the African American trade unionist and civil rights activist Maida Springer, who paints a different picture of the disputes from Carew’s. While Carew emphasizes the political objectives of and secret service involvement in the AFL–CIO’s work in Africa, Yvette Richards sees the experience of Maida Springer as being typical of the conflicts between the (predominantly African American) representatives of the AFL–CIO in Africa and the representatives of the ICFTU, who were often British and whose familiarity with the colonial administrations was too great for America’s liking. See Y. Richards: *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and international labor leader* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).
 62. At the 1953 meeting in Lisbon, the French had invited the COESP to hold the next gathering on French territory after the COESP had agreed the event should take place in Africa. Following the defeat of French troops at Dien Bien Phu and the start of the war in Algeria, Paris attempted to withdraw the invitation at the beginning of 1954, but was persuaded by the other CCTA powers during a special

- session to go ahead with the plans, as the others feared that cancelling would increase pressure on the subject of the African field office. Resolution of the COESP, in GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, Appendix V, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 77. On how the precise venue in French West Africa was chosen, see Galbraith (MOL) to Webster (CO), 14 Dec. 56, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
63. Minutes of a meeting between Morse, Robert Cox and Wilfred Jenks, 6 Sep. 1955, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–59.
 64. Jenks to Morse, 29 Dec. 1955, *ibid.*
 65. This idea came from the relatively small International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU). By this point, the Organization was holding regular, tripartite Regional Conferences for Europe, North and South America, and Asia and the Far East, and there had been a preparatory one for the Middle East. This took place in 1947 in Istanbul and was not actually followed by any regular Conferences because the Arab states refused to take part if Israel was included. For the African Conference proposal, see GB, 131st Session (1956), p. 41.
 66. Jenks to Morse, 29 Dec. 1955, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–59.
 67. Roberts to Morse, 19 Mar. 1956, *ibid.*
 68. Benson's report on the meeting of the COESP, Dakar, 5–12 Dec. 1955, in UNA RAG 2/77/11, International Labour Office, Committees and Commissions, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories.
 69. See Morse's outline agenda, 12 Jan. 1956, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/2, Meetings of the Chiefs of Division: Notes, documents, minutes, etc. 1949–58.
 70. Cabinet meeting, 12 Jan. 1956, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/32, Meetings of the Director-General, notes, minutes, 1951–57.
 71. Memorandum by Gavin, "The achievements of the ILO in Africa", 22 Apr. 1956, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1, Africa: General.
 72. See also the contributions of the Indian Government representative Padmanabhan, Möri and other speakers, including the Soviet representative Arutunian: GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, pp. 41–5.
 73. Memorandum by Gavin, "The achievements of the ILO in Africa", 22 Apr. 1956, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1, Africa: General.
 74. The minutes of the meetings of 19 June 1956 and 26 June 1956 are on the British Ministry of Labour in: PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
 75. Not even the British were yet ready to accept a fully tripartite Committee. Myrddin-Evans would have preferred the COESP to meet once or twice more in its current form. Morris to Bourdillon (CO), 21 June 1956, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
 76. At this point the MOL was less worried than the CO about ILO involvement in Africa. However, both departments continued to believe they would be able to strengthen and assert the ILAI as an alternative to the ILO, so that the ILO would recognize it as "the appropriate organ for coordinating research and other activities, including those sponsored by ILO in the labour field in Africa south of the Sahara". Thus, it was hoped the ILO would be made to see that its direct presence in Africa was redundant. Noted dated 22 Mar. 1956, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
 77. GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, p. 27.
 78. On the complex interplay of metropolitan, colonial and international factors which accelerated the political decolonization process in the mid-1950s, see

- W.D. McIntyre: *British decolonization 1946–1997: When, why and how did the British Empire fall?* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 79–101; R. Betts: *France and decolonization 1900–1960* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), pp. 78–114.
79. A thought-provoking view on the alliances within the post-colonial world under the banner of Afro-Asian or “Third World” solidarity is taken by V. Prashad: *The darker nations: A people’s history of the Third World* (New York/London, New Press, 2007).
 80. On the US role in the Suez crisis, see W. Roger Louis/R. Owen (ed.), *Suez 1956: The crisis and its consequences* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989); S.C. Smith (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New perspectives on the crisis and its aftermath* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008).
 81. ILC, 39th Session (1956), RoP, pp. 235 ff.
 82. Meeting between Morse, Jenks and Cox, 6 July 1956, in: ILOA MF Z 8/1/32: Meetings of the Director-General, notes, minutes, 1951–57.
 83. Discussion between Morse and Alexandre Parodi, French observer at the Conference and then French ambassador to NATO: Morse’s recollections, 16 Aug. 1956, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
 84. Myrddin-Evans to Poynton, 11 Oct. 1956, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
 85. Portugal and France already suspected that an agreement between the Office and the State Department was behind the American delegation’s initiative, and they attempted to get the other CCTA powers to unite in a joint protest against this interference: Morris (CO) to Kunzle (FO-UN), in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1955–57.
 86. Carew: “Conflict within the ICFTU”, p. 162.
 87. Memorandum by Gavin, “The ILO and the C.C.T.A.”, 24 Oct. 1957, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
 88. Memorandum from CO (anon.), “The ILO and Africa”, 22 Jan. 1957, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1954–57.
 89. *Ibid.*
 90. Robertson to Morris, 12 Mar. 1957, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1954–57. Six months earlier, Myrddin-Evans had reacted to Morse’s announcement that budgetary preparations for a field office would get under way in the near future by threatening that Britain would “fight it out” to the end in the Governing Body: Morse’s notes on a discussion with Myrddin-Evans, 8 Aug. 1956, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
 91. Memorandum by Robertson (MOL), “The ILO and Africa”, 13 June 1957, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1954–57.
 92. Robertson thought he could hear “sympathetic noises” coming out of the CO to the effect that Britain would vote for the AFAC and a regional office at the June 1957 meeting of the Governing Body, but not for a Regional Conference: *ibid.*
 93. The British delegate reported from the CCTA meeting in Lisbon in April that everyone had come round to the United Kingdom’s way of thinking and expressed surprise at the “cautious and down to earth approach” of the Conference, which had not even been thrown by the prospect of the imminent membership of independent African states: Marnham (CCTA delegate) to Myrddin-Evans, 2 Apr. 1957; see also memorandum by Robertson, “The ILO and Africa”, 13 June 1957, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1954–57.
 94. This latter point was directed at the Soviet Union and, in particular, India, which had repeatedly claimed to have a right of representation on the grounds of the

large Indian minorities in many countries in southern and eastern Africa: minutes of a meeting between Morse and representatives of the African colonial powers (Myrddin-Evans, Robertson and Cassels for Britain; Ramadier, Hauck and Pelisson for France; Troclet, Wallin and Grosjean for Belgium; Ribeiro da Cunha for Portugal), 31 Oct. 1957, *ibid*.

95. Said Salama had some good arguments at his disposal. First, because of the controversial issue of Israel's participation, a Middle East Conference was impossible, which meant that Egypt had not yet had the opportunity to take part in any Regional Conference. Second, the Asian Regional Conference included Australia and New Zealand – two countries which did not strictly belong to the region. GB, 134th Session (1957), RoP, p. 54.
96. "Although it may not be possible to prevent Asian and African Representatives from ganging up inside the ILO, we must try and avoid an all-African grouping": Myrddin-Evans to Poynton (CO), 21 Mar. 1957, in PRO LAB 13/984, ILO and Africa, 1954–57.
97. Morse's notes on the meeting with the French Minister of Labour, Bacon, and Colonial Minister, Jacquet, 13 Jan. 1958; Morse's notes on the meeting with British officials including the Minister of Labour Iain Macleod, Myrddin-Evans and various members of the CO, 15 Jan. 1958; both in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
98. Jenks's notes on the meeting about Morse's trip to Brussels with the ministers Troclet, Fafchamps and Buisseret (Colonial Minister), 14 Jan. 1958 (Note 16/1), ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
99. Rens' notes on the meeting with the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Paula Cunha, and the Colonial Minister, Ventura, 5 Feb. 1958, *ibid*.
100. British efforts to host the field office on British terrain soon had to be abandoned when Colonial Minister Lennox-Boyd realized from correspondence with the governors of the British territories that these latter were openly hostile to the idea. The Governor of Kenya did not want it there, for instance, because he believed it would be a virtual invitation to local politicians and unionists "to use it undesirably". The Governor of Tanganyika was hesitant for similar reasons: there were "already a considerable number of international influences" at work in his territory which would only be strengthened by the establishment of a field office. His Ugandan counterpart was more direct, saying that a regional office was simply not welcome, as Uganda neither made use of technical assistance projects nor intended to do so in any shape or form. As a result, the staff of a field office would inevitably start to meddle in political affairs as they would have nothing else to do. The office would thus become nothing other than a "major embarrassment" to Uganda. The fact that the ICFTU's African training centre was situated in Kampala did little to increase the Governor's enthusiasm for an ILO office. Lennox-Boyd to the African governors, 25 Apr. 1958; Governor of Kenya to Lennox-Boyd, 29 May 1958; Governor of Tanganyika to Lennox-Boyd, 30 May 1958; Governor of Uganda to Lennox-Boyd, 21 July 1958; all in PRO CO 859/1106, Social Services Department, International Labour Office, ILO African field office, 1957–59.
101. This choice was motivated by the fact that Nigeria was shortly to become independent and its leaders, unlike those of the alternative option, Ghana, displayed no ambitions to spearhead the anti-colonial movement. Establishing the office in Ghana might, in the light of the line followed by Nkrumah, have led to a repoliticizing of the issue of the ILO's involvement in Africa, which was the last thing the Office wanted. In August, Morse announced his decision on the

- office's location to the Governments. Morse's note to George Tobias informing the US Government about the Office's African plans, 21 Aug. 1958, in NARA RG 174.5 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs), B 20, General correspondence, 1953–67.
102. Out of consideration for French sensitivities, the British representatives, including the Governor and other dignitaries, kept their heads down somewhat at the opening celebrations, as directed by the CO. The office was opened by the new Nigerian minister of labour, Johnson. Bourdillon (CO) to Ralph Grey (Deputy Governor-General of Nigeria), 7 Nov. 1958, Bennett (CO) to Robertson (MOL), 19 Dec. 1958, in PRO CO 859/1106, Social Services Department, International Labour Office, ILO African field office, 1957–59.
 103. Report by Jenks, 29 Apr. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/13, Report on Mr Jenks' mission to Africa, Dec. 1958–Feb. 1959.
 104. Jenks to Morse, 30 Dec. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/13 (J.3), Correspondence with Jenks, in a letter.
 105. Notes by Aamir Ali, ILO, on a discussion between the Director-General, Bacon and Cornut Gentile, 23 Jan. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
 106. In a discussion between Aamir Ali and the French Minister for Overseas Territories, Paul Bacon, Aamir expressed his disappointment that France had still not applied for any technical assistance for its colonies. Bacon ensured Aamir then that a change of policy was imminent. Minutes of the meeting between Aamir Ali and Bacon, 29 Jan. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
 107. Minutes of talks between Morse and General de Gaulle, 15 Jan. 1960, in DAMP, B 4, F 4, France.
 108. Report by Jenks, 29 Apr. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/13, Report on Mr Jenks' mission to Africa, Dec. 1958–Feb. 1959.
 109. *Ibid.*
 110. This description by Morse of technical assistance and ILO norms appeared in an ILO brochure published before the first AFRC, *ILO: Africa and the ILO* (Geneva, 1960), p. 27.
 111. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 112. See Morse's directive, 4 Sept. 1958, in ILOA MF Z 8/1/2, Meetings of the Chiefs of Division: Notes, documents, minutes, etc. 1949–58.
 113. The first meeting took place in 1951 in Geneva, followed by Lisbon in 1953, Dakar in 1955 and Geneva again in 1957.
 114. After Philippine independence in 1946, for example, the United States was hardly a colonial power in the strict sense, but it still always sent at least two representatives to the COESP. These were usually representatives of the section of the Department of the Interior responsible for the American territories and Puerto Ricans. The nomination of the Dutchman Hans van Mook, the former Governor of the Netherlands East Indies, was something of an anachronism after Indonesian independence, but could not be withdrawn out of consideration for the Dutch Government. A similar dilemma arose in relation to the nomination of a South African, whose presence was particularly problematic after the (official) start of apartheid in 1948. The Office was also under pressure to increase the number of women on the Committee and to take account of the Christian missions. The latter always had one representative on the COESP. Some of these considerations are mentioned in a letter from Gavin to Jenks (legal adviser to the Office), 18 Dec. 1950, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.

115. Of the 12 members of the COESP in 1951, nine were colonial administrators and three were academics. In Lisbon in 1953 eight out of ten members were administrators. In 1955 in Dakar the Committee was again dominated by administrative figures, apart from the Employers' and Workers' representatives appointed specifically for the purpose. Of the 12 members present, nine were involved in colonial administration. The situation had changed by 1957 as the tripartite process was already under way, but of 20 members, ten were still former administration officials. Analysis by the author based on GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 71; GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, Appendix V, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 77; GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 147; GB, 138th Session (1958), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Fifth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 70.
116. One of the reasons for the failure of the idea of creating a counterweight to the colonial-administrative bias by appointing representatives of independent Asian states was that China was out of the question, after the communist takeover in 1949, and an Indian representative would be too liable to harbour strong anti-colonial tendencies. Gavin to Jenks (legal adviser to the Office), 18 Dec. 1950, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.
117. An example of this was the CO's summoning, before the 1953 meeting in Lisbon, of the British representative Ramage ("You may possibly want to ask us to provide you with factual information to assist you in making an informed contribution"). The colonial powers did not always take the Office's insistence on the independence of the experts particularly seriously. Duncan Watson wrote, regarding Ramage, to a British Government representative in Geneva: "Of course you need not suggest to Gavin that we are getting at one of his 'independent experts'!" Watson to Ramage, 12 Oct. 1953, Watson to Walker 17 Nov. 1953, in PRO CO 859/367, International Labour Organisation, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Third Session, Lisbon, 4–19 Dec. 1953.
118. Jenks to Morse, 20 Dec. 1951, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.
119. These experts were the Senator of Dahomey (Benin), Luis Ignacio Pinto, and E.E. Kurankyi-Taylor of the Gold Coast (Ghana), the most politically advanced British colony in West Africa.
120. Point 18 of the abridged report called for an increase in the number of experts from non-metropolitan territories on the following grounds: "The Committee considered that the knowledge of the social aspirations of the peoples possessed by the experts from the territories, united with the experience of the experts from the home territories, would certainly produce valuable results and that the contribution which the Committee, so enlarged, could make to the solution of the social and labour problems of the territories could not be overestimated." GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 70.
121. The Portuguese originally wanted to delete the formulation "from non-metropolitan territories" altogether, but were then persuaded to accept the

- amendment suggested by Morse. The controversy is recorded, *ibid.*, p. 36. For the entire debate, with supporting contributions from the American, Mexican and Iranian Government representatives, see *ibid.*, pp. 32–7.
122. Memorandum by Gavin, 26 Mar. 1952, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.
 123. Report by MOL official Tennant on a meeting with Gavin: Tennant to Watson, 24 Mar. 1952, in PRO CO 859/364, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952.
 124. One of the reasons behind the British attitude was the fact that they knew they would not receive much help from the African governors in selecting experts. A typical response was that of Governor Cohen (Uganda), who wrote, “frankly I do not think that there is at present any African in Uganda who could very suitably be appointed”: Cohen to Tennant, n.d. (autumn 1952), *ibid.*
 125. Gavin had asked the British to come up with three experts, preferably a (black) Nigerian, a (black) East African and a South Rhodesian. After the Office had been shown the cold shoulder by the CO, Jenks volunteered to renegotiate with Myrddin-Evans to see if he could at least get two experts (from Nigeria and South Rhodesia). But Myrddin-Evans was unenthusiastic too. Gavin’s notes, 21 Nov. 1952, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1 (J.1), Africa: General, 1952–69.
 126. The Office, however, was thinking of someone from French Equatorial Africa. *Ibid.*
 127. In fact, the Belgians were even more unwilling. Brossel, the head of the social division of the Belgian Colonial Ministry, was “most unhelpful and uncooperative” at his meeting with Gavin, and limited his remarks “to pressing very strongly his own candidature”. Gavin took from the meeting the certainty that even if the Office were to make a formal request to the Belgian Government, no African would be suggested. Gavin’s notes, 21 Nov. 1952, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.
 128. See Jef Rens (Assistant Director-General) to Jenks, 4 Mar. 1953, in ILOA NL 1001, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Dependent Territories, 1944–54.
 129. In the end, no new African member had been recruited by the third meeting of the COESP. Instead, the Governing Body nominated, on the suggestion of the British, the Malayan professor of economics Unku A. Aziz, and Hugh Worrell Springer, university registrar and former government official from Barbados. As both Kurankyi-Taylor and Aziz were missing, the absence of the Dutch representative, whose mandate had not been extended and who was not replaced, meant was that the Committee was down one “colonial representative” only. Otherwise the ratios were the same. *Ibid.*
 130. GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, p. 29.
 131. Notes by Lloyd (CO), 5 Dec. 1955, in CO 859/814, ILO Committee on Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Fourth Session, 1954–56.
 132. The establishment of the CEACR at the end of the 1920s was the reaction of Director Albert Thomas to the unwillingness of many governments to amend the Constitution to give the ILO more effective instruments for monitoring the application of standards. The ILO made use of committees of independent experts, hoping for similar results, in a number of other controversial areas (e.g. forced labour, freedom of association). See B. Reinalda: “Organization theory and the autonomy of the ILO: Two classic theories still going strong”, in B. Reinalda and B. Verbeek (eds): *Autonomous policy making by international organizations: Purpose, outline and results* (London/New York, Routledge, 1998), pp. 49–52.

133. CO position paper, "Relations with the ILO in regard to activities in Africa", 2 May 1952, in PRO CO 859/364, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952.
134. GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, p. 27.
135. See Chapter 6.
136. As, for example, in the case of housing for workers and vocational training: see GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, Appendix V, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 76. With regard to productivity, the formulation was that "technical assistance in all forms and from every available source should be used so as to put into execution as rapidly and as completely as possible in all NMTs general programmes for raising the level of productivity": *ibid.*, p. 77. The same phrasing was used in the recommendation concerning social security, in GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 146.
137. See the recommendations on housing, social security and vocational training, *ibid.*
138. Jenks's notes (on the meeting and the African Labour Survey) on the fringes of the COESP 1957 meeting, 20 Dec. 1957, ILOA MF Z 11, Africa general.
139. ILO: *African labour survey* (Geneva, 1957).
140. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 69.
141. William Gemmill, the South African Employers' representative to the ILC and the Governing Body, and a representative of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, for example, lauded migratory labour as "one of the greatest civilising factors in the whole field of employment of African labour". Gemmill believed that this form of labour really taught the Africans how to work, and brought them into contact with a higher standard of living without destroying their "natural milieu". The British and Portuguese members of COESP, however, did not share this view for the simple reason that Witwatersrand Gold Mines poached large amounts of labour from the neighbouring territories (Angola, Mozambique, Nyasaland, etc.), which then had to deal with the social consequences of migratory labour. On the discussions prior to and during the second meeting of the COESP, see ILOA NL 1002, Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Second Session (General).
142. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, pp. 69 ff.
143. GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 145.
144. GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, Appendix V, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 81.
145. GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 152.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
149. GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, pp. 151 ff. For more detail, see the section on freedom of association in Chapter 6.

150. Benson's report on the Third Session of the COESP, 6 Jan. 1954, in UNA RAG 5/3.1, Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, ILO Committee on Social Policy, Lisbon, 1953.
151. Ibid.
152. See F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 362–69.

6 Universal Rights? Standard-Setting against the Backdrop of Late Colonialism, Decolonization and the Cold War

1. Insider's views on the ILO's human rights work are provided, among others, by Lee Swepston in G. Rodgers, E. Lee, et al. *The ILO and the quest for social justice 1919–2009* (New York, Cornell University Press, 2010), pp. 37–93; V. Leary: "Lessons from the experience of the International Labour Organisation", in Philip Alston (ed.): *The United Nations and human rights: A critical appraisal* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 580–620; G. Weaver: *The ILO and human rights* (Geneva, ILO, 1968).
2. The fact that the principles and norms of the ILO reappeared in every section of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 is evidence of this. Representatives of the ILO, who were among some of the most influential authors of the UDHR, contributed both to the formulation of the civil and political liberties (such as freedom of association and freedom from forced labour) and to the codification of the economic and social rights (such as social security and the right to work).
It is the third section (Articles 22–27) of the UDHR which most clearly bears the ILO's signature. This section deals with economic, social and cultural rights, and includes the rights to work, to free choice of employment, to rest and leisure and to education, passages directly in line with the Declaration of Philadelphia. The ILO also played a part in setting down political rights and freedoms (Articles 3–19, including freedom of association and the prohibition of forced labour/slavery). See J. Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, drafting and intent* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
3. Leary: "Lessons", pp. 582 ff.
4. C.W. Jenks: "Human rights, social justice and peace: The broader significance of the ILO experience", in A. Eide and A. Shou (eds): *International protection of human rights* (Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell, 1968), pp. 235 ff.
5. Leary: "Lessons", pp. 582 ff.
6. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, p. 28.
7. The Laotian Government representative said that although his country embraced the standards in principle, it had reservations about their actual implementation. India's Minister for Labour and Employment, Lall, remarked that regional standards might be the only way forward if the ILO stopped taking Asia's particular circumstances into account in its standard-setting. Ibid., pp. 23 ff., 47.
8. The CEACR too, had previously looked extensively at the issue of the difficulties involved in implementing ILO norms in the light of the economic and social situation in Asian countries: ARC 3 (1953), RoP, p. 129.

9. See Prologue. Although the new nations, which were normally behind these initiatives, made up an increasing proportion of the ILO's membership in the 1950s, the majorities in the Governing Body and the Conference prevented amendments being made to the constitutional architecture of the ILO, as such amendments (like Conventions and Recommendations) require a two-thirds majority.
10. In 1953 David Morse attempted to address criticism from within the Governing Body of the colonial powers' refusal fully to realize human rights in the colonies by invoking the universalizing effects of the colonial Conventions. See GB, 123rd Session (1953), RoP, Document V, *The ILO and Non-Metropolitan Territories: Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office*, p. 3.
11. Portugal, for example, continued to refuse to apply a single one of the Conventions of 1947: GB, 138th Session (1958), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Fifth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 53. It took a personal audience with Morse and Jenks as late as 1958 to persuade the French Government to apply the social policy Conventions more widely. Minutes of a meeting between Morse, Jenks, Paul Bacon (Minister of Labour) and M. Jaquet (Ministry for Overseas Territories), 13 Jan. 1958, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa: General.
12. The core human rights norms are identical to the inalienable freedoms laid out in paras I and II of the Declaration of Philadelphia.
13. Minutes of a meeting of the CO and MOL (Bourdillon), 15 Feb. 1954, in PRO CO 859/814, ILO Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Fourth Session, 1954–56.
14. The memoirs of John Humphrey, one of the “fathers” of the UDHR and the Director of the Human Rights Department of the UN Secretariat in the 1950s, give an idea of the tension between UN and the ILO in the area of human rights work. Humphrey accuses the ILO of increasing “agency imperialism” during the 1950s, and of refusing to integrate itself into wider UN human rights work. J. Humphrey: *Human rights and the United Nations: A great adventure* (New York, Transnational Publishers Dobbs Ferry, 1984), pp. 12, 103.
15. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 72.
16. UN General Assembly, Resolution 323 (IV).
17. GB, 115th Session (1951), RoP, p. 61.
18. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, p. 73.
19. Portugal justified this in terms of its “assimilatory” colonial doctrine, according to which only those indigenous workers “who have not yet reached a stage of development justifying the application to them of European laws” were subject to penal sanctions. According to the information at the Committee's disposal, the only territories where penal sanctions were not used at all were those belonging to the Netherlands, Italy, New Zealand and the United States. The French Government failed to provide any information and simply noted that on the basis of its colonial constitution and doctrine it was “legally and psychologically” unable to sign the Penal Sanctions Convention. As France considered the inhabitants of its overseas territories to be French citizens, it could not accept legislation which distinguished between natives and citizens. *Ibid.*, pp. 72 ff.
20. The COESP's report showed that the administrations in East Africa had at least taken the first steps towards abolition, whereas North and South Rhodesia (present-day Zambia and Zimbabwe) based their legislation on the 1911 “Master

and Servants Act" which was valid in the South African Union and which prescribed penal sanctions in a wide spectrum of cases. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 75.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
25. GB, 120th Session (1952), RoP, p. 24.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
27. CO position paper for a meeting between Robert Gavin and representatives of the MOL and CO, 6 May 1952, in PRO CO 859/364, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952.
28. The white settlers there enjoyed self-government and were, therefore, not under the control of the CO.
29. Reed (CRO) to High Commissioner Salisbury (Southern Rhodesia), 2 Mar. 1953, in CO 859/365, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952–53.
30. ILC, 37th Session (1954), RoP, Appendix IX, *Penal sanctions for breaches of contract of employment*, pp. 559–62.
31. ILC, 37th Session (1954), RoP, pp. 365 ff.
32. It was no mere coincidence that a representative of the second largest African colonial power should address the Conference with such a universalistic message. Apart from the fact that France had refused on principle to speak of "colonies" since 1945, and officially rejected the distinction between French citizens and colonial subjects, the 1954 Conference coincided with the Mendès-France Government, one of the most colonially reformist Cabinets of the 1950s. It also took place immediately after the defeat of French troops by the Vietminh army in Dien Bien Phu, which marked the end of the French colonial presence in Asia. As the beginnings of an uprising were making themselves felt in Algeria too, it was not surprising that France should attempt to demonstrate solidarity with its African territories. See R. Betts: *France and decolonization 1900–1960* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), pp. 100 ff.
33. The Indian Workers' delegate, Tripathi, for example, sharply criticized Britain's reluctance to commit to an immediate abolition of penal sanctions. See also the remarks of the British Government representative Duncan Watson, who told the Conference that his Government was not able "at this stage to commit itself to the view that it is practical or realistic for the Conference to attempt to specify in a general way a fixed period for the complete abolition of the penal sanctions in question". For this statement, and Tripathi's reply, see ILC, 37th Session (1954), RoP, pp. 369, 379.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
35. ILC, 38th Session (1955), RoP, pp. 339 ff.
36. The four abstentions came from the two Portuguese Government representatives, the Portuguese employer and his American counterpart (who was opposed to Conventions on principle): *ibid.*, p. 343.
37. ILC, 38th Session (1955), RoP, Appendix VIII, *Penal sanctions for breaches of contract*, pp. 667–75. The document is available as the Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955 (No. 104), in ILO: *Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1992* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 971–73.
38. ILC, 38th Session (1955), RoP, p. 335.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 333–43.
40. Declaration of Philadelphia, para. II (a).
41. Article 2 of the UDHR contains a general condemnation of discrimination.
42. See P.G. Lauren: *Power and prejudice: The politics and diplomacy of racial discrimination*, 2nd edn (Boulder, Colo./San Francisco, 1996), pp. 166–97.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
44. The Indian representative Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (who was Nehru's sister) used the opportunity to denounce South Africa's policy towards its non-white population and called upon the UN General Assembly to condemn Pretoria directly. *Ibid.*
45. The only exception here was the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), in ILO: *Conventions and Recommendations*, pp. 901–04.
46. Lauren: *Power and prejudice*, pp. 197 ff.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 186 ff., 205. See also C. Anderson: *Eyes off the prize: The United Nations and African American struggle for human rights 1944–1955* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2003); T. Borstelmann: *The Cold War and the colour line: American race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2001); M.L. Krenn: *The colour of empire: Race and American foreign relations* (Washington, DC, Potomac, 2006).
48. Weaver: *The ILO and human rights*, 24–38.
49. GB, 124th Session (1954), RoP, p. 43.
50. See, for example, the intense disputes between members of the Committee in 1951 on the issue of racial discrimination in vocational training, which the resolutions hardly reflected. GB, 118th Session (1952), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Second Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, pp. 70, 81.
51. ILC, 37th Session (1954), RoP, p. 336.
52. Memorandum by Robert Cox (executive assistant to Morse on political and organizational issues), "Discrimination in employment", 12 Sep. 1954, in DAMP, B 1, F 15, Cox, Robert W.
53. An ECOSOC resolution of 29 July 1954 called upon the ILO to carry out a study to this end. See the decisions of the Governing Body in GB, 125th Session (1954); GB, 129th Session (1955); GB, 130th Session (1955).
54. ILC, 40th Session (1957), RoP, Appendix X, *Discrimination in the field of employment and occupation*, p. 741.
55. As decolonization in Asia and North Africa progressed, the ILO received a total of 16 new members between 1955 and 1957.
56. ILC, 40th Session (1957), RoP, p. 465.
57. The committee meetings are recorded, *ibid.*, Appendix X, *Discrimination in the field of employment and occupation*, pp. 741–49.
58. *Ibid.*
59. ILC, 40th Session (1957), RoP, p. 463.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 464.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 439 ff.
62. ILC, 41st Session (1958), pp. 746 ff.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 460 and 462.
64. The unusually high number of speakers in the plenary session shows the propagandistic value which the socialist representatives attached to the issue. The discussion is recorded, *ibid.*, pp. 438–64.
65. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Recommendation, 1958 (No.

- 111); both in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 1103–06 and 1107–10.
66. See also D.R. Maul: “The International Labour Organization and the struggle against forced labour from 1919 to the present”, in *Labour History* (2007), Vol. 48. No. 4, pp. 483 ff.; Sandrine Kott, “The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention”, in Pierre-Yves Saunier, Akira Iriye (ed.), *The Palgrave dictionary of transnational history from the mid-19th century to the present day* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 5–6.
 67. See Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, pp. 41 ff. Article 4 of the UDHR states that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” Quoted *ibid.*, p. 331.
 68. *Ibid.* See also Nina Lassen: “UDHR – Article 4”, in G. Alfredsson and A. Eide: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A common standard of achievement* (The Hague/Boston/London, Nijhoff, 1999), pp. 103–21 at pp. 105 ff.
 69. Memorandum (anon.), Ministry of Labour, “Proposed international inquiry into forced labour”, 13 Oct. 1949, PRO CO 859/182/1, Forced and compulsory labour, 1950.
 70. UN position paper on forced labour, Department of Social Affairs, 22 Mar. 1954, in UNA RAG 320/01, Forced labor.
 71. The debate in ECOSOC on 17 Feb. 1949 was typical. After facing accusations by the British and American delegates, the Belarusian delegate, Skorobogaty, spoke of “the colonial areas under the domination of the capitalistic countries, where slavery is the normal form of labour and where the colonial people are forced to work in wretched conditions for the sole profit of their foreign exploiters”: ECOSOC, E/SR 238.
 72. Circular letter from Creech-Jones to colonial governments, 13 July 1948, PRO CO 859/182/1, Forced and compulsory labour, 1950.
 73. *Ibid.*
 74. Creech-Jones wrote: “I conceive my responsibility to be to satisfy myself that the necessary powers exist and that Governments are in no doubt that I would support them in the use of these powers should this become necessary.” *Ibid.*
 75. France and Belgium also made it clear that, aside from their duties on the UN’s Trusteeship Council (TC), they were, for the moment, unwilling to discuss forced labour on the international stage. When the UN was set up, the TC took over the duties of the League of Nations’ Mandate Commission. Countries were held more accountable internationally for their trusteeship territories than for their colonies. The ILO had a permanent representative on the TC, and compliance with ILO standards such as Convention No. 29 (1930) was among the obligations which mandate powers assumed. In Belgian and French trusteeship territories, however, the Forced Labour Convention, according to the Trusteeship Agreement of 1947, was subject to as many restrictions as it was in the colonies. In Ruanda-Urundi, for example, Belgium excluded forms of “educational agricultural work” from the obligations of the Convention “until habits of industry have been inculcated”, and France permitted military service in Togo and French Cameroon to include some forms of indirect forced and non-military labour. See memorandum of the UN Trusteeship Council, Division of Social Affairs, Application of international labour Conventions and Recommendations to trust territories, 12 Oct. 1950, UNA RAG 320/02: Forced labour.
 76. *Ibid.*
 77. Webb (Department of State) to American Embassy in Paris, 3 Mar. 1951, in NARA RG 174.3.4, B 39, Forced labor 1950–51.

78. The outcome of the vote was down to the position taken by the highly regarded French Workers' representative Léon Jouhaux at the second of the two meetings. Like his union, the CGT-FO, Jouhaux was largely loyal to France's colonial policy; nevertheless, he voted in favour of the US motions because he believed the damage would be greater were the ILO to remain inactive. Only by taking matters into its own hands would the Organization be able to achieve the necessary clarity to deal with a worldwide campaign by the communist countries "with the object of exaggerating the nature of forced labour in certain territories". Jouhaux was one of the trade union representatives who had attended the ILO's founding conference in 1919 and his opinion held enormous weight. He had been a member of the Resistance, had survived imprisonment in a concentration camp and had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951. GB, 109th Session (1949), RoP, p. 149; GB, 111st Session (1950), RoP, p. 4.
79. Mudaliar was an illustrious figure who at this point was considered to be a possible successor to Trygve Lie as Secretary-General of the UN. The appointment of Mudaliar also permitted some degree of continuity with the forced labour debate of the 1920s, during which he had been a member of the Conference Committee in charge of drafting the relevant Conventions.
80. ECOSOC, Resolution 350 (XII), 19 Mar. 1951.
81. The sources of information which the Committee made use of at its meetings were, admittedly, limited. They consisted of material taken out of questionnaires on legislative practice that had been sent to all member States, documents in the possession of ECOSOC and the TC and interviews with representatives of NGOs or private persons where accusations against countries could be brought to the attention of the Committee. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 276.
82. The results were published as ILO: *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour* (Geneva, 1953).
83. Other countries listed by the report were Spain and some Latin American nations.
84. Many observers noted later that Moscow's outrage at the report had been an important factor behind its decision to rejoin the ILO. See, for example, the article "USSR rejoins the ILO", published in the *New York Times* on 5 Feb. 1954, which hypothesized that the Soviet Union was joining in order to gain some control over the forced labour debate. ILOA MF Z 5/1/64/1, Readmission USSR, 1954-61.
85. ILO, strictly confidential comments on "The report on forced labour", 2 May 1953, in ILOA MF Z 14/2/5/1, Forced labour.
86. Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour, Fourth Session, final meeting, 27 May 1953, *ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*
88. ILO, strictly confidential comments on "The report on forced labour", 2 May 1953, in ILOA MF Z 14/2/5/1, Forced labour.
89. South Africa used almost all the methods of direct and indirect coercion outlawed by the ILO norm of 1930: ILOA FLA 03: Evidence of existence of forced labour, 1953-56.
90. Material on the forced labour systems in the Portuguese territories (details, evidence, arguments used by the Portuguese Government and colonial administrations to justify them), *ibid.*
91. Material on the forced labour systems in the Belgian territories, *ibid.*
92. The final report of the Mudaliar Committee, published as ILO: *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour*.

93. The US Government also supported this drive. Washington would have liked the Committee to concentrate exclusively on the Eastern Bloc and not at all on “such countries as South Africa, Portuguese and Belgian Colonies”, as a State Department strategy paper revealed: State Department, ECOSOC 17th Session, position paper, Forced labor, 23 Mar. 1954, in NARA RG 174.3.4 (Assistant Secretary for International Labor Affairs), B 39: Forced labor.
94. The Ruegger Committee found that forced labour was no longer used in the Belgian territories. The results of the report are summarized in ILC, 39th Session (1956), Report VI, *Forced labour*.
95. The complaints against Britain and Portugal are found in ILOA FLA 03, Evidence of existence of forced labour, 1953–56.
96. For the report and recommendations, see ILOA MF Z 11/12/1, Committee on Forced Labour, 1955–63.
97. GB, 132nd Session (1956), RoP, pp. 15–19.
98. The draft can be found in ILC, 39th Session (1956), RoP, Report VI, *Forced labour*, pp. 710–23.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 722.
100. Both President Eisenhower and the Department of Labor were in favour of the US Government signing the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, but the will of the State Department ultimately prevailed. See ILO Washington Branch to Morse, 29 May 1956, ILOA MF Z 11/12/2, Forced Labour Convention, 1954–57.
101. Morse had brought the US Government’s clear position in favour of a Forced Labour Convention on to the ILO agenda as early as 1947, when he was still Truman’s Under Secretary of Labor. He believed until the end that the US Government would make an exception on the issue, and complained to the Labor Secretary James P. Mitchell that the American UN representative and former Chairman of the Governing Body, Carter Goodrich, had encouraged him to believe as late as 1956 that “an issue such as forced labor because of its political implications etc. was one that should fall outside the normal trend away from conventions”: Morse to Mitchell, 6 Mar. 1956, *ibid.*
102. Notes by Morse, 28 Apr. 1956, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
103. ILC, 39th Session (1956), RoP, p. 500.
104. The entire debate is recorded, *ibid.*, pp. 344–58.
105. The impulse to include the last point, which was directed mainly at South Africa, came from the debate taking place at the same time on the Convention regarding discrimination. The document that was finally adopted is the Abolition of Force Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 1015 ff.
106. ILC, 40th Session (1957), RoP, Appendix VII, *Forced labour*, p. 709.
107. Declaration of Philadelphia, Section I (b).
108. It had always been the aim of the international trade union movement to follow up this constitutional postulate with a Convention. However, their first attempts in this direction, in the period between the wars, were unsuccessful. Discouraged, the Workers held off from any further initiatives during the 1930s, as the chances of success seemed slim in the light of the growing weight of authoritarian regimes among the ILO’s members during this period. On the debate surrounding freedom of association before and after the war, see Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 67–71, 252–70.
109. In 1947 the WFTU threatened to outmanoeuvre the ILO by bringing the issue to the attention of the UN’s Economic and Social Committee. The WFTU

wanted ECOSOC to come up with some form of internationally binding trade union law and to set up a commission to deal with violations. In response, the AFL, which, like the WFTU, had consultative status in ECOSOC, tabled a motion which brought the ILO back into the picture. The AFL wanted ECOSOC to commission the ILO, as the competent specialized agency, to write a general report on the state of trade union rights worldwide and then to initiate steps to improve them. The WFTU's proposal would have been in the interests of the Soviet Union, which, as it was not a member of the ILO, had no way to influence discussions within it. Having ECOSOC look at trade union rights would have given it the additional opportunities of criticizing action taken against trade unions with communist leanings in independent states, and of condemning the colonial powers' treatment of the trade union movements in their territories. This was one of the main reasons the Western countries wanted the ILO to deal with the issue instead. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 252 ff.

110. For more on Morse's experiences during his time inside the New Deal bureaucracy of the 1930s, and his work during the war, both of which went towards making him a life-long champion of democratic labour relations, see Chapter 4, n. 2.
111. As the US representative in the Governing Body and the Chairman of the ILC committee, Morse played an instrumental role in drafting the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), in *ILO: International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 747–51.
112. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), *ibid.*, pp. 878–81.
113. These included trade union autonomy and independence from governmental influence, *ibid.*
114. A major factor in this development was the Soviet Union's repeated complaints in ECOSOC that the ILO alone would not be able to secure worldwide freedom of association as its Conventions applied only to its members, and in the case of the colonies were only partially applicable with numerous restrictions. Moscow thus pressed for a supervisory commission to be set up within the UN to deal with violations of freedom of association independently from the ILO. The Western countries, which wanted this task to remain with the ILO, eventually achieved a compromise which took more account of their wishes. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 261–64.
115. The Committee was allowed to investigate alleged violations only on the invitation of the government concerned – which in most cases was also the party towards which the accusations were directed. This system was a result of the fact that most governments were still intolerant of any interference in matters which they regarded as internal affairs. As soon as the Commission started work it was swamped with an almost impossibly high number of complaints, but its first attempts to tackle them demonstrated its utter powerlessness as soon as a government turned down the Committee's offer to investigate. *Ibid.*
116. The ILO–UN Commission did not really resurface until the 1960s. During the period under review here it carried out wide-ranging investigations in Japan (1958–64), Greece (1965), Spain (1968) and Greece again (1969). See Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 236 ff.
117. Between 1951 and 1959 the CFA dealt with 565 cases of alleged violations of freedom of association in 65 countries. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 268.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

119. ILC, 31st Session (1948), RoP, pp. 234, 474.
120. At the same time as the South African initiative failed, a motion by two Latin American Governments proposing that the colonial clause be suspended with regard to the issue of freedom of association, in view of its particular significance, was frustrated by the resistance of the colonial powers. The metropoles apparently did not share this view of the principle's importance. *Ibid.*, p. 480.
121. Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 84), in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 731–35.
122. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), *ibid.*, p. 748.
123. Convention No. 84, *ibid.*, 731.
124. See F. Cooper: *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 408–50.
125. *Ibid.*
126. A prime example was Kenya, where during the Mau Mau state of emergency the trade unions represented the only possible channel of organized opposition. See Y. Richards: *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and international labor leader* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), pp. 100–76.
127. A general evaluation of the position of trade unions in Asia was contained in the memorandum "Trade Unions in Asia" (anon.), 19 Dec. 1953, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/22 (J1), WFTU, Relations with the ILO, 1948–56.
128. Duncan Watson (CO) to Robert Gavin, 19 Jan. 1952, in ILOA NL 1002: Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Second Session (General).
129. Position paper of the CO for a meeting with Robert Gavin, 6 May 1952, in PRO CO 859/364, Activities of the ILO Committee of Experts on Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, 1952.
130. Powers such as Portugal which were not willing to respect the principle of freedom of association even in the home country were certainly not interested in securing it for their colonial subjects. The colonial powers were put off ratifying in other cases because of legislation in place in one or more of their territories that created a "colour bar" between Europeans and non-Europeans, something which the Convention expressly forbade. This was the case in Algeria and Morocco, the white settler colonies under British rule in southern Africa, and the Belgian Congo. Britain, France and Belgium did eventually sign in the mid-1950s, but with many limitations to the scope of the document, especially in Africa. See ILO: *List of ratifications by Convention and by State* (Geneva, 2000), p. 95. On the limitations and restrictions, see the COESP's report of 1958, in GB, 138th Session (1958), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Fifth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, pp. 30–36.
131. GB, 131st Session (1956), RoP, Appendix XIV, *Report of the Third Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, p. 145.
132. The UN observer Wilfrid Benson found the COESP's findings on this point "somehow dim". The report had conceded that the degree to which trade unions could be regarded as useful participants in industrial relations depended to a large extent on their level of education, economic position and social experience. Benson argued that this, at best, illustrated the need for more education and training, but could in no way be used to justify racially discriminatory legislation. The COESP was too hesitant on this point for Benson's liking. See Benson's report, 12 Jan. 56, in UNA RAG 2/77/11: International Labour Office,

- Committees and Commissions: Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Dakar, 5–12 Dec. 1955.
133. GB, 138th Session (1958), RoP, Appendix III, *Report of the Fifth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories*, pp. 30–6.
 134. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
 135. GB, 138th Session (1958), RoP, p. 22.
 136. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 137. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
 138. On the tripartism dispute, see: Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 290–311.
 139. McNair had been the President of the International Court of Justice and was a long-standing member of the CEACR. His two colleagues on the committee were the Mexican expert on international law, de Alba, and the Pakistani A.R. Cornelius. For the resolution regarding the appointment of the committee, see GB, 128th Session (1955), RoP, pp. 58 ff.
 140. The McNair Report, in *OB* (1956), Vol. 39, No. 9.
 141. The discussion is summarized in Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 127–31.
 142. *OB* (1956), Vol. 39, No. 9, para. 343.
 143. ARC 2 (1950), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, pp. 62–85; ARC 3 (1953), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, pp. 53–60; ARC 4 (1957), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, pp. 58–61.
 144. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, p. 15.
 145. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 146. At the AFC in Tokyo in 1953, the WFTU representative Woddis named and shamed India, Pakistan, Japan, Malaya, Ceylon and the Philippines as countries which placed restrictions on WFTU member associations: ARC 3 (1953), RoP, p. 25.
 147. See the contributions of ICFTU and IFCTU representatives, *ibid.*, p. 73 ff., 79 ff.
 148. ARC 2 (1950), RoP, p. 113.
 149. ARC 4 (1957), Report IV, *Labour–management relations*.
 150. ARC 4 (1957), RoP, p. 6.
 151. ARC 4 (1957), Appendix VI, *Labour–management relations*, pp. 183–89.
 152. All the representatives of international trade union federations, regardless of political orientation, made this connection. See the comments of WFTU, ICFTU and IFCTU delegates, ARC 4 (1957), RoP, pp. 92, 94, 104.
 153. Rens described his encounters with government officials in Burma and (South) Vietnam as “the hardest and most unfriendly experiences” of his entire ILO career to date. Rens to Morse, 9 Nov. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/16, Mission of Mr Rens to Asia, 1959.
 154. In a report published by the ILO to mark the tenth anniversary of the UDHR, David Morse insisted that the modernization process could succeed only once the elementary principles of the ILO had become legal reality. The report was published as ILO: *The ILO in a changing world* (Geneva, 1958), p. 90.
 155. The importance Morse attached to this programme is evident from notes he made in 1956: “It will show people and groups how to get on with each other. If this will fail it all will fail and people will be forced into resignation, and this is what by my very nature and inner workings I regard as the opposite of all that men need and must have if they are to reach the plateau of living.” Notes by Morse, 29 Apr. 1956, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
 156. Cole’s report was published as “Improving labour–management cooperation”, in *International Labour Review* (1956), Vol. 5, pp. 483–500.

157. See E.B. Haas: *Beyond the nation state: Functionalism and international organization* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 184–88.
158. See Chapter 7, “The social side of development: The Technical Assistance Programme in the 1960s”.
159. Notes by Morse, 20 May 1959, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.

7 A New Power: The ILO and the Growing Importance of the Developing World in the 1960s

1. Macmillan’s speech to the South African parliament, 2 Mar. 1960, in A.N. Porter and A.J. Stockwell (eds): *British imperial policy and decolonization 1938–1964*, Vol. 2: 1952–1964 (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), Document 77: The wind of change: speech by the Rt Hon. Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister, to both houses of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town, 3 Feb. 1960, pp. 522–32 at p. 525.
2. With one exception (Cyprus), all the members were newly independent African states: Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Chad and both Congos (the former French colony and the former Belgian Congo). See the list in V.-Y. Ghebali: *The International Labour Organization: A case study on the evolution of UN specialized agencies* (Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989), pp. 117 ff.
3. The first post-colonial states to join the Organization were Pakistan and Syria, in 1947: *ibid.*
4. ILC, 48th Session (1964), RoP, p. 402.
5. Between 1958 and 1962 a number of other international financing bodies and agencies were set up, some within the GATT framework or under the auspices of the EEC. See H.-I. Schmidt and H. Pharo: “European development policy”, in *Contemporary European History* (2003), Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 389.
6. Morse on a meeting with Paul Hoffman (Director of SUNFED), 29 May 1959, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
7. Resolution concerning the work of the International Labour Organization in Africa, in AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, Appendix III, *Resolutions*, p. 257.
8. AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, p. 24.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
10. In Guinea, for instance, although the ILO was able to support a couple of projects in areas such as social security and vocational training immediately after the country had attained its independence, the Government refused the grants it was offered to send labour administration specialists to European educational institutions on the grounds that what was taught there was incompatible with the goals of African socialism. Warren Furth (ILO, Africa Section) to Morse, 24 Nov. 1959, Mr Orizet’s Mission to Guinea, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1, Africa: General.
11. He did, however, indicate that the ILO would not ignore the new members’ calls for change and that it intended to place more emphasis on involving developing countries in the way TAP projects were carried out. He underlined this by announcing that the term “technical assistance” would be replaced by “technical co-operation”. AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, pp. 233–40.
12. Resolution concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa, *ibid.*, Appendix III, *Resolutions*, p. 255.

13. Ghebali: *The ILO*, p. 27.
14. E. Luard: *History of the United Nations*, Vol. 2: *The age of decolonization 1955–1965* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989), p. 186.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
16. See *ibid.*, pp. 180–87.
17. The venue originally planned for the Conference was the Congolese capital Leopoldville (Kinshasa), but turmoil in the country made this impossible. Lagos, where the ILO had a field office, was an obvious alternative. The invitation came from the Nigerian Government itself. J.M. Johnson (Nigerian Minister of Labour) to Jenks, 26 Sep. 1960, in ILOA MF Z 10/3/13, First African Regional Conference, Lagos, 1959–61.
18. GB, 144th Session (1960), RoP, p. 74.
19. AFRC 1 (1960), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, pp. 4–5.
20. AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, p. 6.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
23. Foreign Service despatch from the US Embassy in Lagos to the Department of Labor, 13 Dec. 1960, in NARA RG 174.5 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs), B 61, General correspondence, 1945–62.
24. Israel had sent an observer delegation to the Conference. The country showed an active interest in the revolution sweeping through Africa, expressed support for and solidarity with the decolonization movement and provided the governments of the newly emerging countries with practical help in a variety of areas. It advised them on the establishment and maintenance of the armed forces, for example, or gave technical assistance in increasing agricultural productivity. Israel's commitment was also motivated by foreign policy interests. After the Suez crisis and the deterioration in relations with its Arab neighbours, the country's interest in Africa increased. For a general background, see J. Peters: *Israel and Africa: The problematic friendship* (Reading, University of Reading Academic Press, 1992).
25. Foreign Service despatch from the US Embassy in Lagos to the Department of Labor, 13 Dec. 1960, in NARA RG 174.5 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs), B 61, General correspondence, 1945–62.
26. *Ibid.*
27. On the role of the UN in the Congo crisis, see the – somewhat polemical – study by Ludo de Witte: *The assassination of Lumumba* (New York/London, Verso, 2001).
28. The head of the ILO mission was Robert Gavin. The correspondence between Gavin and Morse from the autumn of 1960 to the spring of 1961 provides an excellent insight into the Congo crisis and the helplessness felt by the staff of international organizations caught up in the turmoil of war. See ILOA MF Z1/87/1/1, Relations with Congo (Leopoldville), 1960–61.
29. Khrushchev was personally responsible for tabling the motion regarding the anti-colonial declaration at the 1960 General Assembly. At the same time, a discussion began on the reform of the UN system, in which the developing countries and the socialist states campaigned – without success – for the General Assembly's powers to be strengthened vis-à-vis the Security Council. See Luard: *History of the UN*, Vol. 2, pp. 180–87.
30. See Morse's remarks, 15 Feb. 1961, in DAMP, B 89, F 14, Reflections.
31. At this point in time Morse was actively engaged, as part of the “how to defeat communism” quest, in a project aimed at creating a “Cominform of the free

- world" which would enable Western governments to develop one common policy regarding their relations with developing countries, something Morse believed in strongly. For detailed memorandum on this project, see *ibid.*
32. E.C. Lorenz: *Defining global justice: The history of US international labor standards policy* (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 189–94. Here lay one of the reasons why, with the exception of a short phase of improvement under Kennedy, relations between the US Government and the ILO always remained tense. When, in 1970, under Morse's successor Wilfred Jenks, the ILO finally did nominate a Soviet Deputy Director-General, Congress froze the United States' payments to the ILO. And when the ILO condemned Israel's occupation of the West Bank in the 1970s, the United States (under President Carter) even left the Organization for a short period (1976–80), again spurred on by the AFL–CIO and George Meany. See M.F. Imber: *The USA, ILO, UNESCO and IAEA: Politicization and withdrawal in the specialized agencies* (Basingstoke/New York, Palgrave/Macmillan, 1989). There is rich material on the difficult relationship between Meany and Morse throughout Morse's term as head of the ILO in various files within the David A. Morse papers at Princeton.
 33. The 24 (permanent and non-permanent) Government seats in the Governing Body were now shared among four Western European delegates, three Eastern Europeans, two North Americans, four South Americans, five Asians, five Africans and a delegate from the Middle East. The Governing Body had already undergone two reforms. Originally, in 1919, it had consisted of 12 members (nine of whom were European). It was extended to 32 members in 1934 and enlarged again in 1956 by eight delegates to a total of 40. See Ghebali: *The ILO*, p. 143.
 34. There were no changes to the ten permanent seats held by the "states of chief industrial importance", so the industrialized West could still exert its dominant influence.
 35. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, pp. 220–28.
 36. In 1960 the Portuguese dictator Salazar was quoted by *The Times'* Africa correspondent as appealing to the Portuguese to stand firm and wait for the winds of change to die down: "Stand firm, stand firm! Nothing more is to be needed for the storm to subside." "Standing firm on shifting sands", in *The Times*, 23 Feb. 1960, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa: General.
 37. Salazar told Morse he was convinced "qu'il ne soit bientôt trop tard pour assurer la sauvegarde de la civilisation occidentale" if Lisbon did not stick to its chosen path. Portugal was the last of the colonial powers to refuse the ILO's help under the TAP. Minutes of a meeting between David Morse and President Salazar, 1 Feb. 1960, in DAMP, B 27, F 5, Entretien Morse–Mathias.
 38. P.G. Lauren: *Power and prejudice: The politics and diplomacy of racial discrimination*, 2nd edn (Boulder, Colo./San Francisco, Westview, 1996), pp. 240–41.
 39. By this time Portugal was supported by only a handful of states including South Africa, Spain, and the NATO partners Britain, France and the United States. The Kennedy Administration imposed a temporary weapons embargo on Portugal, but this was soon removed. See memorandum from US Department of Labor (anon.), "Background of the controversy over Angola between Portugal and the UN and ILO", 9 Dec. 1962, in NARA RG 174.5 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs), B 27, General correspondence, 1953–67.
 40. Pretoria reacted to criticism from the Commonwealth by cutting ties to the British throne and declaring South Africa a republic in 1961.
 41. Summarized in Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 83–84.
 42. Jenks to Morse, 23 Dec. 1959, in ILOA MF Z 1/1/1/13, Mr Jenks – Africa.

43. Voices within the ILO had been questioning the rightfulness of the accreditation of South Africa's Workers' delegates since 1959, as the country always sent only representatives of whites-only trade unions. However, since there had been no associations in South Africa that were representative of the whole population since 1953 (which was when Africans had been banned from joining the unions), protest was fruitless. See A. Alcock: *History of the International Labour Organization* (London, Macmillan, 1970), p. 330.
44. AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, p. 111.
45. The resolution also called upon the Governing Body to advise South Africa to leave the Organization. See the resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Union of South Africa from membership of the ILO, on the grounds of the "apartheid" (racial discrimination) policy practised by the Union Government, in ILC, 45th Session (1961), RoP, Appendix IV, *Report of the Resolutions Committee*, pp. 696–97.
46. ILC, 45th Session (1961), RoP, p. 575.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 577.
48. Lauren: *Power and prejudice*, pp. 208–40.
49. See, for example, the comments of the US, British, French and Peruvian delegates in ILC, 45th Session (1961), RoP, pp. 575–613.
50. Almost all the Western Governments' and Employers' delegates abstained, with a few significant exceptions that were due in every case to specific circumstances affecting the position of the governments in question on the matter. Israel voted with the African and Asian states for historical reasons: it saw itself as having a special responsibility in the fight against racial discrimination, as the Israeli Government delegate Bar-Niv emphasized. (Bar-Niv also made explicit reference to the Eichmann trial which was concurrently under way in Israel: *ibid.*, p. 583.)
51. De Wet (South African Secretary of State) to Morse, 24 Mar. 1962, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1: South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
52. "That ILO rat", *Daily Times* (Nigeria), 17 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/2 (J.2), South Africa: Issue and events subsequent to the 47th Session of the International Labour Conference – Press clippings on the subject of South Africa.
53. ILC, 47th Session (1963), RoP, pp. 134–41.
54. David Morse's statement to the Selection Committee, 14 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/25/1, South African Issue at 1963 International Labour Conference.
55. ILC, 47th Session (1963), RoP, p. 145.
56. Morse raised the possibility of bringing a new resolution and suggested challenging the very accreditation of the delegates to the next Conference. In the meantime, the African nations should bring the question of South African membership before the UN and ask the Security Council to examine the issue. Concerted efforts could then be made in the executive committees of all the international organizations to change the constitutions of such organizations with a view to enabling South Africa to be barred. See the Statement of points submitted by Mr David Morse, Secretary-General of the 47th Session of the International Labour Conference, to the tripartite delegation appointed by the African group at a meeting called by the Secretary-General at 9.30 a.m. on 17 June 1963, as a legally possible course of action which could be taken by African states, 17 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
57. Divisions within the African group were caused partly by the fact that the delegation which Morse met had no powers to enter into an agreement with the

- Director-General – it had only come for information purposes. Minutes of a meeting between Morse and the representatives of the African group at the ILC, 17 June 1963, *ibid.*
58. Press release by the Nigerian Ministry of Information, 17 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/2 (J.2), South Africa: Issue and events subsequent to the 47th Session of the International Labour Conference – Press clippings on the subject of South Africa.
 59. Morse's hasty attempts to solve the problem simply and cleanly by persuading the South Africans to withdraw from the Conference in order to avoid any more difficulties were unsuccessful. After he had met the African delegation for the second time that day, and been told that if the South African delegate was allowed to speak the Africans would certainly leave, Jenks saw the South African Government adviser Oxley and suggested that South Africa might like to withdraw from the Conference. Pretoria, however, remained firm. See Morse's meeting with the African delegation, 17 June 1963, and minutes of two meetings between Jenks and Oxley, 17 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
 60. See the minutes of Morse's meeting with the three vice-chairmen before the plenary session, 18 June 1963, *ibid.*
 61. ILC, 47th Session (1963), RoP, p. 168.
 62. "Morse's finest hour", *Washington Daily News*, 20 June 1963, in DAMP B 11, F7: South Africa 1963/64
 63. ILC, 47th Session (1963), RoP, pp. 169–72.
 64. See the announcement by the UAR representative, Kamel, *ibid.*; also the declaration by Dr El Wakil (Permanent Representative of the Arab League in Geneva), 20 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
 65. Extract from the press conference given by Mr Camara, Government delegate of Guinea, 19 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
 66. On the same evening, Morse summoned delegates from the United States, Britain and India and asked them for support in persuading the other countries to participate in approving the budget. They assented. Morse's meeting with American, British and Indian delegates, 19 June 1963, *ibid.*
 67. The Soviet Union's attempts to use the South African crisis to paralyse the ILO apparently stemmed from its dissatisfaction with the Office's suggestions for structural reform, combined with its assumption that if the Organization could be weakened, the Soviet Union would have more of a chance of pushing through its own demands. Particularly perfidious, in the eyes of Western observers, was the tactic employed by Slipchenko. As the Vice-President of the Conference, he had a right of veto which he exercised twice to block resolutions calling for more far-reaching measures against South Africa. One resolution, put forward by Panama's Government delegate Calamari, called upon the UN to examine South Africa's status; the other, presented by the French Workers' delegate in the name of the ICFTU, demanded that the Governing Body amend the Constitution over the year that followed to make it possible to bar South Africa. By rejecting these resolutions, Slipchenko apparently wanted to demonstrate to the developing countries the ILO's incapacity to act. For the draft resolutions, see *ibid.*
 68. The Workers' group did, however, express concern about the initiative's coming from Morse personally when the matter was actually the responsibility of the Governing Body. Morse responded by saying that he felt a "moral obligation

- towards the African States to submit proposals of [his] own". See the minutes of Morse's meetings with Employers' and Workers' groups, 24 June 1963; with Government representatives from Western and neutral states, 24 June 1963; and with the representatives of socialist states, 24 June 1963, all in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
69. GB, 156th Session (1963), RoP, pp. 13–28. 40 ff.
 70. Morse had received information that the Algerian Secretary of Labour, Boumaza, wanted to put forward new proposals about how to proceed on South Africa in the session of the Governing Body that was then under way. As Algeria had been a leader of the anti-colonial camp since gaining independence in 1962 and was one of its most radical representatives, the Office expected that such proposals would be very far-reaching. Minutes of an Office Cabinet meeting, 27 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
 71. Minutes of a meeting between Morse, members of the Governing Body and U Thant, 23 Sep. 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/2, South African issue: events subsequent to 47th Session of International Labour Conference.
 72. Despite the bitterness that its position caused among African countries, the United States spoke out decisively, in the 1963 session and beyond, against banning South Africa. Even the Kennedy Administration, though extremely critical of apartheid, was cautious in its treatment of South Africa, not least because the civil rights situation on home soil was hardly exemplary. Soon after the end of the 1963 Conference, Kennedy declared "that it would seem unwise to me to expel nations from the United Nations – because the hand will move, others will come, and the United Nations will be fragmented". Press conference, 17 July 1963, *ibid.*
 73. The plan was extremely detailed and contained practical suggestions on how to combat the apartheid system in all areas relevant to the ILO. See ILO: *Apartheid in labour matters: ILO policy statements and reports concerning apartheid in labour matters in South Africa, 1964–1966* (Geneva, 1966), pp. 1–45.
 74. De Wet to Morse, 3 Nov. 1964, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1 (J.1), South Africa: Issue and events subsequent to the 47th Session of the International Labour Conference.
 75. Minutes of a meeting between Cabinet members and the directors of the field offices in Lagos, Dar-es-Salaam and Istanbul, 22 July 1963, *ibid.*
 76. In 1965, for example, Morse urgently requested an ICFTU delegation to draw a line between the exceptional case of South Africa and that of Portuguese Africa (and Portugal and Spain). Morse in discussion with an ICFTU delegation, 24 Mar. 1965, in ILOA MF Z 11/2/9/1, ICFTU.
 77. See Chapter 8.
 78. For a summary, see memorandum by the Office (anon.), "Expulsion of members from the International Labour Organisation", 19 June 1963, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/1, South African issue on the agenda of 1963 International Labour Conference.
 79. Nanda to Morse, 9 Sep. 1963, *ibid.*
 80. ILC, 48th Session (1964), RoP, pp. 797–98.
 81. See memorandum "The ILO and South Africa", 26 Apr. 1966, in ILOA MF Z 6/2/65/2, South Africa issue: events subsequent to 47th Session of International Labour Conference.
 82. Resolution 1710 (XVI) of the UN General Assembly, 19 Dec. 1961. The proposal was officially launched by the American President, John F. Kennedy. The

- General Assembly's primary goal in the "development decade" was to increase economic growth in developing countries, although the campaign encompassed all the UN's fields of activity. See L. Emmerij, R. Jolly and T.G. Weiss: *Ahead of the curve? UN ideas and global challenges* (Bloomington/Indianapolis, Ind., Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 44–50.
83. Raul Prebisch was the chairman of ECLA and later of UNCTAD. Hans Singer was head of the Department of Economic Affairs in the UN Secretariat.
 84. Schmidt and Pharo: "European development policy", pp. 389–90.
 85. The multilateralization of development aid through the World Bank had the added advantage, in the eyes of the United States, of facilitating the integration of the colonial powers, which had always preferred bilateral assistance and directed it at their former or existing colonies. It also allowed for the incorporation of the Federal Republic of Germany, a potential donor country which up until now had stood on the sidelines of the international development effort. The beginnings of West German development aid were thus closely connected to the American initiative (*ibid.*). On how the Federal Republic of Germany was incorporated, see also H.-I. Schmidt: "Pushed to the front: The foreign assistance policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1958–1971", in *Contemporary European History* (2003), Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 473–507.
 86. See R. Packenham: *Liberal America and the Third World: Political development ideas in foreign aid and social science* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 59–85.
 87. Resolution concerning the stability of world commodity markets and their influence on levels of living and employment, in AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, Appendix VI, *Resolutions and conclusions adopted by the Conference*, pp. 280–81; Resolution concerning measures to promote stable prices of basic commodities in world markets and other measures for the effective utilisation of resources and the improvement of living standards, in ARC 5 (1962), RoP, Appendix VII, *Resolutions and observations adopted by the Conference*.
 88. The issue of price stability for raw materials was an important one for the authors of the Declaration of Philadelphia in the light of the severe problems caused by the world economic crisis of the 1930s. See para. IV of the Declaration.
 89. A Ceylonian Workers' delegate reminded the Organization of the "moral responsibility cast on the ILO to assume a more active role" and called upon it to stand up for the interests of the primary producers. ARC 5 (1962), RoP, p. 84.
 90. On the growing conflict of interests which the national trade union confederations of the industrialized West faced in the 1960s with regard to the developing countries' demands for industrialization, see J.D. French: *International trade unionism and the fight to reshape the world that trade built: The fight for international worker rights in a globalizing world, 1959–1999*, paper presented to International Conference of Labour and Social History, "Labour and social movements in a globalizing world system", Linz, 11–14 Sep. 2003.
 91. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, p. 449.
 92. UNIDO threatened about 25 per cent of the ILO's activities (especially within the Manpower Programme). Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 349.
 93. Discussion between Morse and Harlan Cleveland (US Assistant Secretary of State for International Affairs) 1 Oct. 1964, in ILOA MF Z 1/61/1/1 (J.5), ILO relations with USA, Johnson administration.
 94. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, p. 350.

95. ILO: *The role of the International Labour Organization in the promotion of economic growth and social progress in developing countries* (Geneva, 1961), p. 24.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 24 ff.
97. For an outline of the debates surrounding development policy in the transition process from colonial to post-colonial discourse, see Cooper, "Modernizing bureaucrats, backward Africans, and the development concept", in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds): *International development and the social sciences: Essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997).
98. ILO: *A great adventure of our time: Technical cooperation and the ILO* (Geneva, 1962), pp. 7–10. See also Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 338–39.
99. Morse criticized, for example, ECLA's development economic approach under its chairman Raul Prebisch, one of the "fathers of dependency theory". Minutes of a meeting between Morse, Rens and Prebisch, 13 July 1961, in ILOA MF Z 14/2/10, ECLA.
100. D.A. Morse: "The World Employment Programme", in *International Labour Review* (1968), Vol. 97, No. 6, pp. 518–19.
101. ILO: *The role of the International Labour Organization in the promotion of economic growth and social progress in developing countries*, p. 22.
102. ILC, 45th Session (1961), RoP, pp. 900–04.
103. AFRC 2 (1964), RoP, p. 196.
104. GB, 160th Session (1964), RoP, p. 120.
105. Alcock: *History of the ILO*, pp. 354 ff.
106. Two years later, the Asian Regional Conference in Tokyo launched the Asian Manpower Plan, an adaptation of the Ottawa Plan. At its meeting in Dakar in 1967, the African Advisory Committee also laid the foundations for an African Jobs and Skills Programme which was finally launched at the third African Regional Conference in Accra in 1969. *Ibid.*, pp. 358 ff.
107. ILC, 51st Session (1967), RoP, pp. 412–13.
108. D.A. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO and its role in the world community* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 89.
109. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
110. Other organizations involved in the implementation of the Ottawa Plan were ECLA, UNESCO, FAO, UNIDO, the American-led Alliance for Progress, the Institute for Latin American Integration and the Inter-American Development Bank. ECAFE, FAO, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNICEF, WHO, the Colombo Plan, the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning were involved in the Asian Manpower Plan.
111. See Morse's reminiscences in oral history interviews with David Morse, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University 1981, carried out by Peter Jessup, Columbia University, in Washington, DC, 19 July, 25 July, 2 Aug., 9 Aug., 11 Oct., 25 Oct. 1980 and 11 Jan., 7 Mar. 1981 (OHIM 3), p. 66. On how the WEP fitted in with the UN's strategy change towards a poverty-centred approach, see especially Emmerij, Jolly and Weiss: *Ahead of the curve?*, pp. 60–80; C.P. Oman and G. Wignarajan: *The post-war evolution of development thinking* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 99–100.
112. ILO: *Africa and the ILO* (Geneva, 1960), pp. 23–24.
113. Morse had to work hard to justify this proposal to the FAO, which was not keen on the idea of the ILO encroaching on what was traditionally its territory.

- Morse to Sen (Director-General of the FAO), 21 Apr. 1960, in ILOA MF Z 14/5/1, FAO, 1948–65.
114. ILO: *Contribution of the ILO to the raising of incomes and living conditions in rural communities, with particular reference to countries in the process of development* (Geneva, 1960).
 115. See ILO: *The role of agricultural organisations in promoting economic and social development in rural areas* (Geneva, 1965). Over the course of the 1960s the Organization also tackled more and more politically sensitive issues such as land reform.
 116. That the Office perceived a need to make this kind of statement is illustrated by the special report which the Director-General presented to the ILC at the height of the development crisis. See ILC, 50th Session (1966), Report VIII/2, *The role of the ILO in the industrialisation of developing countries* (Geneva, 1967).
 117. The emphasis on human resources was a consolidation of the Manpower Programme. As well as continuing its work in fields such as vocational training, the ILO now moved into a range of new areas such as management training. By 1968 the ILO was running the largest management development programme in the world. See Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO*, pp. 50–1.
 118. Even before the Centre was set up – from the early days of the TAP, in fact – the ILO had been providing grants for skilled workers and civil servants from developing countries to visit industrialized nations to attend colleges and universities or for on-the-job training. The new Centre was an internal extension of this area of work, but with the added advantage, from the point of view of the Office, that visitors to it could be given a thorough grounding in the goals of the ILO. Turin was thus an important element in the “educational approach” which Morse had postulated at the end of the 1950s. Ghebal: *The ILO*, p. 258.
 119. Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122); Employment Policy Recommendation, 1964 (No. 122); in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 1249–52, 1253–66.
 120. They contained measures which were to be taken on both the national and international levels, and covered areas ranging from investment and income policy, through special methods for creating industrial and agricultural employment, to the carrying out of demographic studies. They also reflected the developing countries’ view that international agreements on raw materials prices were a precondition for the success of employment policies. The unusually extensive Recommendation, which made very detailed proposals concerning employment policy, also contained an annex on planning, which indicated how employment targets could be integrated into general economic and social policy. *Ibid.*, pp. 1265–66.
 121. *Ibid.*, pp. 1249–52.
 122. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO*, pp. 83 ff.
 123. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–4.
 124. Memorandum by Morse, “Observations on the ‘Plan of Attack’ proposed by Sir Douglas Copland for the initial activities of the International Institute for Labour Studies”, 12 June 12/6/1961, in ILOA MF Z 11/7/3, ILS, 1961–68.
 125. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO*, p. 70.
 126. Memorandum by Cox, “Aims and purposes of the ILS”, 15 July 1965, in ILOA MF Z 11/7/3, ILS, 1961–68.
 127. Morse to Kerr, 6 June 1961, in ILOA MF Z 11/7/3, ILS, 1961–68.

128. Council members included Clark Kerr, Charles Myers, Frederick Harbison and John Dunlop, the authors of *Industrialism and industrial man*: C. Kerr et al.: *Industrialism and industrial man* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1960). On industrialism and the relationship between it and Morse's thinking on modernization see Chapter 4, "‘Help them move the ILO way’: The ILO's integrated approach to development".
129. Memorandum by Cox, "Aims and purposes of the ILS", 15 July 1965, in ILOA MF Z 11/7/3, ILS, 1961–68.

8 An Intellectual Fashion: Human Rights Standards as a Barrier to Development?

1. G. Weaver: *The ILO and human rights* (Geneva, ILO, 1968), p. 24.
2. Speech by Wilfred Jenks, in ILOA NL 1004, Fourth Session of the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Dakar, 1955.
3. ILO: *Africa and the ILO* (Geneva, 1960), p. 21.
4. ILC, 46th Session (1962) Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 6.
5. Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117), in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991* (Geneva, 1992), pp. 1155–62.
6. The revised Convention also contained participatory elements, including, for example, a reference to freedom of association. Resolution concerning the revision of the Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947 (No. 82), AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, Appendix III, *Resolutions*, pp. 261 ff.
7. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, Appendix XIII, *Revision of the Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947, by the elimination of the provisions which limit its application to non-metropolitan territories*, p. 815.
8. Resolution concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa, in AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, Appendix III, *Resolutions*, pp. 256 ff.
9. Resolution concerning measures to promote stable prices of basic commodities in world markets and other measures for the effective utilisation of resources and improvement of living standards, in ARC V (1962), RoP, Appendix VII, *Resolutions and observations adopted by the Conference*, p. 187.
10. Two-thirds of ratifications between 1963 and 1983 were by developing countries. See V.-Y. Ghebali: *The International Labour Organization: A case study on the evolution of UN specialized agencies* (Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989), p. 213. See also the list of ratifications in the appendix, arranged by country and date.
11. Many of the Conventions adopted after 1960 contained optional or alternative passages which allowed them to be implemented either partially or gradually. Another favoured technique was to adopt a Convention and a Recommendation on the same topic at the same time, the Convention containing general principles and the Recommendation detailing how the standard was to be implemented. This approach soon became customary practice, despite the initial reservations of the Western Workers and Employers.
12. T. M'boya: *Freedom and after?* (London, Little, Brown, 1963), p. 194.
13. For a more general discussion, see A.A. An-Na'Im (ed.): *Human rights in cross-cultural perspectives: A quest for a consensus* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); for a critical historical view on the rise of cultural relativism in human rights discourse in general, see R. Afshari: *Human rights in*

Iran: *The abuse of cultural relativism* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

14. ILC, 46th Session (1962), Report I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 6.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, RoP, pp. 449–53.
17. The Governing Body had set up a new commission immediately after the Convention was adopted, again under Paul Ruegger, to maintain an element of continuity in the treatment of the issue. However, its report, published in 1959, provided no new insights. GB, 137th Session (1957), RoP, pp. 52–61. *Report of the Ruegger Committee*, GB, 142nd Session (1959), RoP, pp. 137–89.
18. According to the Committee's report, forms of forced labour were to be found all over the world, in independent countries and colonial territories alike. Labour services under the auspices of the military, as had been French colonial practice, were found in 1962 in Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali and Senegal. Emergency legislation was used to draw on compulsory labour in colonial territories such as British Guyana and in newly independent nations such as Kenya, Zanzibar, Singapore and India. "Smaller communal services" formed the legislative basis for recruiting forced labour to maintain infrastructure in countries including Burma, Congo (Leopoldville), Liberia, Nigeria and the Sudan. Political systems of forced labour were found in, among other countries, Chad, Gabon, Liberia, Mali, Upper Volta, Ghana, Malaya and the Gambia. *Ibid.*
19. Gabon, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Upper Volta, *ibid.*
20. Israel had incurred the wrath of the CEACR itself in 1958 because of its youth labour service, Nahal. As the British ambassador in Tel Aviv remarked, the country now risked coming into the sights of a campaign pursued mainly by its Arab neighbours to make it "appear as if it were encouraging forced labour practice elsewhere – particularly in Africa, where it has enjoyed such success in making friends and providing technical aid". Marshall (Tel Aviv Embassy) to Wallis (MOL), 12 Sep. 1962, in PRO LAB 13/1852, International Labour Organisation: Correspondence concerning the application of I.L. Conventions on Forced Labour (No. 29 and No. 105) in Israel, and in the Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and certain other French-speaking African countries, and Afghanistan, 1962–63.
21. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), in ILO: *Conventions and Recommendations*, p. 1016.
22. See ILC, 46th Session (1962), Report III, *Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations*, p. 687.
23. Another thing that particularly irked the representatives of the states in question (all of them former French colonies) was the fact that by accusing them of operating a system of forced labour disguised as military service, the CEACR was in effect accusing them of continuing the much-hated and bitterly resisted colonial institution the *deuxième portion du contingent* (see Prologue). The representative of the Côte d'Ivoire demanded that a clear distinction be drawn between "on the one hand, service imposed on the second group of conscripts for public works alone, decided upon by foreign authorities and of no profit to the individual, which was recognised in the past to be forced labour and on the other hand, civic service established as a prolongation of military service, benefiting the young people themselves by giving them vocational training and teaching them techniques benefiting the nation as a whole". All the other African Governments also objected to the lumping together of the *deuxième portion* and the youth labour services. *Ibid.*, RoP, pp. 36–37, 165, 255, 358.

24. Michael Mahoney points out, on the example of Mozambique, that Portugal's attempts to justify its continued rule despite the progress of decolonization in Africa took on an increasingly universalistic tone. Even the Portuguese now based their claim to political control on a universalistic "development mandate". According to this view, while the new African States were bound to degenerate into poverty and chaos, having obtained independence fully unprepared for it, Portugal would lead the populations of its African provinces out of their primitiveness and into the modern age as Portuguese "citizens". See M. Mahoney, "Estado novo, homem novo (new state, new man): Colonial and anti-colonial development ideologies in Mozambique, 1930–1977", in D.C. Engerman et al. (eds): *Staging growth: Modernization, development, and the global Cold War* (Amherst, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), pp. 165–99.
25. Complaints could be made only when both the complainant and the accused had signed the Convention at issue. See *Constitution of the International Labour Organisation*, article 26.
26. The two other members were Isaac Forster from Senegal and Enrique Armand-Ugón from Uruguay, both experts on international law.
27. The limitations imposed on this type of investigation by the ILO Constitution were the main reason why it ended without Portugal being condemned in clear terms. The report was the result of a three-week, 8,700-mile trip taken by the members of the committee through Angola and Mozambique. They visited mines, factories and farms, and – despite being escorted at all times by officials from the Portuguese colonial ministry and the local administrative authorities – tried again and again to speak to the workers. In the spirit of earlier ILO documents, the situation in Portuguese Africa was branded "backward". It was pointed out to the authorities that "no compulsion is necessary where conditions of employment are sufficiently attractive". However, the committee found that although the lack of inspection of working conditions on the ground was in need of change, the texts of the laws themselves were acceptable. In the absence of co-determination and any effective supervisory mechanisms, however, coercion was almost inevitable. It was therefore of prime importance that trade union freedom be respected and a system of labour inspection set up. Report of the Commission, in *OB* (1962), Vol. 45, No. 2, Supplement II.
28. GB, 151st Session (1962), RoP, p. 15.
29. The Portuguese Government representative, de Paula Coelho, was generally pleased with the report, despite "a few factual errors and some mistaken interpretations": *ibid.*, p. 25.
30. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, p. 287.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
33. The Commission was headed by Enrique Armand-Ugón from Uruguay. The other members were the Sri Lankan judge T. Goonetilleke and E. Castren from Finland.
34. The forms in question were porter services, work for local dignitaries and the compulsory cultivation of certain crops. All in all, the report expressed dismay at the situation in Liberia and called for the country's laws to be adapted quickly in line with the ratified norm. The report appears in *OB* (1963), Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 156–80.
35. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, p. 225.

36. Reminiscences of a British participant in a meeting with Valticos during the Dar-es-Salaam Conference: Foggon (Department of Technical Cooperation, FO) to Wallis (MOL), 16 Jan. 1963, in PRO LAB 13/1852, International Labour Organisation: Correspondence concerning the application of I.L. Conventions on Forced Labour (No. 29 and No. 105) in Israel, and in the Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and certain other French-speaking African countries, and Afghanistan, 1962–63.
37. King (Conakry Embassy) to Millard (FO), 19 Dec. 1962, *ibid.*
38. Stratton (Foreign Office) to Ravensdale (British Embassy in Abidjan), 21 Dec. 1962, *ibid.*
39. Foggon (FO) to Wallis (MOL), 16 Jan. 1963, *ibid.*
40. King (Conakry Embassy) to Millard (FO), 19 Dec. 1962, *ibid.*
41. Even the ambassador to Senegal, whose government was otherwise extremely well disposed towards the ILO, warned that there was no chance that censuring the country would result in a change in legislation, as Senegal was entirely convinced of the necessity of its labour systems as part of the national development effort. The effect would be that “the ILO and the West European Members in particular will merely incur a lot of odium and a decline in influence in Senegal”. The Niger Trade Union Organization, “a very mild and far from radical body”, also expressed criticism of the ILO’s position, describing it as a good way “to keep under-developed countries under alien economic control”. Peck (Dakar Embassy) to Guy Millard (FO), 2 Jan. 1963, *ibid.* The ambassador in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) described the situation there in almost identical terms: Abidjan Embassy (Ravensdale) to Millard (FO), 15 Oct. 1962, *ibid.*
42. Memorandum by the programme committee, “The application of the forced labour Conventions and requirements of economic and social development”, Oct. 1963, in ILOA FLA 3, Special studies on forced labour, 1962–70.
43. The division was basically a result of personnel changes that had taken place within the Office since the establishment of the TAP in the late 1940s. The Geneva headquarters were now staffed by officials of various generations who came from quite different academic and social backgrounds. See R.W. Cox: “ILO: Limited monarchy”, in R.W. Cox and H.K. Jacobsen (eds): *The anatomy of influence: Decision making in international organizations* (New Haven, Conn./London, Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 102–38.
44. “A subsistence economy is not capable of developing the cultural level of its members to what in the middle of the twentieth century is considered dignified human living; its integration in the cash economy contributes to human dignity.” Comments of the Economic Section of the Office, “ILO concepts of forced labour and economic development”, June 1964, in ILOA FLA 3, Special studies on forced labour, 1962–70.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Comments of the Labour Standards Section of the Office, “Comments on certain aspects of forced labour in relation to development”, in ILOA FLA 3, Special studies on forced labour, 1962–70.
47. To a certain extent, the dispute reflected debates inside the modernization theory camp, where in the mid-1960s a quarrel erupted as to whether “development dictatorships” or democratic governments were better suited to overseeing the process of social and economic modernization in the developing countries. See N. Gilman, *The mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, Md./London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 224–35.

48. Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122); Employment Policy Recommendation, 1964 (No. 122); both in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1991*, pp. 1250, 1254.
49. Von Stedingk (Employers Relations Branch) to Morse, 5 Mar. 1964, in ILOA MF Z 11/15/1, Africa: General.
50. The director of the field office in Antananarivo, Albert Tévoédjrè, told Morse that the Malagasy Government regarded the CEACR's criticism as interference in internal affairs and warned that fury at the Organization's "neo-colonial attitude" was continuing to build up in other countries in the region too. The matter reinforced the African Government's view of the ILO as a "haven for political cast-offs, including British and French". Tévoédjrè to Morse, 6 Nov. 1965, in ILOA MF Z 1/80/1/1, Madagascar.
51. With regard to the application of the Conventions, the situation had improved since the beginning of the decade in certain ways. In some cases, laws permitting the forced recruitment of labour were "apparently vestiges of an earlier stage in the political and economic development of the countries concerned" and had since been abrogated or modified. However, there was still much room for improvement, particularly in the developing countries. The report also found that both political and economic systems of forced labour were still being used in the socialist states. ILC, 52nd Session (1968), *Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, III: General survey on the reports concerning the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)* (Geneva, 1968). The report is summarized in "Forced labour: a human rights survey", in *ILO Panorama* (1968), Vol. 32, pp. 26–32.
52. *Ibid.*, RoP, p. 593.
53. ILO: *The ILO and human rights*, pp. 48–58.
54. Special Youth Schemes Recommendation, 1970 (No. 136), in ILO: *International labour conventions and recommendations 1919–1992*, pp. 1424–33. On the considerations behind this normative action, see C. Rossillon: "Youth services for social and economic development: A general review", in *International Labour Review* (1967), Vol. 95, No. 4, pp. 1–12.
55. Another interesting aspect of the Recommendation in this regard was that it sanctioned the practice common in many developing countries of limiting freedom of movement and free choice of place of employment for certain professions (e.g. doctors, engineers), particularly during the first years after completion of training. On this point the Recommendation followed the Mudaliar Committee, which had deemed it entirely acceptable to demand a limited period of service to the community in return for "special facilities for advanced study and training [being] made available to a small minority at considerable cost to the community". The Recommendation thus took account at an early point in time of the problem of "brain drain" from the South to the industrial countries of the West. Recommendation No. 136, in ILO: *International labour Conventions and Recommendations 1919–1992*, p. 1426.
56. Resolution concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa, in AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, Appendix III, *Resolutions*, p. 293.
57. Morse's speech, in AFRC 1 (1960), RoP, pp. 233–40.
58. See I. Geiss: *Gewerkschaften in Afrika* (Bonn, Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschichte, 1965), pp. 25–32.

59. Y. Richards: *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and international labor leader* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), pp. 194 ff.
60. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, p. 226.
61. The Office representative visited Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Rhodesia and Zambia. Von Stedingk (Employers Relations Branch) to Morse, 5 Mar. 1964, in ILOA MF Z 11, Africa: General.
62. ILC, 47th Session (1963), RoP, pp. 16 ff.
63. Bell to Morse, 5 Feb. 1965, in ILOA MF Z 10/3/16, Second African Regional Conference, Addis Ababa, 1964.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. AFRC 2 (1964), *Report of the Director-General*, p. 87.
67. Tanzania was created in 1964 – the result of the unification of Tanganyika and Zanzibar.
68. His Egyptian colleague also felt it was “high time for revision”: AFRC 2 (1964), RoP, pp. 81, 85.
69. Ibid., pp. 70, 145.
70. See the speeches given by the Nigerian and Kenyan representatives, *ibid.*, pp. 59, 135 ff.
71. Morse to George Weaver, 12 Jan. 1965, in: ILOA MF Z 1/61/11, ILO relations with USA, Kennedy and Johnson, 1961–68.
72. ILO: *The trade union situation in the Federation of Malaya* (Geneva, 1962); ILO: *The trade union situation in Burma* (Geneva, 1962).
73. ILC, 46th Session (1962), RoP, p. 226.
74. ILC, 48th Session (1964), RoP, Appendix I, *Report of the Director-General*, p. 657.
75. The Western Employers did not agree to the Ago Formula until 1968. The debate can be found in Ghebali: *The ILO*, pp. 133 ff.
76. Ibid.
77. Bell to Morse, 5 Feb. 1965, in ILOA MF Z 10/3/16, Second African Regional Conference, Addis Ababa, 1964.
78. According to von Stedingk, the general feeling was that a “‘little war’ against communism does more harm than good”. Von Stedingk (ILO, Employers Relations Branch) to Morse, 12 Dec. 1964, *ibid.*
79. Strictly confidential Cabinet file, von Stedingk, “Some notes on political alignments among employers in the light of developments at the African Regional Conference in Addis Ababa, 30 November–11 December 1964”, 12 Jan. 1965, *ibid.*
80. Bell to Morse, 5 Feb. 1965, *ibid.*
81. Ibid.
82. Meeting between Morse, Rens and an ICFTU delegation, 24 Mar. 1965, in ILOA MF Z 11/2/9/1(J1), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.
83. ILO: *The ILO and human rights*, p. 41.
84. “Resolution concerning the strengthening of tripartism”, in ILC, 56th Session (1971), RoP, p. 704.
85. ILO: *The ILO and human rights*, pp. 44 ff.
86. At Morse's request, the IILS had stepped up its research into the effect of political systems on industrial relations in 1964. Cox to Morse, 6 Sep. 1964, in ILOA MF Z 11/7/3, IILS, 1961–68.
87. The report was commissioned in 1967 and published in 1970: ILO: *Trade union rights and their relation to civil liberties* (Geneva, 1970).

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 4 ff.
89. H. Maier: "50 years of partnership: The free trade unions and the ILO", in *Free Labour World*, June 1969, pp. 1–31.
90. D.A. Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO and its role in the world community* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 101.
91. ILO: *The ILO and human rights*, pp. 48–58.
92. "Freedom", "Equality", "Economic security" and "Human dignity" were the main chapter headings of the report.
93. By the end of 1969 the two forced labour Conventions had attained a total of 99 (No. 29) and 79 (No. 105) signatures. The Freedom of Association Convention had 76 signatories by this point, the Discrimination Convention 64. Figures taken from Morse: *The origin and evolution of the ILO*, p. 98.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
95. *Ibid.*; see also the passage on freedom of labour in ILO: *The ILO and human rights*, pp. 48–59.

Conclusion

1. The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, available at: <http://www.ilo.org/declaration>. See also the report of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, "A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all" (2004), available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/wcsdg/docs/report.pdf>

Appendix

1. The Soviet Union did not appear as a signatory power as it was officially represented in the ILO by three separate delegations, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian. Accordingly, the signatories were actually the Russian Federation, the Belarusian Federation and the Ukrainian Federation.
2. Conventions enter into force when they have been ratified by two countries.

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Index

- Ababa, Addis, 251
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 208–11, 213, 264
Abolition of Penal Sanctions Convention, 194–6
Acheson, Dean, 127
actor capacity, 8–9
AFL-CIO, 164–5, 277
Africa, 48, 71, 153, 156, 157
 apartheid, 16
 COESP and, 173–83
 decolonization in, 227, 233–4, 259–60, 295–6
 development in, 179–84
 forced labour and, 264–73
 ILO and, 160–73, 259–64, 293, 295–6
 indirect rule in, 21–2
 second colonial occupation, 98
 TAP in, 150–1
 trade union movement in, 109, 181–2, 233, 273–8
African Advisory Committee (AFAC), 166, 167, 170–1, 172
African Regional Conference (AFRC), 166, 171–2, 229, 277
Africans, 106–7
African youth labour service conflict, 264–73
Ago Formula, 279
agricultural sector, 132
Algeria, 124, 166, 168, 169, 231, 232, 333n53
All African Trade Union Federation (AATUF), 276
Allied war effort, 40–7
American Federation of Labor (AFL), 75, 157, 165, 203
Andean (Indian) Programme, 142, 143
Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, 53
Angola, 193, 236
anti-colonialism, 51–5, 63, 82–3, 87, 157, 169, 288
anti-colonial uprisings, 3, 148–9, 203, 206, 208, 236, 333n53
anti-discrimination provision, 91, 108, 200, 201, 255
Anti-Slavery Society (ASS), 34, 38
apartheid, 7, 16, 180, 197–8, 207, 227, 236–7, 375n72
Argentina, 82
Asia, 87, 187
 technical assistance in, 130–1, 132, 147, 149–50, 229, 260
 trade unions in, 109, 216
Asian Advisory Committee (AAC), 166
Asian Regional Conferences, 115–17, 138, 149, 187, 261, 278
Asian values, 6
Assalé, A., 91, 94, 99–100, 105, 110–11
Atlantic Charter, 287
 Declaration and, 77
 ILC and, 40–50
 ILO endorsement of, 78
 message of, 31, 41
 Roosevelt and, 52
 self-determination clauses of, 55
 social postulate of, 60
 South Africa and, 56
 WFTU and, 85, 287
authoritarianism, 283
autonomy, 8–9

Balewa, Abubakar Tafawa, 232
Banda, Hastings Kamuzu, 272
Bandung Conference, 200
Banerjee, 104, 111
Becu, Omer, 280
Belgium, 36, 37, 57–8, 73, 79, 81, 95, 105, 173, 190, 195, 207
Belgrade Conference of Non-Aligned States, 246
benevolent autocracy, 39, 68
Bengal, 55
Benson, Wilfrid, 45, 63, 109, 155–6
 colonial social policy and, 53–4, 64–70, 72–4, 91, 102–4

- Benson, Wilfrid – *continued*
 Forced Labour Convention and,
 72–43, 91, 102, 109, 155
 ILO and, 166
 in Canada, 58, 59, 64–70
 in London, 31, 33–40
 pre-war Conventions and, 51
 social reform and, 48, 79
- Berlin Wall, 233
- Beveridge Plan, 60, 69, 124
- Bevin, Ernest, 80
- Blelloch, David, 109, 153–4
- Bloomsbury Group, 34
- Bombay Plan, 115
- Brazzaville Conference, 56–7
- Bretton Woods Conference, 101
- Britain, 18, 19, 24, 63, 95,
 203–4, 207
- British Empire, 35–6, 48, 50, 52,
 56–8, 80
- Bunche, Ralph, 90, 97
- Burma, 48, 71, 98, 131
- Caine, Sydney, 55, 80
- Camara, Sikhe, 240, 241–2
- Canada, 32–5
- Caribbean, 35
- CCTA, *see* Combined Commission for
 Technical Cooperation in Africa
 (CCTA)
- Central Africa, 22, 81
- Ceylon, 98, 187
- Charter of the UN, 5, 87–9, 97, 100, 128,
 156, 231
- Chile, 82, 90
- China, 45, 82–3, 102, 114, 129, 208
- Chinese Communist Party, 129
- Churchill, Winston, 41, 44, 48,
 50, 61, 81
- citizenship, 65–6, 86, 136–7
- civil rights, 186
- coercion, 205–8, 264–73
- COESP, *see* Committee of Experts on
 Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan
 Territories (COESP)
- Cold War, 122
 developing world in, 137
 discrimination debate and, 197–9
 forced labour and, 203, 205,
 210–11, 233
- human rights and, 13, 185, 192, 102,
 122, 125
 ILO and, 7, 9–10, 121, 125, 144, 233
 trade unions and, 157, 184
- Cole, David, 223
- collective security, 101
- Colonial Charter, 46, 57, 81–5
- colonial clause, 153, 202, 208,
 267, 288–9
 attempts to remove, 188, 210,
 368n120
 extension of, 214
 NLC and, 23–4
 provisions of, 19
- colonial Conventions, 104, 148,
 159, 163–4, 178, 189, 192–202,
 214–15, 260
- colonial depression, 47–51
- Colonial Development Welfare Act
 (CDWA), 35, 36, 37, 38
- colonial double standard, 45, 59, 64,
 146, 238, 266–7, 289
 end of, 261, 266–7, 289
 forced labour and, 207–8, 214–17, 238
 inability to eradicate, 183, 188,
 214–17
 preservation of, 292, 294
- colonial economies, 67, 114–18
- colonial labour, 19–27
- Colonial Labour Advisory Committee,
 67
- colonial liberation movements, 1, 5, 52
- colonial minimum standards, 43–7
- Colonial Office (CO), 54, 80,
 110–11, 170
- colonial reforms, 60–85, 100–11
- colonial representatives, 110–11, 113–14
- colonial social policy, 17–27,
 35–40, 43–7, 50–1, 55–8,
 63–74, 287–98, 292
 late, 152–84
 minimum standards of, 84
 in non-metropolitan territories,
 173–83
 post-war era, 86–118
 reforms, 75–82
- colonial wars, 99
- colonies
 indirect rule in, 20–2
 native labour in, 19–27

- colonization, legacy of, 1
- colour bars, 197–8
- Combined Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa (CCTA), 150, 161, 168, 170, 171, 182
- commissions, 10
- Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), 147–8, 153, 176–7
- Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories (COESP), 133–4, 152–3, 161, 164–8, 173–83, 193–4, 293–4
 - findings of, 179
 - members of, 174–6
 - migrant labour and, 179–84
 - as voice for International Labour Office, 176–9
- Committee on the Freedom of Association (CFA), 213–14
- Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), 194–5
- communism, 102, 125, 129, 131, 137, 228
- Congo, 36, 56, 99, 173, 233–4
- constructive colonialism, 49
- Cox, Robert, 256, 269
- Creech-Jones, Arthur, 34, 70, 203
- Cuba, 90
- Cuban Missile Crisis, 233, 235
- cultural relativism, 13–14
- Cyprus, 231
- Czechoslovakia, 127

- Dakar, 164, 166, 167, 180
- Dakar Conference, 109
- decentralization, 256
- Declaration of Philadelphia, 89, 287
 - human rights and, 185, 187, 189, 247, 287, 299
 - ILO and, 101, 123, 136, 138, 156, 247
 - principles of, 76–86, 89, 136, 138, 156, 187, 189, 288, 298, 299
- decolonization, 1–2, 137, 212, 227, 286, 300
 - in Africa, 233–4, 259–60, 295–6
 - in Asia, 98
 - conflicts, 231, 233
 - ILO and, 4–7
 - international organizations and, 12–14
 - labour policy and, 10
 - social policy and, 10
- de Gaulle, Charles, 56–7, 90
- democracy, 49, 136–9, 272, 283
- democratic development model, 184
- democratic modernization, 284
- democratization, 69
- dependency theory, 246, 250
- developing countries
 - in 1960s, 227–58
 - pressure by, to reform ILO, 235
 - technical assistance to, 248–50
 - world trade and, 247–8
- development, 14
 - in Africa, 179–84
 - demands of, 287–98
 - dual theory of, 249
 - forced labour and, 264–73
 - human rights and, 259–85
 - integrated approach to, 131–46, 151, 185, 186–8, 255–8, 259, 290–1
 - rural, 254–5
 - social, 21, 250–1
 - social side of, 245–58
 - standards and, 268–72
 - as state of emergency, 261–4, 297
- development agencies, 133
- development aid, 125–6, 141
- development decade, 247, 296
- development dictatorships, 207
- development policy, 38, 67–8, 71–2
- Diagne, Blaise, 25
- Diallo, Seydou, 230
- discourse
 - concept of, 10
 - human rights, 13, 16, 189, 191–2, 294–5
 - modernization, 137
 - moral, 298–302
 - power of public, 10–11
- discrimination, 97, 110, 231
 - in employment and occupation, 197–9
 - freedom from, 186
 - racial, 197–8, 227, 236–7
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 199–202
- distributive justice, 262

- double standards, 45, 59, 64, 146
 end of, 261, 266–7, 289
 forced labour and, 207–8, 214–17, 238
 inability to eradicate, 183, 188,
 214–17
 preservation of, 292, 294
 dual mandate, 21, 106
 Dulles, John Foster, 144, 191–2
 Dumbarton Oaks Conference, 101
 Dutch East Indies, 17, 36, 45–8
 Dutch government, 45–6, 73, 79
- East Asia, 17, 55
 East-West conflict, 15, 16, 87, 191
 AATUF and, 276, 292
 decolonization and, 234, 235
 discrimination issue and, 198–9
 forced labour and, 202, 210–11
 human rights and, 189, 191
 ILO and, 102, 121, 144–5, 184,
 290, 292
 WFTU and, 157, 184
- Economic Cooperation Administration
 (ECA), 128
 economic development, 114–18, 205,
 206, 209, 221, 223, 228
see also development
 economic policy, 49, 75–6
 economic theory, Keynesian, 11, 49
 economic underdevelopment, 5–6
 ECOSOC, *see* UN Economic and Social
 Council (ECOSOC)
- Eden, Anthony, 61
 educational approach, 220–3
 Egypt, 97, 139, 169
 Eisenhower, Dwight, 144, 191–2
 emancipation, 4–7
 employment discrimination, 197–9
 employment policy, 255
 epistemic communities, 11–12
 equality, 5
 Eurocentrism, 117, 300
 European Economic Community
 (EEC), 228
 European Recovery Programme
 (ERP), 122
 Expanded Programme of Technical
 Assistance (EPTA), 128, 131–2, 141
 expert knowledge, 11
 experts, 174–6
- Fabian Colonial Bureau, 38, 70
 Fabian Society, 34, 38, 49
 Fanon, Frantz, 1
 fascism, 91, 122
 First Development Decade, 245, 296
 Food and Agriculture Organization
 (FAO), 132
 forced labour, 20–7, 55, 72, 202–11,
 264–73, 291, 297
 Forced Labour Convention, 25–7, 37, 51,
 57–8, 72
 “Four freedoms” speech (Roosevelt),
 41, 43
 Fourth Committee, 97
 France, 18, 19, 25, 33, 56–7, 73, 79, 92,
 95, 99–100, 105, 161, 162, 169, 190,
 195–6, 207
 freedom of association, 108–11, 186,
 211–23, 237, 273–85, 291, 294–8
 Freedom of Association and Protection
 of the Right to Organise
 Convention, 213, 237, 265
 free labour, 272–3
 free markets, 249
 French Popular Front, 36
 Furnivall, J.S., 71
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 35
 Gavin, Robert, 154–5, 161–2, 167,
 169–70, 175, 177
 Gemmill, William, 107, 359n141
 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
 (GATT), 247
 globalization, 302
 Godart, Justin, 100, 105
 Goodrich, John Carter, 41–2, 43, 52–3,
 82, 89
 Governing Body (GB), 74, 89, 104, 109,
 122, 128, 167, 170, 235
 anti-colonial forces in, 68, 74, 89, 104,
 109, 122, 128
 criticism of Morse by, 156–8, 167,
 170, 235
 political power of, 3–4
 social policy and, 61–4
 Grace, H.M., 70
 Greece, 123–4
 Greenidge, Charles Wilton Wood, 44
 Greenidge, William, 38–9
 guided democracy, 283

- Haas, R., 82
 Hailey, Lord, 35, 50, 57, 72, 104
 Hallsworth, Joseph, 61, 90–1, 94, 109
 Hamilton, William, 239
 Harrison, Sir Archibald, 202
 Hauck, Henri, 42, 92, 202
 hegemony, 14
 Hibbert, Geoffrey, 54
 Hill, Martin, 156
 Hinden, Rita, 38
 Hong Kong, 48, 131
 Hull, Cordell, 55
 human development, 4–7
 human rights, 4–7, 13, 87–8, 97–8, 185
 cultural relativism and, 13–14
 discrimination and, 197–9
 disputes, 189–92
 economic development and, 259–85
 forced labour and, 202–11
 freedom of association and, 211–23
 ILO and, 186–92
 integrated approach to development and, 186–8
 norms, 260–1, 296–7
 human rights discourse, 13, 16, 189, 191–2, 294–5
- ILO, *see* International Labour Organization (ILO)
- import-substitution industrialization (ISI), 147, 246
- indentured labour, 26
- India, 19, 35, 45, 48, 83–4, 97, 102, 131, 149, 157
 ILO and, 112–14
 independence for, 98, 111–18
 industrialization, 115
- Indian Five Year Plan, 133
- Indian National Congress (Congress), 18, 52, 83–4, 98, 115, 117
- indigenous workers, 19–27, 31–5, 38–9, 106
- indirect rule, 20–2, 50, 66, 68
- individualism, 301
- Indochina, 17, 47–8, 99, 129
- Indonesia, 99, 115, 131
- industrialization, 71, 115, 132, 133, 137, 138, 147, 246, 248, 249
- Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), 53
- integrated development, 131–46, 151, 185–8, 255–9, 290–1
- Inter-African Labour Conferences (IALCs), 150
- Inter-African Labour Institute (ILI), 164
- international civil service, 7–8
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), 157–9, 164, 165, 166, 169, 200, 216, 276–81, 293
- international cooperation, 9–10, 68
- International Development Association (IDA), 228, 247
- International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), 276–7, 279–82
- International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 18
- International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS), 223, 256–7
- internationalization, 73–4
- International Labour Code, 64
- International Labour Conference (ILC), 3–4, 18–19, 25, 34, 40–7, 61, 64, 87, 89–91, 102, 110–11
- International Labour Office, 3, 7–8, 11–12, 20, 31–4, 39–43, 46, 185
- International Labour Organization (ILO), 1–4
 activities of, 4
 Africa and, 160–73, 229, 259–64, 293, 295–6
 African trade union movement and, 273–8
 Atlantic Charter and, 43–7
 in Canada, 32–5
 colonial representatives, 110–11, 113–14
 Conventions of 1947, 105–6
 creation of, 2
 decolonization and, 4–7
 developing countries and, 227–58
 epistemic communities and, 11–12
 in exile, 31–58
 as historical actor, 7–12
 history of, 14–15
 human rights and, 6–7, 186–92
 integrated approach to development of, 131–46
 inter war years, 17–27
 late colonial social policy and, 152–84

- International Labour
 Organization – *continued*
 mission of, 2
 Native Labour Code and, 23–7
 norms, 259–64
 North-South Conflict and, 245–8
 Philadelphia Conference, 75–82
 in post-colonial era, 111–18
 in post-war era, 60–4, 86–118
 pressure to reform on, 228–30
 regional structure, 113–14
 research and studies on, 8–9
 South African crisis and, 236–45,
 295–6
 Soviet Union and, 234–5, 244,
 295, 299
 structure of, 2–4, 256
 international labour standards, 4, 19,
 71, 77–8
 International Organization of
 Employers (IOE), 278
 international organizations
 autonomy of, 8–9
 decolonization and, 12–14
 as historical actors, 7–12
 influence of, 9–11
 international secretariats, 11
 international trade, 245–7
 international trade union movement, 61
see also trade unions
 Israel, 264
- Jacksson, Wilfrid, 107
 Jamaica, 35
 Japan, 47–8, 60, 99
 Jenks, Wilfred, 37, 139, 140, 163–4,
 169, 286
 Africa and, 160, 163–4, 172–3, 175,
 259–60
 CCTA and, 167, 169, 172
 ICFTU and, 166
 on post-war thinking, 186,
 259–60, 286
 UN and, 156
 Johnson, Joseph Modupe, 237, 239,
 241, 242
 Jouhaux, Léon, 19, 128
- Kaiser, Phil, 144–5
 Kamaliza, Michael, 237, 275
- Kennedy, John F., 247, 375n72
 Kenya, 168, 232
 Kenyatta, Jomo, 45
 Kerr, Clark, 137
 Keynes, John Maynard, 49
 Keynesian economics, 11, 49
 knowledge-based experts, 11–12
 knowledge imperialism, 14
 Korea, 129
 Kunst, Arnold, 156
- Labour-Management Relations
 Programme, 223
 Labour Party, 86
 labour policy, 10
 Lagos, 229, 230
 Lagos Conference, 232
 laissez-faire, 50, 287
 Lall, Shri Shamal, 108, 112, 113, 130
 Latin America, 94
 technical assistance in, 130, 132, 147
 League of Coloured Peoples, 48
 League of Nations, 2, 8, 18, 22, 23, 38,
 60, 76
 League of Nations Union, 38–9
 Leggett, Frederick, 80
 Lewis, W. Arthur, 132, 147, 250
 Libya, 141
 Lie, Trygve, 155
 Lodge, George Cabot, 232
 London, 33, 34, 37
 Lubin, Isador, 122
 Lugard, Lord, 21
 Lumumba, Patrice, 233
- Macdonald, Malcolm, 35–6
 Macmillan, Harold, 227
 Maier, Heribert, 283
 Malawi, 272
 Malaya, 99, 129, 168
 Malaysia, 48
 Malik, Charles, 143
 mandate system, 18
 Manpower Programme, 124, 125, 127,
 128, 132, 229
 Mao, 129
 market economy, 249
 Marshall, George, 126–7
 Marshall, Thomas H., 86
 Marshall Plan, 98, 122, 126, 128, 290

- Mau Mau uprising, 208
 Mazower, Mark, 59
 M'boya, Tom, 262–3
 McLeod, Iain, 172
 McNair, Lord Arnold, 218–19
 McNair Committee, 219
 McNair Report, 220
 McNamara, Robert, 254
 Meany, George, 235
 media, 11
 Mexico, 82, 94, 149
 Midway Atoll, 60
 migrant labour, 50, 106–7, 179–84
 Ministry of Labour (MOL), 108
mise en valeur, 20–2, 26
 modernity, 7
 modernization, 16, 123, 136–9,
 142–3, 180, 188, 255, 271–2, 284,
 290–1, 298
 modernization theory, 12, 137, 291
 Moody, Harold, 45
 Moore, Wilbert, 137
 moral discourse, 298–302
 Moreu, Atiles, 193
 Morocco, 168
 Morse, David, 15, 158, 290
 Africa and, 166–7, 171–2, 263–4
 colonial work under, 152–9
 decolonization conflicts and, 233–4
 development and, 250, 263–4, 296
 forced labour issue and, 210
 freedom of association and, 212
 human rights and, 283–5
 Nobel Peace Prize and, 286
 South African crisis and, 236–45
 Soviet Union and, 234–5
 TAP and, 121–30, 133–40, 144, 145,
 148, 254
 trade unions and, 274–5
 tripartism debate and, 280–1
 WEP and, 252
 Mozambique, 193
 Mudaliar, Ramaswami, 272
 Mudaliar Committee, 205–8, 218, 237
 Myrddin-Evans, Guildhaume, 105, 110,
 114, 153, 154, 161, 169

 Nanda, Gulzarilal, 244
 Nash, Walter, 76
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 232

 national development, 115
 national sovereignty, 18, 19, 88, 97
 native experts, 174–6
 native labour, 19–27, 31–5, 59
 Native Labour Code (NLC), 23–7, 38–9,
 44, 54, 58, 64
 Nazism, 91, 122, 203
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 115–17, 221
 neo-colonialism, 229, 230, 246,
 268, 297
 Netherlands, 99, 115
 New Deal, 49, 75
 new international order, 87–100
 New York Conference (1941), 40–8, 60
 Nigeria, 155, 168, 172
 Nkrumah, Kwame, 45, 168
 Noel-Baker, Philip, 149
 Non Metropolitan Territories
 Department, 154
 Non-Alignment Movement, 231, 246
 non-discrimination, 107–8
 non-governmental organizations
 (NGOs), 3
 non-interference, 97
 non-metropolitan territories (NMTs), 89,
 105, 148, 149, 160, 173–83
 North Africa, 168
 North-South Conflict, 245–8, 299
 Nuremberg, 97

 Oldenbroek, Jacobus, 46, 158–9
 Orde-Brown, Granville St John, 54,
 79, 104
 Organisation for Economic
 Co-operation and Development
 (OECD), 228
 Ottawa Plan, 251
 Ottoman Empire, 18

 Padmore, George, 45
 paid holiday, 93–4
 Palestine, 148
 Pan-African Movement, 89, 230, 233,
 261–2, 275, 276, 277
 Paris Conference, 87–96
 Parodi, Alexandre, 89
 particularism, 66, 71, 86, 87, 287
 paternalism, 301
 Pearl Harbor, 47
 Penal Sanctions Convention, 192–202

- "people's peace", 50–1, 65–9, 78,
 79, 88, 288
 Perham, Margery, 49–50
 Perkins, Frances, 32, 41–3
 Phelan, Edward J., 39, 42, 43, 60, 61, 74,
 90, 101, 113, 121–2, 125
 Philadelphia Conference, 6–7, 15, 59–85
 Philippines, 47–8, 98, 131
 Pim, Sir Alan, 71–2
 Point IV Program, 125–31, 290
 Poland, 127
 Political and Economic Planning
 (PEP), 38
 political decolonization, 5–7
 politicalization, 230–6
 political rights, 186
 Port Harcourt, 155
 Portugal, 115, 156, 163, 193, 207, 209,
 231, 236, 266, 267
 post-colonial era, 111–18
 problems in, 87
 TAP and, 146–51
 post-war era, 86–118
 post-war policy, 48–50, 60–74
 Prebisch, Raul, 246
 pre-investment conditions, 228–9
 productive development, 250–1
 productivity, 135
 protectionism, 262
 public opinion, 10
 Puebla Vargas, 90

 Quit India campaign, 52

 racial discrimination, 7, 16, 231, 236–7,
 375n72
 railway construction, 22
 Rao, Raghunath, 129
 ratification certificates, 260–1
 regional conventions, 115–18,
 138, 166
 regionalization, 112–14
 Rens, Jef, 139, 140, 244
 reports, 10
 representation, 112–14
 research, 4, 8
 Resistance movements, 49, 89
 Right to Organise and Collective
 Bargaining Convention, 213
 Roberts, Sir Alfred, 158, 166

 Romania, 123–4
 Roosevelt, Eleanor, 98
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 32, 41, 43, 49,
 52, 61, 76, 84
 Rostow, Walt Whitman, 137
 Ruegger Committee, 208–11
 rural development, 254–5
 Russian Revolution, 2

 Salazar, Antonio de Oliveira, 163, 236
 San Francisco Conference, 88, 101
 Sarraut, Albert, 20
 Schevenels, Walter, 61
 Second World Congress, 158
 Second World War, 31, 32, 36–9, 47, 288
 Allied war effort, 40–7
 end of, 60
 in Southeast Asia, 47–8
 self-determination, 5, 85, 98, 99
 self-rule, 5
 self-sufficiency, 20
 Shils, Edward, 137
 Singapore, 48
 Singer, Hans, 246
 slavery, 22, 23
 Smuts, Jan, 56, 193
 social development, 21, 250–1
 socialism, 218
 social justice, 49, 68
 social policy, 10
 colonial, 17–27, 35–40, 43–7, 50–1,
 55–8, 63–82, 287–98
 in dependent territories, 64–74,
 91–3, 102–3
 minimum standards of, 59, 62, 77–8, 84
 in non-metropolitan territories,
 173–83
 post-war, 49, 60–74
 recession of, 233
 Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards)
 Convention, 260
 Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan
 Territories) Convention, 105,
 192, 260
 social rights, 86, 187
 social security systems, 124, 181
 socio-economic development, 70,
 72, 231
 see also development; economic
 development

- solidarity rights, 6
- South Africa, 84, 161, 172, 193, 209
 anti-colonialism and, 236–8
 apartheid, 7, 180, 197–8, 207, 227, 231, 236–7, 375n72
 Atlantic Charter and, 56
 colonial double standard and, 214
 crisis of 1963, 236–45, 295–6
 migrant labour and, 107
 racial discrimination in, 97, 156
 wage policy and, 94–5
- South America, 94
- South-East Asia, 31, 47–8, 71, 99, 168
 decolonization in, 98
 Second World War and, 288
- Soviet Union, 125, 149, 151, 206, 291
 decolonization and, 13, 18
 developing countries and, 169, 234–5
 forced labour convention and, 209–11
 ILO and, 60–1, 63, 75, 76, 101, 115, 144, 185, 188, 234–5, 244, 295, 299
 racial discrimination and, 198–9
 reaccession of, 218, 299
 WFTU and, 102, 157
- Special Committee, 97, 155
- Special Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED), 229, 249–50
- stabilization, 106, 179–80
- Stalin, Joseph, 76
- standard-setting, 133–5, 185, 187–8, 213, 260–1, 263, 268–72
- Stanley, Oliver, 80–1
- state socialism, 218
- sub-Saharan Africa, 98, 171, 232
- Suez crisis, 169, 231
- Taiwan, 208
- technical assistance, 12, 14, 121–51, 229, 285, 291–2
 standard-setting and, 133–5
 for underdeveloped countries, 129–31
- Technical Assistance Programme (TAP), 121–51, 159, 286, 290, 292
 in 1960s, 245–58
 in Africa, 167
 integrated development approach of, 131–46
 origins of, 121–5
 Point IV Program and, 125–9
 political success of, 142–6
 post-colonial face of, 146–51
 strengthening of, 229
 successes and limits of, 139–42
 technical cooperation, 4
- Thant, U, 235, 243
- think tanks, 11
- Thomas, Albert, 17, 24, 34
- Thorp, Willard, 127–8
- Toledano, Lombardo, 125
- Tomlinson, George, 81–2
- Toure, Sekou, 230
- Trades Union Congress (TUC), 44–5, 157–8
- trade unions, 51, 61, 72, 75–6, 85, 95–6, 122, 127, 156–9, 215–17, 220–1, 289, 294
 in Africa, 109, 181–2, 233, 273–8
 in Asia, 109, 216
- training programmes, 12, 131–3
- Treaty of Versailles, 2
- Trinidad, 35
- tripartism, 2–3, 12, 218–20, 278–85, 298, 299
- Truman Administration, 122, 125, 132
- Truman Doctrine, 122
- trusteeship, 50, 56, 72, 88, 89, 97, 264n75, 324n120
- Trusteeship Council (TC), 97, 102, 155
- Tschoffen, Paul, 148
- Tunisia, 168, 266
- UN Charter, 5, 86, 87–9, 97, 100, 128, 156, 231
- UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 246
- underdeveloped countries, technical assistance for, 129–31
- underdevelopment, 114–18
- UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 101, 102, 128, 199, 203
- UN Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 132, 141
- UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), 248
- United Arab Republic, 232
- United Nations (UN), 8
 decolonization and, 13, 14
 establishment of, 86
 structure of, 96–7

- United States, 103
 - anti-colonialism of, 51–5, 63, 82–3, 87, 169, 288
 - anti-discrimination convention and, 201
 - Atlantic Charter and, 41–2, 52
 - decolonization and, 13, 18
 - Forced Labour Convention and, 210
 - foreign policy, 128–9, 130–1
 - human rights and, 191–2
 - ILO and, 144–5
 - organized labour and, 75–6
 - WWII and, 47, 51–2
- universal citizenship, 136–7
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 5, 77, 86, 98, 186, 197, 231
- universal human rights, 87–8, 92, 97–8
- universalism, 61–6, 68, 91–3, 179, 182, 183
- UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), 61
- vagrancy laws, 22
- van Remoortel, William, 89–90, 96, 104–5
- vocational training, 124, 128, 130–3, 141–3, 178, 180, 182, 199, 248, 254, 264–5
- wage policy, 94–6, 140
- war crimes tribunals, 97–8
- Watson, Duncan, 160–1
- Weaver, C.W., 33
- Weaver, George, 259
- welfare state, 82
- West Africa, 22, 162, 264
- West Indies, 35
- Wilson, Woodrow, 5
- Winant, John, 32, 33, 39, 42
- Wirjosandjojo, Soekiman, 26
- Woolf, Leonard, 34, 70
- Woolf, Virginia, 34
- workers, as drivers for change, 164–8
- Workers' group, 18–19, 24–6, 64, 91–2, 104, 109, 157, 158, 160, 163, 166
- workers' rights, 82–3
- World Bank, 228, 247, 254
- world community, 8
- World Employment Programme (WEP), 227–8, 250–5, 273
- World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), 75, 85, 102, 128, 157–8, 171, 215–16, 281–2
- World Literacy Campaign, 254
- World Plan for Agricultural Development, 254
- world trade, 247–8
- youth labour services, 264–73
- Yugoslavia, 125