**Communist fronts and Third World politics in the long 1960s**

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*NB: I’ve included many subheadings to make reading easier.*

**introduction**

In 2015, six people worked at the World Federation of Democratic Youth’s (WFDY) headquarters in Budapest: a Cuban general secretary in his early 40s, a Cypriot president in his mid-20s, a Lebanese vice president a few years younger, an absent vice president from Mozambique, and two Hungarian office workers. With the federation’s 70th anniversary close at hand, and invitations to other anniversaries mounting (e.g. Vietnam’s 70th and Angola’s 40th), the principal task was logistics: visas and tickets to China in March, Lebanon in April, Vietnam, Angola, and Havana in the fall.¹

The youth federation is, like all other erstwhile communist fronts, a shadow of its former self. Hungary stopped paying salaries and providing diplomatic services in 1992. In 1993, the Federation moved from a five-story office building in the affluent Buda hills to an aluminum factory’s “social building” in Pest. The publishing house that had printed 8-10 glossy, full color annual issues of *World Youth*, supplemented by monthly installments of *WFDY News*, was sold in 1996. By which time the archive of documents printed on and off that press for forty years had whittled down to fifteen boxes. The Hungarian General Secretary destroyed the archive in 1992, recalls the office secretary, adding, “this is [the] Hungarian mentality.”²

In one sense at least the Federation had advanced steadily toward its founding mandate since 1989. From 1950 until 1982, the “democratic world youth’s” presidents belonged to Italy’s *Federazione Giovanile Communista Italiana*, and its general

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¹ I visited the headquarters informally on several occasions in spring 2015.
² The mentality succeeded, as hardly any Budapesters have heard of WFDY, and the State Security Authority (AVH) holds just one WFDY-related file. According to the secretary, a non-state Budapest archive offered to take the materials, but the federation’s General Secretary, a Hungarian, refused.
secretaries to the *Mouvement Jeunes Communistes de France*. From 1982 until 1989, presidents came from Lebanon’s Union of Democratic Youth, and general secretaries from Hungary’s Young Communist League (KISZ). The disaggregation has continued, as noted, such that of the 40 organizations that elected the 2015 leadership, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America each received 8, Europe 7, and North America one. The pattern is similar at other former fronts. The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) moved its offices from East Berlin to Sao Paulo in 1994, and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) moved from Prague to Athens—with “regional offices” in South Africa, Gabon, India, Syria, Cuba, Cyprus, and New York.

This paper asks when and how the southern drift began, and traces it along two lines: Soviet bloc policy, and Third World participation. On policy, the 13 world federations born between 1945 and 1955 stood closer to the global South in the 1940s than the historiography of Stalinist foreign policy suggests they should have. Once the southern drift gathered speed in the late 1950s, it proceeded in step with the Sino-Soviet split. Turning to Third World participation, I qualify the Sino-Soviet analogy on two counts, each in reference to the fronts’ signal event, the World Festivals of Youth and Students. First, African and Arab functionaries gained enough influence in WFDY (youth) and IUS (students) by the mid-60s to contest and overcome Soviet interests. Second, divisions between rival delegations from the same country reflect the fronts’ struggle to reconcile their founding ambivalence between loyalty to the Left and world representation. The fact that most splits pitted states against rebels, not Maoists against Soviets, provides another caveat to the Sino-Soviet analogy.

I. Soviet fronts go south: 1945-1965

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3 WFDY includes Turkey in Europe, and Mexico to North America. See http://www.wfdy.org/structure/.

4 Unmentioned here is the fact that most of the most vocal Afro-Asian critics of the Festival in the 1960s were not militants, but moderates, who shared the anti-ideological sentiment of the French Boy Scout in 1945. Another point arguing against the China-centered argument is that the chief concern of Festival planners in mid-1965, according to East German documents, and at the peak of the Sino-Soviet split, was the West, not China. Sources to follow.
1. Origins, 1945-1950

At their founding in the mid-1940s, the postwar fronts pursued the same end and employed the same tactics as their Popular Front predecessors. Both sought to blunt anti-Soviet sentiments in the West by co-opting or founding the organizations that underpinned Western civil society. In 1945, with Soviet popularity at its peak, and progress toward globalizing the Grand Alliance as a peacetime United Nations underway, the postwar fronts sought a broader audience than before. What had operated nationally in the 1930s, each front defined in opposition to Nazis and any local analogy to them, was now to work universally, with each federation assigned to a different demographic—international women, international students, lawyers, etc.

The error that has discouraged Cold War historiography from taking the federations seriously was Stalin’s confidence in 1943, when he dissolved the Comintern, that Western publics would not suspect what they could no longer see. Between 1945 and 1950, the fronts’ support for the Czechoslovak coup, ouster of Yugoslavia, and North Korea’s national defense made a mockery of their avowed nonpartisanship, and evoked the prewar fronts’ pivot in September 1939. Western participants tried to warn them. At a July 1945 planning meeting for the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF), for instance, British and Australian participants recommended that the committee substitute “democratic” for “antifascist” on the federation charter, noting, “[t]he word ‘antifascist’ alienates [our] organizations.” At a parallel meeting prior to WFDY’s founding conference in London, French delegates alarmed the Soviets by submitting a draft charter for the Federation that did not cite “fascism” once. It was


6 Mikhailov to Malenkov, 18 Oct 1945, RGASPI-M, f. 4, op. 1, d. 233, 104.
subterfuge in both cases, Soviet representatives reported to Molotov and Malenkov. Without a root vocabulary, propaganda was futile.\(^7\)

Of the terms discussed at these early events, before CIA-backed alternatives drew the moderates away, few were as well-defined as the colonial question. At WFDY’s founding in London, Kitty Boomla of the All-India Student Federation attributed Bombay’s squalor to British rule.\(^8\) A resolution urged the United Nations to set timetables for self-determination.\(^9\) And Latin American leftists convinced the “credentials committee” to relegate Dominican Republicans from participant to observer status, as representatives of a “fascist” government.\(^10\)

Two-and-a-half years later in spring 1948, a string of leftist uprisings in Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia followed close on the heels of a South-East Asia Youth Conference in Calcutta, organized by WFDY (youth) and IUS (students). For Western powers, the inference was clear: the risings were the work of the federations, and the federations were the revolutionary servants to Molotov’s Foreign Ministry. In 2009, Russian historian Larisa Efimova concluded that in fact, the Komsomol had intended no such thing in Calcutta.\(^11\) But the damage was done, and the front stigma deepened.

The silver lining of the Calcutta conference thus faced south. Stalin’s bias against socialist revolution in agrarian societies is well documented. His 1951 note on Soviet


\(^8\) Boomla, according to Marxist economist and former comrade Ashok Mitra, was more British than Indian by education (in fact, Pakistani), and “rolling in money” by birth. Nikolai Mikhailov, We Live to Bring Peace (Recollections about the World Federation of Democratic Youth) [orig. Russian edition: Deti raznikh narodov] (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1968), 27; Ashok Mitra, “Kitty Boomla, the South-East Asia Youth Conference: Memories,” in Social Scientist, v. 40, n. 7/8 (July-Aug 2012), 5.

\(^9\) (Is this only the US’s proposal?) US Delegation, “Report of the World Youth Conference,” NYU Tamiment Archive, James and Esther Cooper Jackson papers, Box 19, folder 44, 3; Holmes to Smith, 10 Dec 1945, Kew, LC 5812, 5.

\(^10\) A Canadian delegate described the Latin Americans to the British Foreign Office as, “as rabid as they were ignorant.” Ibid., 3; Kotek, Students and the Cold War (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 134, 149, 161.

peasants is representative: “it is not advisable to rush...there is no need to hurry.”

But the fronts’ actions and propaganda spoke differently. Komsomol chief Nikolai Mikhailov intimated the Soviet elite’s frustration with the shift of orientation from west to south when he wrote Malenkov in 1951 that the “overwhelming majority” of US delegates to the Third World Youth Festival were “Negroes and Jews.”

It may be that he meant the comment positively, as proof of the Festival’s anti-racist integrity. More likely, though, is that he considered too many Jews and blacks a liability to the Festival’s core mission—to gain traction on white, Christian majorities, and by extension, Western governments.

Events like the conference in Calcutta beg the question of what affected anti-imperial revolutionaries more, communist propaganda or Soviet policy. To world federation staffers like Ahmed Kathrada of the African National Congress (ANC), who headed the WFDY Africa desk in Budapest in 1951-1952, and “sent a great deal of Communist literature to Nelson Mandela,” the press mattered greatly. For national liberation movements in need of external recognition, front magazines and media events like the Festivals were as valuable, arguably, as guns and butter.

2. The long 1960s

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13 RGASPI-M, f. 4, op. 4, d. 15, l. 3.

14 Of 32 speeches held at the WFDY Executive Committee meeting in Beijing in 1950, 6 of them were made by Chinese delegates, 14 by Asians, 6 Eastern Europeans, 2 Africans, 2 Australians, and 2 Western Europeans. RGASPI-M, f. 3, op. 1, d. 36, 1-2.

15 Mandela biographer Tom Lodge adds: “Kathrada’s WFDY connections were later to prove important in securing invitations and travel arrangements that enabled a succession of ANC personalities to visit eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.” Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life*, **. For Kathrada’s warm memories of the Soviet bloc and allegiance to it, see Ahmed Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2004), 89-91.

16 See Jacob Zuma speech to the 17th Festival in Pretoria, 2010. See also Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution* (Oxford, 2002).
Khrushchev’s reformers came to the same conclusion on national liberation that
Trinidadian ex-Comintern functionary George Padmore did in Pan-Africanism or
Communism (1956). Stalin’s perfidy did not diminish the anti-imperial principle in
communist thought, nor the anti-racist achievements of Soviet society. 17 It followed that
with some work—and here Padmore departed from Khrushchev—the Soviet’s southern
policy could be redeemed. 18

The greatest challenge to Khrushchev’s optimism came of course from China.
The early 1960s destroyed Padmore’s 1956 confidence that “[b]ecause of their tolerance
on race and color, the Russians and Chinese are going to get on marvelously.” 19
Recent historiography has attempted to do the same to Leszek Kolakowski’s 1978 thesis that the
Sino-Soviet split owed, “above all to Soviet imperialism and not to differences, though
they did exist, as to Communist ideals and methods.” 20 The new work draws considerably
on ideological debates at international organizations: Communist Friendship Societies;
the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization (AAPSO); the United Nations and its
subsidiaries; and last, in order of attention, the world federations. 21 Puzzling here is the
fronts’ superiority in numbers. Where the AAPSO held four congresses between 1957
and 1965, the 13 world federations met at least ten times that. Sheer frequency and
variety of sites ensured that more Africans, Asians, Arabs, and Latin Americans could
participate than at any other venue. To track the federations’ participation in the Sino-
Soviet split, let us follow the three-stage progression laid out in Jeremy Friedman’s
history of “the Sino-Soviet competition for the third world.” 22

17 George Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communism (New York: Anchor, 1972), **.
18 Padmore, it should be said, was considerably less optimistic of this than Khrushchev. **
19 He added: The West need have no illusions about that.” Padmore, 292.
20 Kolakowski’s Polishness likely reinforced his thesis. Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism,
1190.
21 See Austin Jersild on the friendship societies in The Sino-Soviet Alliance, 84-85, 184-196; Jeremy
Friedman on the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Countries of Asian and Africa (SCSCAA) and its
Chinese Foreign Ministry counterpart in The Shadow Cold War, 51-52, 89, 109, 111; Lorenz Lüthi, The
Sino-Soviet Split, 141, 185. For a rough tally of how many world events happened and where, see the CIA’s
monthly “Calendar of Forthcoming Events” bulletin at CIA-RDP91T01172R000300130001-5.
22 Heremy Friedman, Shadow Cold War (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015).
Stage 1: peaceful coexistence

Although federations began to meet frequently in postcolonial capitals as the 1950s closed, their peace cant remained the same. At a representative December 1958 WFDY Executive Committee meeting in Colombo, titled, *Mutual Understanding, Friendly Relations Between the Youth of Asia, Africa and other Regions of the World, and the Work of the WFDY in the Spirit of the Bandung Principles*, WFDY president Bruno Bernini gave a speech in the Soviet idiom. After acknowledging “[t]he presence of observers from numerous Asian and African organizations at our meeting, whom we invited to participate in the discussions,” Bernini took an optimistic view of the anti-imperial movement: “We live at a time of great and spirited impetus of the national liberation movements. These movements are a great contribution to the building of a peaceful world. [...] Some still live under colonial domination, but they are on the way to liberating themselves.” What the “liberating” entailed Bernini did not say. Implicit, though, was an air of inevitability, and consequent passivity. Liberation required nothing from communist states and NGOs like WFDY but material aid, statements of solidarity, and publicity. Bernini’s message thus differed little from Stalin’s in 1951, that it was not advisable to rush.

Stage 2: militancy

Seven years later in 1965, Bernini’s successor as WFDY president, Rodolfo Mechini, spoke very differently. At a WFDY Executive Committee meeting like the one in Colombo, this time in Accra, Mechini introduced the upcoming World Youth Festival as the first to meet outside of Europe. The Algiers Festival would “reflect enormous

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23 I have not yet compiled data on where and when each federation met, but Accra, Cairo, and Conakry appear frequently.

changes” around the world in several respects, including “peaceful coexistence between countries of different societal structure[s],” and “the adherence to non-interference and self-determination of peoples.” Where Bernini had favored the former, peaceful coexistence, Mechini now endorsed the latter, self-determination. The event would express the world youth’s “active solidarity with the heroic armed struggle of the youth of South Vietnam, the resistance of young patriots of Congo (Leopoldville), the struggle for freedom led by the youth of Venezuela, Columbia, South Korea, Spain, Portugal, and South Africa.”

In his 11-page speech, the Soviet representative urged African observers to appreciate their similarity to the Bolsheviks:

We are especially familiar with and understanding of [хорошо поняты] the hopes of peoples fighting for their right to build life as they wish. The fight on the revolutionary barricades, civil war, intervention of armies armed to the teeth [by] 14 imperialist states, devastation, hunger, economic blockade, difficulty developing—our Homeland went through all of this. We know the value of genuine proletarian solidarity from our own experience.

China’s spokesman, in turn, began by reminding listeners of the PRC’s proposal to found “a permanent organ of solidarity” for the rebel war in eastern Congo. He then recommended a “permanent organ of solidarity on a democratic and broad basis” with the youth of the Portuguese colonies. (Whether the organs were the same is unclear.) Next came a call to replace the Festival’s four-word slogan. “for solidarity, peace, and friendship” (itself an expansion on “for peace and friendship,” per Algeria’s request a few months earlier), with a roll call for, “Unity, struggle against imperialism, peace and friendship.” Halfway through page one, the Chinese delegation dispensed with all constructive advisory statements, and stated that “[u]nder the mask of anti-imperialist

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26 RGASPI-M, f. 3, op. 3, d. 75, l.140.
27 The phrasing of “against imperialism, peace, and friendship,” was unfortunate and no doubt unintended.
phrases in the speeches, questions are emerging, about which polemics have circulated inside WFDY for the past several years.” The first was what the world youth should be doing, fighting imperialism or coexisting peacefully toward disarmament. The second was whether it was right for WFDY to proclaim solidarity with Vietnam from an office in Budapest—“to propagandize” in line with Lyndon Johnson, toward a “‘world political regulation’ of the South Vietnam problem.” The last, and to Mechini and his colleagues the most troubling, was “whether it made sense to fight for the unity of youth of all countries, or to move toward a split [идти к расколу].”

China’s threat to secede typified the federations’ third crisis since 1945. The first had come when Western organizations evacuated in 1945-195. The second saw Hungary force fronts “to bend rather than break” in 1956, as the CIA put it, and even then not far enough. And now, at the peak of China’s mid-60s challenge to the USSR in Africa, front conferences broke down one after the other. Chinese delegates inveighed against Soviet encroachment on the 7th World Peace Council (WPC) Congress in July 1965. The World Youth Festival’s International Preparatory Committee (IPC) canceled the Algiers Festival that same month, shortly after Ahmed Ben Bella’s overthrow—a decision that the New China News Agency presented as grounds for secession. In mid-1966, the CIA press department reported five near or complete splits in the space of six weeks: one at the Afro-Asian Writers Organization; another at WFDY’s Seventh Congress in Sofia; a

28 ibid., ll. 154, 155.
31 The NCNA wrote: “After the Algerian event on 19 June, leaders of the Committee of Soviet Youth Organizations [the international desk at the Soviet Komsomol] plotted in the international youth and student organizations under their control [WFDY and IUS] to transfer the ninth festival to be held in Africa for the first time to a place in Europe.” Chinese allegations about a Festival-planning cabal proved correct. At a three-day discussion in Prague just before the meeting in Finland, leaders of all bloc youth organizations but for China-friendly Romania had resolved to host no World Youth Festival in Algiers or anywhere else in 1965. Bulgaria’s Dimitrov-Komsomol nominated Sofia, the only Warsaw Pact capital yet to host, and the Soviets, for one, approved. As for Algeria’s stance at the emergency meeting in Finland, a second press release accused the Soviets of “grossly interfere[ing] in Algeria’s internal affairs.” Mechini and his East European allies refuted the argument, pointing out to the Algerians that they had advised the IPC only days before to leave their Algiers office at once. See BStU, HA XX, Nr. 5731, 32. For Soviet approval, see Student News and Information Service; CIA-RDP78****; NCNA, English Service, “Comunist Chinese Deplore Soviet Actions on Youth Meeting,” 20 July 1965, CIA-RDP78-03061A000300040003-3.
third, at a World Peace Council plenum in Geneva; and two more hosted by the World Federation of Trade Unions. And then, sometime between mid-1966 and mid-1967, the Chinese seceded, and the shouting stopped.

The Cultural Revolution did not silence China’s claims on world leadership, as Zachary Scarlett shows. At a January 1967 meeting in Vienna, WFDY and IUS officials spoke anxiously about the crop of new, radical youth and student organizations that might spring up at any moment, in the name of a giant “intermediate zone” between the US and USSR. The fronts’ measure of success thus remained the global South.

Stage 3. synthesis

True to Jeremy Friedman’s causal argument, Festival planners no doubt had China in mind in early 1968, when they insisted on “a militant [боевой], politically charged event” in Sofia, one which would underscore the “solidarity of world youth with the people and youth of Vietnam.” The South Vietnamese delegation was the first to round the track on opening day in July 1968, dressed head to toe in camouflage. The first day on the program was the Day for Solidarity with the Youth of Vietnam. A Vietnam Solidarity Center featured seized American guns and airplane parts. Even so, and despite China’s absence, the Soviet bloc still found itself attacked for its apathy toward the global South—this time by the Western New Left.

The long 1960s ended for the fronts in a “peaceful coexistence redux,” to borrow Friedman’s term, combined with an abiding fear of perceived weakness in the Third

34 On intermediate zone, see Friedman, 16; on Vienna meeting, Bundespolizeidirektion Wien, Betr: IX Weltjugendfestspiele, 25-28 Jan. 1966. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Archiv der Republik (AdR), Bundesministerium für das Innere (BMI), 23.193—17/67, 2.
World. In 1973, after five years of deliberation on whether to hold another World Youth Festival, the tenth iteration opened in East Berlin as a test of the conjuncture of détente with the ongoing national liberation struggle in South Africa and the Portuguese colonies. With the West’s “glorious thirty” at last in recession, Festival toiletry bags made the material convergence between East and West manifest. But was the same true of foreign policy? Were East and West converging on their anti-imperial policies, to the detriment of the militants?

The East German program was designed with this question in mind. Day one was yet again for Vietnam, though now expanded on account of Nixon’s bombing campaigns, to include Laos and Cambodia, too.37 Day two was for “solidarity with the Arab peoples,” day three for “solidarity with people, youth, and students who fight for liberty, independence, democracy and social progress,” and only on day four did the first reference to détente with the West appear: “the day for peace, international security and cooperation.”38 Two anti-imperial centers opened on Vietnam Day—an International Solidarity Center at the event’s epicenter, the base of the TV tower on Alexanderplatz, and an exhibition titled, “The Youth and Students Prosecute Imperialism,” at Humboldt University.39 It was here in the Humboldt courtyard, facing the busiest street in the Republic, on tables stacked with US-made materiel seized in Mozambique (and a photo of Erich Honecker shaking FRELIMO leader Samora Michel’s hand), that the Festival and GDR made their dauntless solidarity with national liberation manifest.40

37 IPC Coordinating Secretary, Dominique Vidal recalls that North Vietnamese youth officials were not as enthusiastic to attend as he and his colleagues had expected when they traveled to Hanoi in 1972, to appeal face-to-face. Author’s interview with Dominique Vidal, 2012.
39 Rau to Lamberz, Tagesbericht 29.07.73, BArch Lichterfelde, DY/24/7222,1.
40 BStU, Allg. S., 346/73, 27, 30.
II. Third World agency

There is much to be said, then, for Friedman’s thesis that Chinese militancy compelled the USSR to advocate more loudly for armed struggle than it would have liked.\(^4\) What this bilateral thesis leaves out, however, or at least leaves quiet, is the influence of Third World actors themselves. Who ensured that of 32 papers presented at a WFDY executive committee meeting in July 1964, 26 concerned Third World countries, and another North Korea?\(^4\) Was it China, by way of example; or might it have been African and Arab WFDY functionaries by a more direct route? Granted, the binary is false. One cannot distinguish African action entirely from China’s example, especially considering the propaganda, aid, and university scholarships that the PRC provided. Even so, in two cases Africans’ and Arabs’ influence on the fronts was direct and consequential.

1. Third World functionaries

\(^4\) Post-Stalinist “peaceful coexistence” never fully recovered, argues Friedman, resulting in the marriage between industrial socialism and agrarian dependency that Stalin had refused to consummate. Friedman, *Shadow Cold War*, 183.

\(^4\) RGASPI-M, f. 3, op. ***
First, Arabs and Africans gained considerable power within the WFDY, IUS, and Festival apparatuses in the 1960s. There is little question that China was the principal driver behind the Festival’s move from Europe to North Africa in 1965. But the manifest, on the ground influence belonged in many respects to Algerians. President Ahmed Ben Bella returned from Moscow in May 1964 with a massive aid package, and a likely tacit agreement to host the fronts’ banner world event.43 Ben Bella would be free to give the Ninth World Youth Festival whatever anti-imperial, non-aligned accents he wished, an authority that he asserted by naming himself chair of Algeria’s National Preparatory Committee (NPC). The free license came, nevertheless, with two caveats, one more explicit than the other. First, Algeria’s planners had to work in concert with the International Preparatory Committee (IPC). Second, China must not be allowed to co-opt the eight-day event. China had voted in favor of Algiers’ nomination in September 1964, and had issued a series of hardline proposals at the next IPC meeting in December—e.g. opening day should be the Day of the Cuban revolution, and the final day the Day of Africa.44 The choices were clever, given Ben Bella’s close friendship with Fidel Castro, and Algiers’ reputation as the “Mecca of revolution.”45 Reports from IPC headquarters in Algiers to East Berlin confirmed the risk that the Chinese threat, paired with Algerian autonomy, carried. If the Festival devolved into another shouting match, the 10,000 African activists on hand might side with China.

China and Ben Bella notwithstanding, there was another voice behind the Algiers Festival that deserves mention. In February 1963, the overthrow of Iraq’s Communist-friendly government drove a wave of émigrés into Eastern Europe, and soon thereafter, onto WFDY’s and IUS’s rosters. In Budapest as in Prague, they soon acquired a “leading

43 The calendar of international events in Algiers that year, as Niger’s president called Algiers, was impressive: the Pan-African Student Movement in January, the AAPSO (Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization) in March, the long-awaited Bandung 2 in June, and now the World Youth Festival in July.
role. The 1964 preparatory meeting where China proposed Cuba Day and Africa Day ratcheted Third World influence higher by redistributing IPC seats. For 1965, 9 were East European seats; 6 West European; 6 Latin America; 5 Asian; 3 from the US, Canada, and Australia; and 13 from Africa. The African caucus thus controlled one-third of the IPC vote. They were considerably less influential on the IPC’s executive organ, where programs, slogans, and imaginary budgets were drafted, according to East German documents. Iraqi Communists and the Ben Bella government, furthermore, felt little sympathy for one another since the latter banned the country’s Communist Party soon after taking power. It may be, therefore, that Arab and African voters exercised considerably less influence de facto than they had de jure.

The best evidence to counter this skepticism concerns the aftermath of Ben Bella’s overthrow in Algiers five weeks before the Festival was to open (and days before the scheduled opening of Bandung II). East European youth organization leaders had held a secret meeting in Prague ten days after the coup, and agreed that one instable, postcolonial host state was enough. Bulgaria nominated Sofia, and though no vote was taken, the response was positive. The public nomination process, nor surprisingly, was slow and fractious. At a Latin American student congress in Montevideo in November 1965, Cuba pushed for Hanoi, “reportedly incurring the ire of the Soviet delegate who favored Sofia.” Already that October, an article in Sudan’s communist daily recommended two “African socialist” capitals, Cairo and Accra. When Nasser declined, a

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48 See, e.g., BArch-Lichterfelde, DY/24/2437, 14-19.
49 The Algerians were deeply suspicious of the Iraqis, suspicions that they projected on to East European Festival planners as the event drew closer. Ibid.
50 See fn. 33.
51 Youth an Freedom, v. 8, n. 6 (1966), 9; on the meeting in Prague, see: HA XX/2, “Information über die IX Weltfestspiele 1965,” BStU, MfS HA XX, Nr. 5731, 32; News Features, v. 6, n. 8 (Aug 1965), 3.
three-man IPC “working group” flew to Ghana for an eight-day tour to evaluate its preparedness.\(^{52}\)

Two weeks later, in January 1966, the IPC “voted unanimously,” according to \textit{WFDY News}, in favor of Accra—by 39 to 0.\(^{53}\) In fact, though, no vote was taken. Since the “overwhelming majority of discussion speakers spoke for Accra,” reported the East German Stasi, the IPC leaders saw no need. Accra had nominated itself two days earlier, and Africa’s 13-member caucus, one-third of the 39 present, had let a Ghanaian speak in their name.\(^{54}\) The bloc obeyed the decision, in keeping with IPC’s parliamentary constitution. Whether China inspired the IPC to increase African representation in 1964 is in this case moot. What pushed the Festival to Accra, contrary to Soviet wishes, was the continent’s 13-vote caucus. Kwame Nkrumah’s overthrow one month after Ghana’s selection, in February 1966, was fortuitous, as the fronts could at last come home. But it also ensured that the Festival did not meet for six of the most dynamic ten years in youth culture and politics in memory, from 1962 to 1968.

\textbf{2. Split delegations}

A second challenge to the conventional portrayal of Soviet-backed fronts as marionettes, and Third World delegations as impotent within them, concerns the miniature civil wars that broke out between rival national delegations in the 1960s. Ostensibly, responsibility for the feuds belonged to the federations that invited the factions to participate. And indeed, the reasoning here was not always clear. What is self-evident is that neither the fronts nor the Festival host states had any reason to encourage hostilities at events devoted to “peace and friendship,” and intent on unifying world communism in the

\(^{52}\) Quote from \textit{Youth and Freedom}, v. 8, n. 6 (1966), 9; working group trip reported in Cabinet Secretariat memorandum, “\textit{9th World Festival of Youth and Students, 1966},” 1 Feb 1966, National Archives of Ghana (NAG), ADM 13/1/56.

\(^{53}\) \textit{WFDY News}, Jan. 1966, in IISG, World Youth Festival collection, folder: IX Festival, Accra. Czechoslovakia’s \textit{Mlada Fronta} affirmed that “the Cuban and Bulgarian delegations acclaimed” the choice. In fact, though, the Cubans “strongly insisted” on Havana, directing “furious” remarks against all counterarguments. Quotes from \textit{Youth and Freedom}, v. 8, n. 6 (1966), 9

\(^{54}\) BStU, HA XX/2, **“Information”, 1 Feb 1966; BStU, Mfs HA XX, Nr. 10224, Heft 1, 207.
1960s. At the core of the problem was the founding paradox of the front movement—the need to reconcile communist loyalties with what the CIA termed “representativity.”

The apparatus in charge of Festival admissions was comparable to the Olympic Games’. The International Preparatory Committee (IPC) took full responsibility for the event, including delegation quotas and invitations to governments in whose countries no National Preparatory Committee (NPC) operated. Each Communist-led NPC was tasked with recruiting a representative national delegation, in close contact with the IPC, oftentimes via the Soviet embassy. The host state, in turn, was the venue and nothing more. It built the dormitories and swimming pools that the Festival program required; but the politics belonged solely, according to the IPC, to the “world youth” themselves.

As the Cold War softened in the mid-1950s, pressure on Western NPCs to liberalize admissions led to regular confrontations. Soon rival NPCs formed, each vying for the right to distribute each nation’s allotted tickets and seminar slots to its own members. In postcolonial states where democracy was weak and civil societies small, the rifts were sharp, and the NPCs exclusive. The result was a difficult choice for the IPC: whether to invite governments that opposed Communist Parties, or to admit the oppositions in isolation.

In June 1973 in East Berlin, the IPC’s Standing Commission chose to ignore requests from Sudan’s Jaafar Nimeri government for an invitation to his Nimeri Youth organization. The majority-Communist Sudanese Youth Union (SYU) sent 200 delegates to the 1973 Festival, 100 of whom lived in the eastern bloc, and another 60-90 in other countries. On the day before the opening ceremony, a Sudanese man on the Standing Commission shared rumors of a Nimeri Youth group’s arrival in East Berlin, and asked his East German colleagues if the rumors were true. SED Central Committee member Paul Markowski assured him it was not. Three days later, however, the same Hassan

55 CIA-RDP*****.
57 BStU, HA XX Nr. 11351, S. 222, 237.
Sinada returned to report that Markowski was lying; the GDR had “set state relations to Sudan in the foreground,” its place of its political-ideological integrity.\textsuperscript{58} In a rush to preempt the “street riots” between state and exiles that Sinada predicted, the East Germans drew up a schedule of sightseeing events for the Nimeri Youth, all of them outside Berlin. They did the same for 37 Senegalese Communists who had insinuated themselves into the multi-national delegation of the International Union of Students (IUS).\textsuperscript{59} The Senegalese shouted obscenities at President Leopold Senghor as the Senghor-sponsored delegation rounded the track on opening day, followed by threats to attack them, before stating their “fundamental disagree[ment]” with the Festival’s two-faced admissions policy.\textsuperscript{60}

The roles in the Sudanese and Senegalese conflicts were inverted, inasmuch as Sudan’s government trespassed on the official opposition, while Senegalese Communists harassed Senghor’s official cohort. The reasoning here was either highly complex or heterogeneous, with different ends of the planning apparatus pursuing different audiences. In keeping with the latter view, Sinada turned out to be correct; the East German Foreign Ministry had invited the Nimeri government in hopes of restoring relations damaged by the coup.\textsuperscript{61} In Senegal’s case, meanwhile, the Soviets on the IPC had taken exception to Communists’ absence from the Senghor delegation. It was “necessary,” they argued, “to welcome a separate [Senegalese] delegation that will be treated as a part of the WFDY or IUS delegation.”\textsuperscript{62}

The GDR thus pursued national, diplomatic interests, while the USSR argued for the oppositions—the militants to whom the USSR had gravitated in the mid-1960s, in a race with China. In both cases, the conflict was between states and exile oppositions, not Maoists, pro-Soviets, Trotskyists or otherwise. Try as they might to govern attendance—

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} They had thus placed the lives of YUS delegates who still lived in Sudan at great risk. Ibid., 173.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Nr. 11351, S. 140, 274.
\item \textsuperscript{60} BStU, HA XX Nr. 11351, 154, 156.
\item \textsuperscript{61} BStU, HA XX Nr. 11351, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{62} MfS AS 432/73, Bd. 5, 142.
\end{itemize}
toward fewer Communists under Khrushchev, more under Brezhnev in 1968, and into the muddle of 1973—the polarity of Third World politics left little room for the fifth columns that led most Western delegations, and Popular Fronts before them. Third World participants redirected the Festival inasmuch as they obliged communist hosts to weigh which pole mattered most.

Conclusions

So when and how did WFDY (World Federation of Democratic Youth) become the most cosmopolitan NGO in Budapest? The paper began by arguing that the fronts were more closely allied with the global South in the 1940s than was the rest of Soviet foreign policy, and deserve historians’ attention accordingly. The Calcutta conference is well documented, but the organizations that made it possible are not. Had the organizations been circumscribed by ideology or geography, then the Western caricature of them might stand. But even at the acme of high Stalinism, the pretense to “representativeness” made bloc norms and protocols unwieldy. The Chinese threat provides a convincing if abstract explanation for the fronts’ southward drift in the 1960s. Missing are the social and power relations that arose in fronts based on an awkward overlap of communism and pluralism—relations that were not exclusive to the Soviet bloc.

63 On the night of day six, 20-30 Sudanese formed a drum circle on East Berlin’s Marx-Engels Platz before a “large crowd,” fifty meters from the TV tower. Taped to dancers’ and drummers’ backs were lists of the Communists killed by Nimeri’s government in the aftermath of a failed Communist coup in 1971. MfS (Stasi), “IM ‘Edith’ Bericht zu den Weltfestspielen”, 3 Aug 1973, BStU, AS 346/73, 61; BStU, HA XX Nr. 11351, 154, 156.