

THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN LABOR'S INFLUENCE ON THE COLD WAR FREE LABOR
MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF IRVING BROWN AND THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS IN TUNISIA AND ALGERIA

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B.A., Classics, University of Illinois, 2003
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A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2010

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Abstract

In 1988, Irving Brown received the Medal of Freedom from President Ronald Reagan for playing “a crucial role in breaking the hold of international communism over postwar Western Europe. By doing so, he can truly be called one of the architects of Western democracy.” Brown also made extraordinary efforts to fight international Communism in French North Africa during the 1950s. This paper seeks to answer the question of why these efforts in North Africa failed, and it will show the limits of American labor’s international influence during the Cold War, in particular in French North Africa.

Irving Brown successfully strengthened anti-Communist unions in Europe, and had the financial backing of the Truman Administration for those projects. However, Brown’s efforts to build anti-Communist trade unions in Tunisia and Algeria did not have the backing of the U.S. government under the Eisenhower Administration. Instead, the AFL-CIO, with Brown as its representative, attempted to use the non-Communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) to influence the nationalist movements of Tunisia and Algeria through their respective national unions, the *Union générale tunisienne du travail* (UGTT) and the *Union générale des travailleurs algériens* (UGTA). Disagreements within the ICFTU severely inhibited Brown’s effectiveness and prevented him from fully realizing the AFL-CIO’s policy goals in North Africa. Brown was overly dependent on Tunisia for his operations with the Algeria labor movement, and the ICFTU was incapable of providing adequate support to the Algerians to compete with its Communist rival, the World Federation of Trade Unions.

To the extent that independent Tunisia was Western-oriented, Brown was successful in his efforts. However, in the long run, Brown failed as an “architect of Western democracy,” as Tunisia became a dictatorship with a socialist economy. In Algeria, the state of war forced the UGTA to turn to the Eastern bloc despite Brown’s personal dedication to North African independence and development. Furthermore, in independence, Algeria’s government embraced socialism and single party rule.

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Acknowledgements

As with all scholarly works, this one was completed with the assistance of a large number of people. First, I thank the faculty of the History Department, especially the members of my committee: Michael Ramsay, Amy Hubbell, Albert Hamscher, and David Graff. Their cooperation and flexibility permitted the defense of this thesis under arduous time constraints. I also thank Dr. Farid Al-Salim who served as an advisor on my thesis. I must also acknowledge the wisdom imparted on me by the many faculty members with whom I have worked or studied under during the past four years: Marsha Frey, Michael Krysko, Robert Linder, Brent Maner, Kristin Mulready-Stone, and David Stone.

Second, the Department of History has supported me professionally and financially with a Graduate Teaching Assistantship for most of my time at Kansas State University. Since the spring of 2009, I have had the tremendous privilege and responsibility to teach a Western Civilization survey course of my own creation to undergraduates. It has been a rewarding experience in more ways than one. Moreover, both the Departments of History and Continuing Education permitted me the great pleasure in sharing my interest in the history of modern Algeria by creating and teaching a course for both the January 2009 intersession and the following May intersession.

Additionally, I was honored and grateful for two grants awarded by the Department of History: the Colonel Peter Cullen Fellowship and the James C. Carey Research and Travel Award for research leading to this thesis. I must also thank the Department of Political Science for the Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani Scholarship for my Arabic language studies in Ifrane, Morocco in the summer of 2007. Also, Mike Scheffel, K-State Dairy Unit Manager, helped me make ends meet in the summer of 2009. He took a chance on this city slicker and let me learn the ins and outs of dairy farming from driving a tractor to milking cows and all the wide range of activities that comprise dairy farming.

Archival research for this thesis was completed at: the United States Archives and Records Administration in Silver Spring, Maryland; the George Meany Memorial Archives at the National Labor College, also in Silver Spring; and the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. A heartfelt “thank you” is not enough for the many staffers who assisted me in this research.

Last, but not least, I must acknowledge the friends and family who kept me on the straight and narrow path to the completion of my degree. Jonathan Root spent many late nights across a table from me in Hale Library as we adapted to our first grueling year of graduate school. Jonathan and Susan Berhow have frequently been gracious dinner hosts, confidants, and all round good friends. John Gamble, likewise, has been a regular dinner partner, and I especially thank him for assisting me in the early revisions of my thesis draft. My parents and siblings have also been a constant source of support during my time here at Kansas State. Most of all, I am grateful for Heather Arnold, my love, who I met in the Great Room of Hale Library, appropriately enough. Without her love and faith in me, I might never have completed this thesis.

Dedication

For my family & friends, especially my parents,
John & Bernardine;
no one is self-made.

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Historiography

The final maneuvers in the liberation of Europe at the close of World War II were also the opening moves of the Cold War. The United States of America dominated the “Free World,” which was pitted against the Eastern bloc, led by the Soviet Union. The American Federation of Labor (AFL), led by President George Meany, felt that the role of organized labor in international affairs during the Cold War was just as important as the domestic role it had played in wartime production during World War II. Ideological victory over the hearts and minds of European workers would be the first campaign of this “free labor movement,” which would then bolster anti-Communist governments.¹ Irving Brown was an American labor representative in Europe from late 1944 until his death in 1989. Meany employed Brown to develop democratic, anti-Communist labor unions in Europe. From 1952 onward, Brown served as Meany’s personal representative on the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board (ICFTU) when Meany or another AFL officer could not be present at ICFTU’s Brussels headquarters, which was the majority of the time.²

In 1988, U.S. President Ronald Reagan awarded Brown the Medal of Freedom for playing “a crucial role in breaking the hold of international communism over postwar Western

1. Joseph C. Goulden, “Birth of a Cold Warrior,” Chapter 6, in *Meany* (New York: Antheneum, 1972); Archie Robinson, “The Cold War,” Chapter 7, in *George Meany and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981). George Meany was AFL’s secretary-treasurer from 1940-1952, AFL’s president from 1952-1955, and AFL-CIO president from 1955-1979.

2. Ben Rathbun, *The Point Man: Irving Brown and the Deadly Post-1945 Struggle for Europe and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Minerva Press, 1996), 53-54. From 1944 onward, Brown was FTUC’s representative in Europe. Though the FTUC was affiliated with the AFL, Brown did not become “AFL’s Representative to Europe” until 1947. In 1952, when George Meany was elected President of the AFL, he appointed Brown as his personal representative to international organizations in addition to his previous titles, although these were only nominal changes.

Europe. By doing so, he can truly be called one of the architects of Western democracy.”³ But Brown had also made extraordinary efforts to fight international Communism in French North Africa during the 1950s, and these exploits have been hardly noticed since then. Brown, for the most part, failed to achieve his objectives of creating democratic labor movements that could play a role in fostering the anti-Communist orientation of their own nations. This study seeks to analyze the obstacles that limited Brown’s success in North Africa, specifically in Tunisia and Algeria.

While North Africa had been a stepping-stone to the liberation of Europe, Cold Warriors such as Brown saw North Africa as an entrance point for the free labor movement to proliferate democratic and independent labor unions, eventually leading to the global liberation of all the world’s workers from Communist imperialism and neocolonialism.⁴ This is not to say that Europe’s significance had diminished or that its fate was secured by the Western Alliance. In fact, Europe remained the top priority in U.S. foreign policy during the first term of the Eisenhower Administration. The U.S. discreetly supported French neocolonialism as long as France’s policies were effective because of the critical importance of France’s cooperation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Unlike the U.S. government, however, Brown had the flexibility to expand the scope of American labor’s operations beyond Europe, even at the risk of Franco-American relations. Fascism had been defeated in Europe, but according to Brown, neocolonialism in Africa and

3. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, “Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the Presidential Medal of Freedom,” 17 October 1988, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1988/101788b.htm> (accessed 21 April 2010).

4. The author has borrowed the term “Cold Warrior” from Joseph Goulden’s work on Meany, but it equally applies to Brown who liked to reverse Clausewitz’s dictum on war being politics by other means to suggest trade unionism was war by other means. Report by Irving Brown, “Confidential,” 7 April 1953, in GMMMA-IB, box 10, folder 18, “Brown, Writings ‘52-‘53.”

elsewhere left colonial peoples vulnerable to Communist exploitation and was therefore a liability to the Western Alliance. But, the AFL did not have the support of the Eisenhower Administration for its mission in North Africa as it had enjoyed under the Truman Administration in Europe. Instead, Brown relied primarily on the ICFTU to fund and legitimate his work with the trade unionists of Tunisia and Algeria.

The concept of international labor unity was by no means new. Even before World War I, multiple International Trade Secretariats (ITS's) had been formed to represent trade unions of a specific industry but with multinational representation. For example, the three largest ITS's by 1955 were the International Metalworkers' Federation, the International Transport Workers' Federation, and the Miners' International Federation, comprising 14 million workers from 67 countries.⁵ There was also the International Labor Organization (ILO), which was established by the League of Nations and survived World War II to become part of the United Nations (UN). However, neither the ITS's nor the ILO had been formed to deal with the preponderant issues facing the post-war world: emerging and developing nations and the Cold War.⁶

Thus, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was established in 1945 to create a new international for workers of all nations, and for their needs alone — separate from employers and national governments (as in the tripartite structure of the ILO) and inclusive of all trades (as opposed to the ITS's). From its founding, however, the WFTU included unions from the Eastern bloc. The AFL leadership refused to participate in the WFTU because totalitarianism

5. Lewis L Lorwin, "The Structure of International Labor Activities," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 310 (Mar., 1957): 1-11.

6. A third organization, the International Free Trade Union did not survive World War II, unlike the ITS's and the ILO, *ibid.*

and Communism were anathema to free trade unions, meaning both democratic in nature and independent of national governments.⁷

Therefore, in 1949 the AFL and other national unions from the Western Alliance — including France’s new anti-Communist national union, *Confédération générale du travail - Force ouvrière* (FO) — formed the ICFTU. In time, membership within these two competing internationals reflected the political orientations of their member-unions’ respective governments *vis-à-vis* the Cold War. From the perspective of the West, the ICFTU was a free, independent, and democratic institution promoting those same qualities in trade unions, while the WFTU was totalitarian and Communistic.

The ICFTU’s constitution states, “The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions exists to unite the working women and men of the world in solidarity, organised in free, democratic, independent and representative trade union organisations, for the purpose of realising their emancipation, ensuring their dignity and bettering the quality of all workers’ lives everywhere in pursuit of a shared vision of a just and equitable world.”⁸ The combination of free trade unionism and the international labor movement yielded the international free labor movement. Brown occasionally used the phrase “free trade union movement,” such as in his 29 September 1950 speech to the U.S. Army War College. The phrase “free labor movement,” meaning democratic and independent of government, was used as early as 1947 in an article describing the re-emergence of free labor in Germany since the fascist repression of civil rights under the Nazis.⁹

7. Goulden, 126-127.

8. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, “Preamble to the ICFTU Constitution as Ammended by the Eighteenth World Congress,” December 2004, <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221155&Language=EN> (accessed 17 May 2010).

9. Irving Brown, “The Role of Labor in International Relations,” Speech at U.S. Army War College, 29

In keeping with America's position within the Cold War context, it was the AFL's goal to ensure that the ICFTU was not only non-Communist, but also effectively anti-Communist. Anything else was a "neutral threat" and applied to international organizations, such as the ICFTU, and governments, such as members of NATO. According to the AFL's perspective, neutralism was as much a threat to the Free World as Communism, because of its inherent passivity and potential for global appeal.

The history of the AFL in international labor relations of this period has focused mostly on Meany's steadfast opposition to *détente* during his nearly thirty years of leadership of American labor, or the eventual withdrawal of the AFL-CIO from the ICFTU in 1969 and the ILO in 1977. This history ranges between two extremes of interpretation. One suggests that Meany helped end the Cold War with a victory for the Free World, and was a hero for his wisdom and dedication to keep pressure on the Soviet Union. The opposite interpretation criticizes Meany and his supporters within the AFL-CIO as obtuse and stubborn for amplifying and perpetuating Cold War tensions, ultimately putting the needs of the American working man second to the American military-industrial complex. The current study seeks to avoid any judgment on this aspect of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy, and rather explores the limitations of its mission as pursued by Irving Brown in North Africa through the AFL-CIO's membership in the ICFTU.¹⁰

September 1950, GMMA-IB, box 10, folder 12, "Brown, Writings 47-85"; Samuel Liss, "Revival of Free Labor Organizations in the United States Occupation Zone in Germany: A Preview," *Southern Economic Journal* 13, No. 3 (Jan., 1947): 247-256.

10. An example of AFL-CIO's detractors is Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and the United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1969). A supportive analysis can be found in Philip Taft, *Defending Freedom: American Labor and Foreign Affairs* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1973) or Roy Godson, *American Labor and European Politics: The AFL as a Transnational Force* (New York: Crane, Russak, and Co., 1976). A full treatment of the relationship between the United States and the ILO is Walter Galenson, *The International Labor Organization: an American View* (Madison, Wisconsin: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

The extant history of the AFL-CIO in Africa is less than that of the AFL-CIO activities in Europe. There are perhaps two reasons for this. First, many of the records of the AFL-CIO from this period were not available until the 1990s. As a result, prior histories were ones originating from sources filtered by the AFL-CIO itself. Considering that the AFL-CIO did not have much to show for its efforts in Africa, it is unlikely that the AFL-CIO wanted the less admirable aspects of this story to be told. Similarly, while the Cold War was ongoing, American scholars may have been somewhat hesitant to criticize American labor's policy.

The 1992 Ph.D. dissertation of John Charles Stoner represents a change in this trend. His work focuses on AFL-CIO activities in sub-Saharan Africa, with specific examination of AFL-CIO's African-American representatives there. This work sheds some, but not much light on Brown's efforts in that region.¹¹

There is a similar dearth of research on Brown himself. The 1981 Ph.D. dissertation of Judith France explores the AFL-CIO's attempts to put public pressure on the Eisenhower Administration to change its policy towards France and Algeria, but mentions Irving Brown hardly at all.¹² The only biography of Brown is of the hero-worshipping variety, mostly of anecdotes told by Brown or by people who knew him personally. Articles exclusively about Brown are non-existent, but when he is mentioned the focus is his activities in France which emphasize his role in America's post-war intelligence operations. In that role the French treatment of Brown interprets him as the unwelcome outsider and a harbinger of Franco-American discord.¹³

11. John Charles Stoner, "Anti-Communism, Anti-Colonialism, and African Labor: the AFL-CIO in Africa, 1955-1975" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001).

12. Judith France, "AFL-CIO Foreign Policy: an Algerian Example, 1954-1962," (Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, 1981).

13. Ben Rathbun, *The Point Man: Irving Brown and the Deadly Post-1945 Struggle for Europe and*

The second chapter of this thesis confirms the collusion between the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the AFL's Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC) during the Truman Administration. However, the operational links between the CIA and the FTUC were deliberately dismantled after increasing disagreements about each party's labor relations activities in Europe and elsewhere.

While Brown was the AFL's representative to Europe and the FTUC's primary operative there, he had been dependent on CIA funds. By 1953, these funds were no longer readily available to Brown for either European or North African activities. Brown believed Africa and other underdeveloped regions to be increasingly important theaters of operation in the Cold War, because colonial peoples were increasing their demands for independence and economic development. The Eisenhower Administration, however, gave neither public nor private support to nationalist movements in North Africa during its first term. Instead, the U.S. government deferred its North African policy to successive French governments in order to sustain the Franco-American alliance within NATO. Thus, in terms of Cold War strategy, Eisenhower gave priority to Europe and NATO over other theaters of operation, such as the nationalist labor movements of French North Africa.

Chapter 3 will discuss Brown's work with the nationalist movement in Tunisia before and immediately after independence. Brown had close contacts with both the nationalist union *Union générale tunisienne du travail* (UGTT) and Habib Bourguiba, the leader of the nationalist political party Neo Destour. Brown was operating both as a representative of the ICFTU and the

Africa (Washington, D.C.: Minerva Press, 1996); George Morris, *CIA and American Labor: the Subversion of the AFL-CIO's Foreign Policy* (New York: International Publishers, 1967); Annie Lacroix-Riz, "Autour d'Irving Brown: l'A.F.L., le Free Trade Union Committee, le Département d'État et la scission syndicale française, 1944-1947," *Le Mouvement social*, no. 151 (April-June, 1990), 79-118.

AFL (later AFL-CIO). Brown lent Tunisians strong moral support when official U.S. policy was still paying deference to French attitudes on all of North Africa.

After Tunisian independence, AFL-CIO's model for an anti-Communist, democratic, and independent labor movement was never fully realized in Tunisia, in part because of the untimely assassination of the UGTT's founder, Farhat Hached. The future success of the African and Middle Eastern free labor movements seemed dependent on North African states because they were the first in all Africa to be freed from colonial rule. Accordingly, Brown and the AFL-CIO became obliged to Bourguiba, who was the single most influential Tunisian after Hached's death. Moreover, after the Suez Crisis, the Eisenhower Administration policy in North Africa shifted toward one of amelioration with independent Tunisia in the winter of 1956. The promising establishment of U.S. diplomatic and economic relations with Tunisia gave validity to the AFL-CIO's model of the free labor movement's role in establishing Western-oriented democracies in post-colonial Africa.

As a result, Brown and his colleagues did not oppose Bourguiba during his first conflict with the Tunisian labor movement in the same year. In fact, AFL-CIO was willing to sacrifice the Tunisian labor movement's independence from government in order to maintain access to other nations' labor movements in the rest of Africa, especially in Algeria. These preliminary moves by Bourguiba towards authoritarianism concerned the ICFTU Executive Board, which asked the AFL-CIO to intervene and preserve the independence of the UGTT. In order to fulfill the AFL-CIO's primary goal of establishing anti-Communist, pro-Western governments in North Africa, the AFL-CIO stood beside Bourguiba, who crushed a new labor union led by Ahmed Ben Salah.

In the process, disagreement over Tunisia was added to a growing list of Cold War issues that divided Brown, as the AFL-CIO's representative to the ICFTU, from other affiliated member-unions and personalities of the ICFTU. The resulting disharmony contributed to future failures of the AFL-CIO's attempts to use the ICFTU to further the AFL-CIO's international policy of building anti-Communist unions and Western-oriented nations in the post-colonial world.

As discussed in Chapter 4, this situation was apparent in Brown's relationship with the Algerian *Union générale des travailleurs algériens* (UGTA), which, like Brown, was expelled from Algeria during the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962). The Algerians' status as refugees in Tunisia and the Cold War competition between the ICFTU and the WFTU were two further obstacles to Brown's success in establishing the UGTA as a democratic and pro-Western organization capable of influencing the government of a future independent Algeria. Ultimately, the UGTA and Brown had zero influence on the Algerian Revolution that was dominated by the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN). Chapter 4 examines the plethora of obstacles that prevented Brown from replicating his Tunisian "success" in war-torn Algeria.

The current study concludes that American labor was unable to impose its will on the ICFTU and in turn, was unable to create free democratic labor movements in North Africa which could have been decisively influential in Tunisia or Algeria after independence. Brown was an ardent anti-Communist, but this study also suggests that American labor's ideological goal of free, independent labor movements, was secondary to the broader goal of establishing Cold War allies for America, or at least denying them to the Soviet Union. Yet, without substantial international support of the ICFTU or the official support of the U.S. government, Brown could not achieve either goal.

This thesis is complimentary to the collective works of John P. Windmuller, professor of industrial labor relations. Windmuller cataloged the development of the ICFTU as it occurred and observed the disintegration of relations between the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU from the position of an informed, outside observer. Most other treatments of this rupture focus on the events immediately related to the AFL-CIO's withdrawal from the ICFTU in 1969.¹⁴ This work, however, will illustrate the fault lines within the ICFTU Executive Board dating to an earlier period by exploring the primary documents of Irving Brown and other AFL-CIO colleagues regarding Tunisia, Algeria, and the ICFTU.

This work also gives a glimpse at the divisions within the AFL-CIO between the former members of the AFL and the former members of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The reader should be aware that while the AFL became the AFL-CIO in 1955, the transition was essentially seamless for Brown and the CIO's representatives to the ICFTU. This is due to the fact that despite the two national unions' merger into one American national union in 1955, they maintained their separate positions inside the ICFTU. Victor Reuther occupied the seat held by Walter Reuther when he was President of CIO, while Brown continued to represent AFL-CIO President Meany. This is somewhat ironic because CIO had originally split from the AFL in part, because of differences of opinion regarding Communism between the world wars.¹⁵ While merging in 1955 for the domestic solidarity of American workers, the two factions remained divided on international issues even within the AFL-CIO's new International Affairs

14. John P. Windmuller, "The Vienna ICFTU Congress," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 9, no. 2 (January 1956), 268-279; Windmuller, "Labor: a Partner in American Foreign Policy?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 350 (November 1963), 104-114; Windmuller, "The Foreign Policy Conflict in American Labor," *Political Science Quarterly*, 82, no. 2 (June 1967), 205-234.

15. France, 15-17. Another major factor was the differences of opinion about organizing craft workers, part of AFL's tradition, versus organizing industrial workers, championed by the founders of the CIO.

Department. This all-American feud has been studied elsewhere and is outside the scope of this work.¹⁶

Another relevant consideration in this history is the nation of Morocco, which was an important factor in many of the issues embroiling North Africa. Moreover, Brown did work with Morocco's national union the *Union marocaine du travail*. However, because of the constraints of this academic exercise, Morocco is considerably less important for illustrating Brown's difficulties related to the ICFTU and the Tunisians and the Algerians. Morocco was and remains to this day a monarchy, and it was a very unlikely target of Communist influence. The sultanate had played a pivotal role in Morocco's independence movement and remained very sound in its rule. Moreover, Morocco was already dependent on American aid, including American use of Moroccan airbases, and had a longstanding tradition of friendly diplomatic relations with the U.S. predating the French protectorate. Although there was a natural concern by the U.S. government for Moroccan affairs, these combined factors meant there was no more than reasonable doubt on the part of Eisenhower Administration about the continued positive Moroccan-American relationship, except possibly in regards to American airbases, which were decreasing in importance in the age of nuclear missiles.¹⁷

This thesis makes reference to many Arabic names of Algerians and Tunisians based on the writings of Westerners who did not benefit from a system of transliteration established by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* that scholars use today. Therefore, in quoting primary sources, there are occasional inconsistencies in spelling between the citation and the

16. Ibid., "The Foreign Policy Conflict in American Labor."

17. Mathew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50-54,111-112; Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 109,163,175,206.

words of the current author. For example, “Moslem” has become “Muslim,” and “Sakhiet ben Youssef” has become “Sakiet ben Youssef.” The Algerian politician is “Ferhat Abbas” while the Tunisian labor leader is “Farhat Hached.”

The author has also elected to use the term “Muslim States” in referring to the nations of North Africa and the Middle East, while the historical documents refer to “Arab States” for the same group of nations. This is incorrect, because the peoples of North Africa are not exclusively Arabs; they are *Amazighs*, or Berbers, and Turks, and Europeans, too. But the majority faith is Islam. The remaining alternative term “Islamic States” has been rejected also, because it implies a theocratic government that was, in fact, not the trend in Muslim States during the mid-20th century.

In referring to the names of French organizations, the French conventions for capitalization have been applied. The term *Pieds Noirs*, refers to European colonists specifically living in Algeria who thought of themselves as native Algerians. The term *colons* is equally appropriate but has been reserved by the author for Europeans living in Tunisia.

The terminology for the autochthonous people of Algeria is also problematic, that is to say the non-Europeans. The French referred to them variously as Muslims, Arabs, or *indigènes*. The author has chosen to use the term “native Algerians” or simply “Algerians” to refer to the people with anti-colonial sympathies whatever their ethnicity or religion. However, it is still true that most of these people were in fact, Muslims of non-European descent and were the marginalized majority of French colonial society.

Also, in quoting the primary documents the author strove to make them as precise to the original as possible, including errors in punctuation, grammar, and capitalization. Irving Brown (or perhaps his secretary) frequently omitted the use of commas and made inconsistent use of

capitalization or punctuation for acronyms. Brown also had the curious habit of referring to himself in third person in his earlier reports, but was somewhat inconsistent in that he at least once referred to himself in the first and third person in the same sentence.¹⁸ Most of the time, Brown signed the reports, thus confirming his authorship. Translations of French language sources have been done by the author with one or two exceptions in the case of the American consular officers' English reports on a French language article, which are indicated in the footnotes. Any and all errors within this thesis are my own.

18. For examples, see the citation p. 35, no. 6 or p. 80, no. 35.

Photographs



Above, left: Irving Brown speaks at the ICFTU's Fifth World Congress at Tunis, July 1957. Above, right: Brown at Tunis, July 1957. Below: Prime Minister Habib Bourguiba (back, left) talks over drinks with Irving Brown (back, right) at Tunis, July 1957.

All photographs are © Time Inc.



Chapter 2 - Irving Brown, and the French Labor Movement, 1944-1953

Irving Brown spent his entire professional career as a trade unionist in one capacity or another, first in the United States as part of the AFL, then later as part of the United States government during World War II. However, the bulk of his life was spent in Paris seeking to execute the foreign policies of the AFL and later the AFL-CIO through its Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC). Although funded in part by the AFL and followed closely by AFL President George Meany, it was directed by Jay Lovestone, a former Communist turned anti-Communist, with whom Brown had a longstanding personal and professional relationship.

From 1944 onward, as an operative of the FTUC, Brown worked to end Communist influence over the French labor movement in order to bolster France as an American ally in the Cold War against Communism. Early on, Brown struggled to convince French workers with anti-Communist sympathies to oppose the strong influence of Communists in France, in part because of meager resources. However, a cooperative relationship with the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) starting in 1947 and the influx of Marshall Plan money in 1948 improved Brown's effectiveness. With this funding, Brown assisted a major break in France's national union the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT). U.S. government money funded other union activities in Europe as well. However, disagreements over foreign labor policy between the FTUC and the CIA led to a deterioration of the cooperative relationship, and it effectively ended when Allen Dulles became director of the CIA in 1953.

Like many Americans during World War II, Brown was heavily involved in the war effort as an employee of the U.S. government. He worked officially at different times for the

U.S. War Production Board and the Foreign Economic Administration in Washington, D.C., from 1940 to 1945. But Brown also served as a consultant to William “Wild Bill” Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), America’s intelligence organization during 1944. In London, Brown advised the OSS on the role of transport workers in the resistance movement within occupied Europe.¹

After victory in Europe, President Truman recognized the importance of reorganizing labor unions in rebuilding war-torn Europe. For this purpose, in 1945, Truman appointed Joseph D. Keenan, brigadier general and AFL vice president, as a labor advisor to General Lucius Clay. Clay was the commander of the American Occupation zone in Germany.² In July of that year, Keenan, at the behest of Meany, brought Brown to Berlin to meet Clay. Brown made policy recommendations about how best to set up unions to ensure that Communists were less able to exploit them. One of Brown’s more notable achievements occurred in April 1946, when he helped identify Major George S. Wheeler as a Communist in the U.S. military government’s Manpower Division. Shortly after, Wheeler fled to Czechoslovakia.³ Even while consulting with the American military government in Germany, Brown continued his primary responsibilities as AFL’s FTUC roving agent across Europe.

The FTUC had been established in 1944 by George Meany, then AFL’s secretary-treasurer, who had had the foresight to recognize that trade unions could play a role, not only in the successful rehabilitation of Europe, but also in preventing the spread of Communism there and elsewhere. The FTUC was not, in fact, an original AFL creation, but the AFL’s adoption of

1. Rathbun, 91-95; 225.

2. Ibid.; The American Catholic Research Center and University Archives, “An inventory of the Joseph D. Keenan Papers at the American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives,” the American Catholic University, <http://libraries.cua.edu/achrcua/keenon.html> (accessed 22 April 2010).

3. Rathbun, 238-9.

an existing organization. David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), had established the Jewish Labor Committee in 1934 to assist Jewish and socialist refugees escape from fascism in Europe. During the war, the OSS collaborated with the Jewish Labor Committee to take advantage of the anti-fascist network established by the committee. It was a logical development, given Brown's proven capability and previous cooperation with the U.S. government, that the link between the government's intelligence community and this labor organization, forged during the Second World War, was passed on to their successors—the CIA and the FTUC—in the Cold War.⁴

The FTUC board comprised David Dubinsky, George Meany, George M. Harrison, and Matthew Woll, who served as chairman. As a Luxembourg-born American and AFL vice-president, Woll served as the public face of the FTUC and as the AFL's European "expert." This was because the actual director of the FTUC, Jay Lovestone, was infamous in America for having been the former head of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). He was not an ideal candidate for promoting the FTUC's anti-Communist mission among the AFL's dues-paying members.⁵

In the 1920s, a majority faction of the CPUSA opposed Lovestone's continued leadership of the party. Lovestone nearly lost his life while pleading his case to the Comintern in Moscow in 1929. Lovestone was a supporter of Nikolai Bukharin precisely at the time when Stalin was seeking to eliminate the last comrade of Lenin. Over the next decade, Lovestone led an opposition faction amongst American Communists appropriately known as the Lovestonites.

4. Goulden, 119-120.

5. *Ibid.*, 123; Rathbun, 58-59. George Harrison was the president of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, and a vice-president of the AFL. Woll was formerly the president of the Photoengravers' Union. Lovestone ran the FTUC out of the very same ILGWU office from which he had directed the Jewish Labor Committee in New York City.

Eventually, Lovestone's personal vendetta against Stalin became an opposition to the very same ideology that he had once embraced.⁶

In 1931, Lovestone met a college senior in economics at New York University named Irving Brown. As president of the NYU Social Problems Club, Brown invited Lovestone to give a guest lecture. The former leader of the CPUSA took Brown to a popular restaurant and later, other high-end restaurants Brown had never set foot in before. Lovestone found that Brown shared his socialist concern for labor rights, but also an anti-Communist outlook.⁷

After graduation in 1932, Brown worked all sorts of odd jobs, such as non-union truck-driver, while taking night classes at Columbia University. He also fell in love, and in 1934, Brown married Lovestone's German-born, Hungarian-American secretary. That same year, Brown joined the AFL as a grass-roots or shop-level organizer. He started in Kentucky and moved all around the country.⁸

In 1937, employees of the Ford Service Department, the automaker's in-house security and strike breaking force, mugged Brown at a Ford plant south of Chicago. This was one of his many lessons about the hard realities of labor organizing. Eventually, both Brown and Lovestone served as advisors to United Auto Workers (UAW) President Thomas Martin in his reelection campaign versus the Congress of Industrial Organizations' (CIO) candidate for the post, R.J. Thomas. Thomas won, which established the UAW as a CIO source of power for decades to come.⁹

6. Goulden, 120-122; Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster* (New York: Random House, 1999), 48-124.

7. Rathbun, 44-45. The first restaurant was Lüchow's, which was a New York establishment from 1882-1982.

8. *Ibid.*, 45-47.

9. Goulden, 121; Rathbun, 47-49.

While Brown continued to work as a union organizer for the AFL all over the U.S., Lovestone served as the general secretary of the Jewish Labor Committee for the ILGWU. Meany's 1944 adoption of the Jewish Labor Committee brought Lovestone and Brown back together under the auspices of the FTUC, which was an extra-constitutional, off-budget organization of the AFL. After victory in Europe in 1945, Lovestone began with three foreign operatives: Richard Deverall was sent to work in Asia, Henry Rutz was based in Germany, and Brown was sent to Paris, but quickly branched out all over Europe and even to Africa. Brown's most notable achievement in Europe and most relevant to the current study was his key role in establishing the French anti-Communist union *Confédération générale du travail - Force ouvrière*, or simply the *Force ouvrière* (FO).¹⁰

During the war, the Soviet Union had been one of France's allies in its liberation, and many French Communists had played a valiant role in the resistance movement against the German occupation. Moreover, Communist ideology forecasting a workers' utopia struck a chord with a working class mired in the deep and widespread economic suffering of a prostrate France. Accordingly, Communists were trusted and had mass appeal in politics and in unions, including France's largest national union, the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT). It was Brown's mission on behalf of the AFL and the FTUC to challenge Communist influence within the unions, including CGT.¹¹

Brown recognized that the appeal of Communism correlated to the level of labor's economic hardship, something over which he had no control. Therefore, his primary tactic was to criticize the inconsistencies between Communist ideology, the policies of the CGT, and those of the French coalition government, which included the *Parti communiste français* (PCF). Starting

10. Goulden, 127-128; Rathbun, 58.

11. Godson, 7; Goulden, 128.

in 1946, the FTUC published the monthly *International Free Trade Union News* in four languages: French, English, German, and Italian. The FTUC also published pamphlets, and Brown and the committee members (including George Meany) contributed to independent papers and journals across Europe.

For Brown and the FTUC, a favorite point of criticism was the Soviet's system of slave-labor camps, which was invoked as the future of France should Communist domination of the CGT continue. These writings were also aimed at the national labor unions of both Western and Eastern Europe, which remained affiliates of the only major international labor organization at the time, the Communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The AFL published its most substantial anti-Communist document in 1949. It was a full-length book featuring testimonies of former inmates of gulags from Eastern Europe.¹²

Many French unionists were receptive to this campaign but lacked the confidence and coordination to oppose the Communists. There were doubts about the intentions of the CGT and the PCF, both of which told France's workers they must increase production and oppose strikes. One obstacle was that the would-be anti-Communist opposition was spread among small unions across France that were often dominated by Communists even at the local level. Anti-Communist morale was poor because of fear that Communists would, in fact, soon be ruling the country and seek reprisals against opposition groups within the trade unions. Moreover, the Communists still enjoyed a positive public image from wartime exploits, while many of the experienced anti-Communist leaders bore the stigma of appeasing or collaborating with the Vichy regime. In

12. Godson, 107-110.

short, no apparatus for national coordination and communication to fight the Communist leadership of the CGT existed. Furthermore, the funds to create such an apparatus did not exist.¹³

To remedy this, Brown spent most of 1946 traveling throughout France and speaking with French trade unions in key sectors of transportation, mining, and communications. His goal was to make sure the opposition groups knew that they were not alone in their doubts about the Communist-controlled CGT. Brown determined that the nucleus for building the opposition should be an anti-Communist labor newspaper: *Résistance ouvrière*. Run by Robert Bothereau, *Résistance ouvrière* was the seed for the emerging union *Force ouvrière* (FO).¹⁴

The strategy of building a new national union had two major hazards. First, splitting any union was blasphemous in the eyes of the labor movement. Union busting was the strategy of the business interests and reactionary governments. Brown himself noted that union splitting was “not a nice way of doing business.”¹⁵ Second, both the CGT opposition groups and Brown were equally aware that the perception of AFL influence would invite strong criticism from the PCF, the CGT leadership, and possibly many other non-Communist groups genuinely concerned about American manipulation. Thus, early FTUC funding was filtered through the Jewish Labor Committee, which had an established wartime record.

FTUC’s funds for Europe were meager in any event. An annual budget of about \$35,000 had to cover Brown’s own operating budget of about \$24,000 in addition to building France’s anti-Communist unions.¹⁶ Historian Roy Godson estimated from FTUC records that up to

13. Ibid., 94-101; Radosh, 312.

14. Godson 77-85; Radosh, 312-313, 315.

15. Radosh, 315.

16. Anthony Carew, “The American Labor Movement in Fizzland: the Free Trade Union Committee and the CIA,” *Labor History* 39, no. 1 (Feb. 1998): 25-43; “Labor: The Most Dangerous Man,” *Time magazine*, 17 March 1952.

\$20,000 was given to the French opposition groups between 1946 and December 1947, when the FO was formally established.¹⁷

In the absence of major financial resources, Brown also sought material support. According to Brown, he secured one truckload of second-hand typewriters from Jefferson Caffrey, the U.S. ambassador to France. Brown appreciated Caffrey all the more because, he said, Caffrey was one of the few U.S. government officials then in Europe who understood the need “to do something or this country [France] is going to be on its ass.” Brown, however, believed that Caffrey’s staff was hostile to him, that they thought of Brown as “the new guy on the block who represented the lousy unions.”¹⁸ Brown also secured 25 mimeograph machines to spread the FO’s anti-Communist, anti-CGT message across the country.¹⁹

This message took aim at what Brown saw as the Communists’ essentially capitalist postwar policy.²⁰ As part of the coalition government, the Communists used the slogan “produce, always produce.” Government policies intended to encourage rapid redevelopment included wage freezes at a time of inflation and food shortages. Thus, Brown argued that the PCF did not have the workers’ material interests at heart because, as part of the government — including the Ministry of Labor — the PCF was responsible for the wage freezes.²¹ This is the type of argument FO made to encourage non-Communists to leave CGT. Although support by Brown helped the FO get the message out, a catalyst was still needed to get the anti-Communist majority of the CGT’s membership to leave the CGT and thereby decrease its significance.

17. Godson, 117.

18. Rathbun, 32-33.

19. Godson, 130.

20. Irving Brown, “The C.G.T. Convention,” n.d. [1946], in Radosh, 317.

21. Radosh, 316-17.

That catalyst was the national wage strikes called by the CGT, which crippled France's economy throughout 1947. The French socialist party, *Section française de l'internationale ouvrière*, and the emerging FO criticized the strikes as a politically motivated effort by the Communist leadership of the CGT to save face in light of growing dissatisfaction with the PCF's economic policies as part of the coalition government.²² Alternatively, the strikes could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to sow discord among the masses. Brown subscribed to the latter interpretation. The duration of the strikes began to take a toll on the participants, who doubted the motives of the CGT leadership more than ever.²³ By December 1947, Léon Jouhaux, the only non-Communist leader remaining in the CGT, accepted the need to form an anti-Communist union and endorsed the official creation of the anti-Communist national union CGT-FO (FO).²⁴ This was the first major success of Brown's efforts to fight Communism in France. The Communist unions were far from defeated — for that Brown needed money and lots of it.

According to the often-cited 1967 *Saturday Evening Post* article, "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral," the former director of the CIA's Foreign Operations Division, Tom Braden, began funding the FTUC during the French nation-wide strikes of 1947. Braden gave Brown \$15,000 cash for his operations in France.²⁵ It is difficult to gauge the impact of this particular grant. On the one hand, it was equivalent to nearly half of FTUC's annual European budget, but it was a paltry sum compared to the millions of dollars of Soviet funding available to the PCF or the

22. Radosh, 318.

23. Godson, 85-86.

24. *Ibid.*, 117-118; Rathbun, 193.

25. Tom Braden, "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral," *Saturday Evening Post*, 20 May 1967, 10.

CGT.²⁶ On the other hand, it was a U.S. government endorsement of the FTUC's anti-Communist activities in France.

Meanwhile, the Truman Administration recognized the lackluster recovery of Western Europe was a major liability for global security. Thus, in 1948, U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall established the European Recovery Program in order to rejuvenate Western Europe. The influx of billions of dollars in American aid made access to U.S. funds easy for Brown. Under the guise of the Marshall Plan and the auspices of the State Department, the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) provided CIA funding for Brown. Averell Harriman, the special representative in Europe in charge of the Economic Cooperation Administration, which oversaw the execution of the Marshall Plan, arranged for the transfer of funds to Brown. Harriman modestly observed that, he “arranged rather liberal Marshall Plan funds for Irving” when in fact direct cash support averaged roughly \$1 million annually from 1948-1950.²⁷

Brown's most notable use of these funds was for the Mediterranean Committee, established in August 1949 by the International Transport Federation's Dockers' and Seafarers' conference at Rotterdam. The committee's purpose was to ensure the delivery of Marshall Plan goods through Mediterranean ports in France, Italy, and Greece. The arrival of American aid had given hope to Frenchmen that there would be a reversal in France's economic condition — and for Brown a corresponding decline in Communist influence of French labor. Foreseeing the potential impact of substantial American aid, Communist-directed dockworkers and stevedores across the Mediterranean went on strike. Other workers were prevented from unloading the cargo

26. Rathbun, 217-218.

27. Carew, 1; Rathbun, 218-19, 221.

by the Communists' threats of violence or actual violence. This maneuver threatened everything Brown had accomplished and the economic recovery of Europe.²⁸

With American funding directed by Brown, the Mediterranean Committee, led by the Corsican trade unionist Pierre Ferri-Pisani, became an institution unto itself. The committee's full time staff published its own monthly magazine *Air, Terre, Mer (Air, Land, Sea)* and coordinated anti-Communist dockworkers in at least three countries. In France, the union leaders of the French national railway as well as other land-based transport unions also joined the Mediterranean Committee.²⁹

The Mediterranean Committee funds — which originated from the CIA through the OPC to the FTUC or directly to Brown — were used in a variety of ways, some more ruthless than others. First, the Committee's propaganda sought to encourage dockworkers to unload the American goods and discourage them from striking. If an American ship could not find an open port, it would sail to a functioning port arranged by the Committee. Another less common technique was to use anti-Communist holdouts who remained in the CGT as inside players to undermine the local strikes. Similarly, groups of sailors on individual ships were paid to counter Communist propaganda among the crews. The least savory, but most direct type of operation was the hiring of strongmen to protect dockworkers non-compliant to the CGT strike orders. Since the dockworkers might be threatened at home, the committee went to the extraordinary step of promising to avenge any injured dockworkers, not by roughing up their attackers, but by

28. Godson, 120.

29. Ibid., 120-1; Radosh, 323-324; Rathbun, 199-202.

“crushing the skulls” of the Communist union leaders who directed them. The Mediterranean Committee was very effective in bringing an end to Communist-led dock strikes by 1952.³⁰

Despite such successes, Brown was still not satisfied with the national leadership of the FO. He felt a major weakness was the exclusion of blacklisted labor leaders. These individuals had held prominent trade union roles under Vichy and were expelled from trade unions after the war at the instigation of the CGT. Brown defended them as being anti-Communist and thought of them as the potential leadership required to end Communist influence once and for all. This was too much for some French trade unionists. As a foreigner, Brown was reaching the limits of his influence upon the FO.³¹ In a way, he was a victim of his own success. The FO did not desperately need Brown’s organizational skills or American funding anymore. Other circumstances moved against Brown’s efforts in Europe, particularly in the issue of funding.

The end of Brown’s and the FTUC’s easy money was approaching with the conclusion of the Marshall Plan in 1952. Furthermore, the relationship between the CIA and the FTUC was already becoming strained by 1950. There were three main factors in the deterioration of the FTUC’s arrangements with the CIA. The initial factor was the FTUC’s desire to remain as independent as possible. According to Braden, “The CIA was handing over enormous sums of money to Lovestone and Brown for their network abroad, and it was always a sore point that we never got any accounting from them. Lovestone and Brown successfully managed to say, ‘Well, we spent that in Marseilles, or that in Paris, or there’s a communist dock strike and we broke it up.’”³²

30. Godson, 82-83, 120-122, 136-137; Rathbun, 199-202. The author does not know the extent of such reprisals against the Communists. However, “The first Communist who tried to fire Ferri-Pisani’s men was chucked into the harbor.” *Time magazine*, “Most Dangerous Man.”

31. Radosh, 324-325.

32. Carew, 1-2.

Another cause of friction resulted from operations in Italy. In addition to supporting the FTUC's operations there, the CIA was conducting its own, parallel, operations. In a situation similar to France, the Americans wanted to form a strong anti-Communist labor movement, but the Italian Communists had the most influence over organized labor. The free flow of American cash through the CIA and the State Department dampened the level of control that the FTUC could exercise over potential recipients, since the FTUC had minimal funds of its own. The government employees dispensing the cash were attempting to buy anyone and everyone and lacked the sophistication to get funds to legitimate anti-Communist trade unionists, according to Brown and Lovestone.³³ In short, the CIA was undermining its own policy.

This lack of coordination reflected a more fundamental source of friction: a widespread anti-labor sentiment among members of the CIA. In this regard, Lovestone's leadership of the FTUC was a particular source of doubt since he had been general secretary of the CPUSA and even liked to brag among his peers that he had known "Lenin at first hand."³⁴ Lovestone also mockingly referred to the CIA as the "Fizz kids." Rather than comply with the CIA's demands for accountability, Lovestone vainly fought back. He began slowing the flow of global labor intelligence, gathered by FTUC operatives, to the agency.³⁵

In response, the CIA attempted to cut out Lovestone and handle the FTUC operatives — including Brown — individually. Sometimes the agency asked them to gather intelligence not related to their labor activities. Apparently this failed, because payments from the CIA to the FTUC became smaller and parceled out on a project-by-project basis. This was, perhaps,

33. Ibid.; Rathbun, 212-214.

34. Crew, 2; Goulden, 122.

35. Carew, 2.

adequate for intelligence gathering but not union building, and Lovestone and Brown resented it. In March 1951, Brown wrote Lovestone, “I cannot conceive how we can lend our good name and organization to such a group of uniformed irresponsible sophomores. I absolutely refuse to be put in the position of being run by people who have never been in the labor movement, who have never lived intimately with the problems that we are dealing with and who are merely intellectually on our side for certain moments.”³⁶

In April 1951, at least two members of the FTUC governing board met with General Bedell Smith, then director of the CIA. Matthew Woll and David Dubinsky complained about competitive funding to the CIO (still a separate organization from the AFL in 1951), mishandling of the Italian situation, the inexperience and ineffectiveness of the new CIA front organization (the National Committee for a Free Europe) and its eight million dollar annual budget, and lastly, the lack of funding for the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

The ICFTU was formed in 1949 by the AFL and other national labor organizations as a counter to the Communist dominated World Federation of Trade Unions. The CIA was clearly moving away from reliance upon the FTUC’s labor network and moving toward keeping all of its intelligence gathering in-house, including in the labor movement. Thus, the CIA was not as interested in giving money to a non-governmental international organization, such as the ICFTU, over which it would have doubtful control after its less than ideal experience with the all-American FTUC.³⁷

CIA funding to the FTUC peaked in 1950 at \$170,000. As tensions between FTUC and the CIA grew, funding was increasingly determined on a project-by-project basis. From 1949 to

36. *Ibid.*, 3.

37. *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

1956, the vast majority of these funds were sent to Asia, specifically China, Japan, India, and Indonesia. These were the portfolios of Dick Deverall, not Irving Brown. In fact, the only CIA money Brown may have had access to after 1952 was for a project in Finland. Funding for Africa was conspicuously absent, even though Brown had been going to North Africa as early as 1950. Overall funding declined with the last known subsidy being a mere \$10,109 in 1958. It would hardly have been enough to pay the salary of a single FTUC staffer.³⁸

In 1953, Brown's funding was so reduced that he could no longer fund the Italian section of the Mediterranean Committee. Desperate, he went to the CIA's American headquarters in March 1953, but was denied any additional support.³⁹ Interestingly enough, on 2 April 1953, in their only confirmed meeting, Brown met President Eisenhower in the Oval Office of the White House.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Eisenhower Presidential Library documents do not indicate what was discussed, but according to Brown, "The President pointedly told me: 'I just can't challenge the French on colonial policy, Irving. As President, I can't lecture them about what to do about their colonies. That would be very counterproductive.'"⁴¹ The timing of this decreased funding for European operations and Brown's meeting with the President indicate Brown may have been hoping to expand or divert his operations as U.S. funding for European projects dried up. Circumstances affecting the international labor movement made trade union development in

38. Ibid., 1, 5. In all likelihood, these funds were not delivered for services rendered abroad on behalf of the CIA or in conjunction with the CIA. By that time, Jay Lovestone's sole contact with the CIA was James Jesus Angleton, himself a sort of pariah within in the agency. Lovestone was selling reports from his FTUC operatives to Angleton page by page, hardly the level of cooperation of the days of the Mediterranean Committee paying thugs to beat up Communists so that Marshall Plan cargo would make it ashore. Morgan, *A Covert Life*, 195-258, 281-310.

39. Carew, 5.

40. EPL, Eisenhower, Dwight D., Records as President, Index of Daily Appointments.

41. Rathbun, 293-4.

other regions, such as North Africa, seem of greater immediate importance to American labor's role in Cold War strategy as will be discussed below.

In any case, it was unlikely that Brown or the FTUC would have their funding restored under the new Eisenhower Administration. First, Eisenhower initially elected to practice a foreign policy favoring France's colonial pretensions rather than the nationalist aspirations of France's colonial subjects, even though he was aware of the risks of such policy.⁴² Secondly, Allen Dulles, Eisenhower's CIA director, had been the chief proponent in reducing funding to the FTUC in favor of creating the CIA's own operations when serving as the special assistant to then Director Bedell Smith.⁴³ Therefore, when Dulles became Eisenhower's director of Central Intelligence, it was almost guaranteed that no substantial funding from the U.S. government would reach Brown for use in the development of trade unions in French North Africa.

In the final analysis, Irving Brown did more for the development of free labor in Europe than any other American. In March of 1952, *Time Magazine* lionized Brown in an article titled "The Most Dangerous Man." It explained how Brown in "6½ action-packed years as A.F.L. Representative in Europe" had earned the ire of European Communists by breaking the French and Italian general strikes of 1947 with the support of anti-Communist unions in each country. He had also organized the Mediterranean Committee to keep French, Italian, and Greek ports open to Marshall Plan goods despite Communist efforts to prevent delivery. Of his own work Brown said, "Wherever we could find men who would fight, we had to give them the knowledge that they were not fighting alone."⁴⁴ This sums up nicely Brown's morale-boosting efforts to

42. Connelly, 99-100. Eisenhower's thinking about France and the post-colonial world is apparent in his reflections on the Indochinese War (1945-1954) in his memoirs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, NY : Doubleday, 1963).

43. Carew, 2-5.

44. *Time Magazine*, "Most Dangerous Man."

fight Communism in the Cold War theater of operations that was the international labor movement.

His efforts in Europe during this period would much later earn recognition from President Ronald Reagan, but in the 1950s, his recent actions in France would complicate his efforts in French North Africa. He established a controversial reputation for himself among knowledgeable Frenchmen. He was ultimately a foreigner, and he had committed a cardinal sin of labor by breaking the French national union, the CGT, even if it was dominated by Communists. Brown liked to tell the story of a cab ride through Paris that shows his infamous reputation. The driver was an ardent Communist who ended an unsolicited political rant with “And the most dangerous man in all France is the American spy, Irving Brown!” Of course, the driver was quite surprised to learn the identity of his fare. Although this reputation as an “American agent” was well earned, it was not quite accurate.⁴⁵

Even when the FTUC was receiving financial support from the U.S., it was a coincidence of common interest as evidenced by the rather brief period of amicable cooperation. The CIA had played a crucial role in funding the AFL’s FTUC operations abroad, including those of Brown in Europe during the Truman administration. However, by the time President Eisenhower took the oath of office, Brown was out of the loop and his activities in North Africa were not supported by the U.S. government. Instead, in the 1950s AFL would be reliant on the ICFTU to underwrite American labor’s aggressively anti-colonial and anti-Communist policies globally, as well as in North Africa. As discussed below, American labor’s dependence on the ICFTU would be a factor in Brown’s inability to effectively develop free trade unions and pro-Western governments in Tunisia and Algeria.

45. Ibid.

Chapter 3 - Irving Brown and the Tunisian Labor Movement, 1950-1956

After World War II, Irving Brown dedicated himself to the international free labor movement, first in Europe and then in Africa, including French North Africa. Starting in 1950, he developed contacts with Tunisian labor unions and politicians, when the ICFTU decided to expand its operations in Africa. After these initial contacts, Brown worked alongside Tunisian trade unionists to raise the global profile of the leading nationalist union, *Union générale tunisienne du travail* (UGTT), as a union dedicated to anti-Communism and worthy of the national self-determination it desired. Simultaneously, Brown accepted the premise that a nationalist trade union movement could support the democratic aspirations of a purely political organization, such as Tunisia's nationalist party Neo Destour, as a precursor to cooperation between the two organizations during independence.

This model was never fully realized in Tunisia, in part because of the untimely assassination of the UGTT's founder, Farhat Hached. In staking the future success of the African and Middle Eastern free labor movements on Tunisia, Brown became obliged to Habib Bourguiba, the single most influential Tunisian after Hached's death. After full independence was achieved in 1956, the preliminary moves by Bourguiba towards authoritarianism concerned the ICFTU Executive Board, which asked Brown and the AFL-CIO to intervene and preserve the independence of the UGTT. In order to fulfill the primary goal of establishing an anti-Communist, pro-Western government in North Africa, the AFL-CIO stood aside when Bourguiba crushed a new labor union led by Ahmed Ben Salah. In the process, disagreement over Tunisia was added to a growing list of issues that alienated Brown as the AFL-CIO's

representative to the ICFTU from other affiliated member-unions of the ICFTU and various personalities within the executive board. This disagreement hampered effective operation of the free trade union movement throughout North Africa, not just Tunisia.

In September 1950, Irving Brown delivered a lengthy (twenty-two page) speech to the United States Army War College entitled “The Role of Labor in International Relations.” The first portion explained the need for a unified NATO and an increase of military and economic preparedness against the Soviet bloc. Brown believed America should continue to be an “Arsenal of Democracy,” providing material and ideological “weapons” for free labor, democratic in organization and independent of government, the antithesis of Communist totalitarianism.¹

Midway through the speech, Brown turned to Cold War theaters of operation beyond Europe. Speaking about the global work of the recently established ICFTU, Brown stated, “For the first time in the international labor movement...[it] is welded together to fight against Communist infiltration and to help solve some of the economic problems which made communism possible. As a truly world-wide organization, the activities of the ICFTU are not merely confined to Europe and America but extend to the undeveloped areas of the world like Asia, Africa, and Latin America.”² The ICFTU’s nemesis, he explained in his speech, was the Communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) from which the ICFTU must wrest helpless national unions and bring them into the fold of the Western-oriented ICFTU.

Briefly, he turned to the subject of North Africa and its role in the international struggle between the “slavery” of the WFTU and the free labor movement led by the ICFTU. “I have received a report that one of the important unions in Tunisia and Africa has left the WFTU and I

1. Irving Brown, “The Role of Labor in International Relations.” Interestingly, he also apologetically explained the hostility of average Frenchmen for America: “No poor people love a rich people.”

2. Ibid. The ICFTU was established on 7 December 1949.

am going there in a few weeks, hoping to bring about their affiliation to the ICFTU. That will be extremely important in terms of the ports of North Africa which are essential from the point of view of military strategy. So we are beginning in less than a year to penetrate some of these areas of the world, and we speak not as an American union, not as a British union, but as an international force.” Brown hoped, “that on the democratic side we are accepting the challenge of the Communists in the field in which they are usually strongest, in the field of ideology, and beating them at their own game.”³

The trip that followed, from 19 November to 8 December, was probably Brown’s first to North Africa, as a member of the ICFTU’s three-man delegation.⁴ The ICFTU Executive Board, comprising the Secretary General and about two-dozen representatives of affiliated national unions, agreed in principle that native, nationalist unions could be considered for affiliation to the ICFTU, even though their nations were not independent. Thus, the three-man delegation met with leading nationalist groups in Tunisia and Algeria. They also met with regional leaders of the FO’s branch unions in the respective countries. They did not meet with counterparts of *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) whose colonial branches the ICFTU considered to be as equally under the influence of Communists as in the *métropole*.

After returning to Europe, the delegation’s report was discussed at an ICFTU Executive Board meeting in February 1951. In his summary for the AFL’s Free Trade Union Committee, Brown wrote, “The main underlying theme of the North African report is the acceptance of the nationalist trade union movements as eligible for affiliation to the ICFTU especially the UGTT

3. Ibid.

4. Irving Brown report, “ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951,” in GMMA-IB, b, folder 12, “Brown, Irving, Writings, ‘47-‘85.” The delegation included Misters Brown, Bringolf of Switzerland, and Babau of France. The report indicates that André Lafond, the *Force ouvrière* (FO) director of overseas affairs, was originally supposed to represent France in the delegation, but was replaced for an unstated reason. Bringolf and Babau are not mentioned elsewhere in any of the GMMA records read by the researcher.

in Tunisia. Support also is to be given to those elements in Algeria and Morocco who are fighting for the right of free trade union association. (This is the point of conflict with our French friends).”⁵ It is unclear if Brown meant French trade unionists or French government officials, but either group could and would find fault with Brown’s pro-nationalist, or anti-colonial, policy.

Brown had his first run-in with French colonial law enforcement in Enfidaville, Tunisia. The ICFTU delegation had the misfortune of being there at the time of a riot, in which the French response resulted in the death of several Tunisians. *Gendarmes* seized the delegates and questioned them. “The French were not too pleased with the attitude of the ICFTU delegation towards their methods in handling the colonial strikers. This feeling was especially noted in relation to Brown’s statement criticizing the killings as unnecessary and playing into the hands of the Communists,” Brown wrote.⁶ Even facing arrest, Brown consistently emphasized the ICFTU’s anti-Communist agenda.

His analysis of North African nationalist movements continued: despite the “peculiar differences between Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, there are common characteristics and problems which are important in treating with the trade union problem. There is no doubt that the issue of independence from France is the demand which unifies the entire nationalist movement.” He also noted that this demand for independence and the shared religion of Islam connected all three nationalist movements of French North Africa to the Arab League.⁷ The Arab League’s potential to unify North Africans to their Middle Eastern co-religionists posed a threat to the free labor movement because the league could orient itself to the Soviet bloc or attempt to remain neutral in the Cold War. From the perspective of Meany and Brown there could be no

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. Brown usually referred to himself in the third person for his reports.

7. Irving Brown, “ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951.”

neutral nations, which would result in a “third force” that ultimately served the needs of the Soviet bloc.⁸

Brown also called attention to a paradox of North African nationalists: “The most intense feeling is directed obviously against what is termed French colonialism although it is quite clear that most of the leaders have benefited from French culture and education...and in many ways have a deep appreciation of French civilization. This is especially true of a man like [Habib] Bourguiba, leader of the Tunisian nationalist movement (Neo Destour).” Furthermore, Brown noted that most of these leaders understood the need for continued association with France for both economic development and national defense, but as “free and independent citizens rather than colonial subjects.” And yet, the ever-present threat was that “they cannot guarantee that the movement will not eventually become subject to Communist control or direction. This in spite of the fact that from a philosophical and religious point of view there is an irreconcilable conflict between Islam and the Kremlin.”⁹

Despite this contradiction, Brown warned, “A strong minority of extremists exists, varying in intensity from area to area. These extreme fanatical groups carry within themselves a potential for serious trouble and for all kinds of deals with communist forces as a result of their blind hatred of what they term ‘their white masters.’”¹⁰

Brown also described the poverty of the shantytowns like those the victims of the Enfidaville riots had lived in, and pointed out that a French company owned the land those victims had worked. He gave credit to the desire of many Frenchmen within the colonial

8. Windmuller, “Foreign Affairs and the AFL-CIO,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 9, no. 3 (April 1956): 419-432; Goulden, 272-273.

9. Irving Brown, “ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951.”

10. Ibid.

administration to be informed and to alleviate the suffering of the North Africans, “but it must be pointed out also that there are too many who are merely bureaucrats or colonial administrators interested in showing their authority and making sure that French interests are protected.” The presence of large, European minorities who considered themselves to be genuine natives amplified these vested colonial interests. Accordingly, “although the fight for economic and social justice goes on, the major and overriding issue for the nationalist trade unions is this national struggle for political liberation....The backward state of trade unionism is, of course, conditioned by these cultural lags and an arrested economic system.”¹¹

Brown’s report then turned to analyze Tunisia specifically.¹² The existence of the UGTT was somewhat less controversial at the time than the would-be nationalist unions in Algeria or Morocco, because the UGTT was an officially sanctioned union. Still, there was controversy regarding the UGTT’s potential membership in the ICFTU and its relation with the FO, which was already an ICFTU affiliate. The Tunisian branch of the FO had 12,000 members, some of whom were Tunisians but most were government employees, and therefore *colons*. The UGTT had as many as 70,000 members, all of whom were native Tunisians.¹³

When the ICFTU delegation met with the UGTT leadership, including Secretary General Farhat Hached, the Tunisians expressed two concerns pursuant to their ambition for national independence. First, they wanted guarantees that affiliation with the ICFTU would not compromise the UGTT’s domestic freedom of action, which had been a reason for its recent departure from the WFTU. This the delegation could assure. Later, ICFTU affiliates, such as the FO of France and the UGTA of Algeria, would prove to be nothing but independent within the

11. Ibid.

12. The issue of Algerian unions will be discussed in the following chapter.

13. Irving Brown, “ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951.”

organization and not adhere to the ICFTU's strictly anti-colonial and anti-Communist ideology, respectively.

Second, the UGTT wanted the ICFTU to ensure that the FO's Tunisian branch would recruit no more Tunisian members. If the UGTT was going to be a nationalist union, it wanted control over all Tunisian workers. The delegation could not promise this, since the ICFTU could only arbitrate between two affiliates. Instead, the delegates offered assurances of a fair resolution should the UGTT actually join the ICFTU. At the time, Brown noted that the FO's "leadership shows a remarkable degree of understanding of the nationalist problem, and has offered no objections to the affiliation of the U.G.T.T. to the ICFTU."¹⁴

The delegates' assurances were acceptable to Hached, who indicated that the UGTT would apply with the approval of the entire congress of the UGTT coming up in April as per the union's constitution. In fact, this did occur in April 1951, and the UGTT filed its official application to the ICFTU, which had already drafted a resolution to accept the application. In February, the *New York Times* had anticipated the event with a short column labeled "Tunisian Union Hits Reds," noting that the UGTT is the "most predominantly Arab trade union in the world."¹⁵ This was a promising beginning to Brown's efforts to build contacts with non-Communist unions in Africa and unify them with the member-unions of the Western-oriented ICFTU.

In September of that year, the AFL enhanced the profile of the UGTT as an anti-Communist, nationalist union by inviting its secretary general, Hached, as a guest-speaker to the AFL's national convention in San Francisco. He paid tribute to "the tremendous power of

14. Ibid. This would not be the case in Algeria.

15. "Tunisian Union Hits Reds," *New York Times*, 25 February 1951, in NARA-Tunis, box 71, folder 560.1 "Trade Unions."

American free trade-unions” and hoped that Tunisian and American unions’ “efforts will succeed in safeguarding peace on the basis of prosperity, social justice and freedom.”¹⁶

In Tunis, a local daily paper, *La Presse*, ran an interview with Hached following his return from his eight-month sojourn in America. The U.S. Consulate circulated quotations of the Tunisian labor leaders’ glowing praise for American labor to the consulates in Algiers, Rabat, and the American Embassy in Paris. For the U.S. State Department officers, they may have taken heart from Hached’s clear statements about the superiority of the American system to that of the Communist nations. In America, “when you come in contact with the working class of that country, you readily understand the reasons which lead the American people to defend its way of life and the social gains it has achieved. For the impartial observer, it requires no effort to see that the American people clearly wishes peace.” Of the Communist countries he had previously visited, “there is no comparison...between the state of the American worker and that of the workers in countries having a communist regime.”¹⁷

Hached’s admiration for American labor and his aspirations for Tunisian labor were apparent in his answers. He noted that the American trade union movement is “fully integrated in the life of the nation.” Moreover, he admired industrial stability, to which he attributed to the intimate connection between the unions and “the management of the enterprises, whose profits they share in one form or another. At the higher level, the labor leaders hardly concern themselves with local questions, which are the responsibility of the shop delegates.” Instead, the national congress of the AFL that he attended, “kept itself above daily quarrels of the sort we

16. Lorna Hahn, “French North Africa: an American Problem,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (June, 1955): 186-198; 191-192.

17. American Consulate Tunis to State Department, “Farhat Hached's Impressions of American Unions,” 21 December 1951, in NARA-Tunis, box 71, folder 560.1 “Trade Unions.”

know here at home, in order to study the general economic policy of the Government, especially at the present moment, in relation to the merciless struggle against totalitarianism.”¹⁸

On this American tour, Hached failed to get the U.S. government’s diplomatic support for Tunisian independence, but he clearly established ties to the AFL. This would later prove to be a fatal liability to Hached. In the meantime, the UGTT’s affiliation to the ICFTU and its contacts with the AFL served as role models for Tunisia’s free labor movement. The American idea that labor had a part to play in influencing national policies, including self-determination, was a strong element of the Tunisian nationalist movement. Thus, the nationalist party Neo Destour’s progress towards self-determination was also important to the UGTT’s success and vice versa.

While the UGTT had solidified its base as the Tunisian national union by joining the international free labor movement in 1951, Neo Destour also made gains in the political sphere. Most importantly, the French government recognized Neo Destour as a legitimate political party. This was an effort at ameliorating relations with moderate nationalists as a step towards progressive reform, but it did not satisfy Habib Bourguiba, president and founder of Neo Destour. Conversely, it distressed the *colons* of Tunisia who formed their own party, the *Rassemblement française de Tunisie*.¹⁹

Bourguiba was a veteran politician and intimately familiar with the political instability of French governments in both the Third and Fourth Republics. For every progressive government, neo-colonial interest groups could cobble together a compromised substitute equivocal to true colonial reform. This instability was an inherent element in all of French North Africa’s affairs during this period. So, like his trade union counterparts of the UGTT, Bourguiba went abroad

18. Ibid.

19. Kenneth J. Perkins, *Tunisia: Crossroads of the Islamic and European Worlds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 112.

preaching the gospel of anti-colonialism and Tunisian independence in an effort to garner international support for the principle of Tunisian self-determination.²⁰

Bourguiba's colleague, Neo Destour Secretary General Salah Ben Yusuf, traveled to Paris in January 1952. As a minister in the government of the Tunisian protectorate and with the permission of Tunisia's nominal ruler, Amin Bey, Ben Yusuf took a petition for Tunisian political reform to a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council then meeting in Paris. However, the new French Resident Minister of Tunisia, Jean de Hautecloque, ordered the arrest of both Bourguiba and Ben Yusuf. The imprisonment of these two prominent Tunisians and other officials of Neo Destour spurred bloody riots, which were suppressed by the colonial government. In turn, Amin Bey replaced the government with one more acceptable to Resident Minister de Hautecloque.²¹

In the meantime, the UGTT and Irving Brown continued their mission to increase awareness of Tunisia's importance in the international free trade union movement against Communism. In March, the UGTT's assistant secretary, Nouri Boudali, responded to the American Consulate's annual labor union survey with a sixteen-page manifesto. It attacked the various injustices of the colonial system, defended the principle of trade unionism's political activities, and detailed French mistreatment of various UGTT officials. Also included was a history of major events of the Tunisian labor and independence movement in which the French persecuted Tunisian nationalists. It closed with the UGTT's stated principles: economic development, social justice, and democratic autonomy. The words "self-determination" or

20. Ibid., 112. For a broad treatment of all North African movements including Tunisia, see also Charles-André Julien, *L'Afrique du Nord en Marche: Nationalismes Musulmans et Souveraineté française*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Julliard, 1972).

21. Perkins, 112; Rathbun, 305.

“independence” are not used, which indicates a still moderate approach to independence, or at the very least intending to give such an impression to the U.S. State Department. It concluded, “The realization of these legitimate aspirations will lift all causes of trouble, will greatly aid the tranquility of the Mediterranean and in the Arab world and facilitate all accord to the best interests of the Western bloc.”²²

While the UGTT promised this Cold War panacea to the American Consulate, the AFL republished for mass distribution Brown’s annual “International Report,” originally delivered to the 71st AFL national convention in September 1952. In the report, Brown had warned of a “dangerous state of calm. Relaxation has set in permitting a kind of ‘luxury thinking’ which includes demands for a reduction of the rearmament tempo, a trend towards neutralism and appeasement, and an almost pathological recoiling from any allied program of initiative based on the ideological offensive towards the Soviet Union.”²³

For Brown, the place for the Western offensive was the Middle East and North Africa. Citing Iran and Egypt as examples, he warned, “Unless the democracies can find a way to work with the non-Communist nationalists in the Arab world, then the unholy alliance of the two fanatical extremisms — Communism and the Moslem Brotherhood — will unite to drive out the common enemy.... Only in Tunisia and Morocco are the mass movements still in the hands of the non-Communist, democratic nationalists who are and want to remain our allies.” Contrarily,

22. Nouri Boudali to U.S. Consul Tunis, untitled, 14 March 1952, in NARA-Tunis, box 71, folder 560.1, “Trade Unions.”

23. “International Report by Irving Brown, A.F.L. Representative in Europe, Delivered to the 71st Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor. New York City, N.Y. September 17, 1952” in NARA-Tunis, box 71, folder 560 “Labor Affairs, General.”

French policy “is driving these friends of ours into the hands of the fanatical extremists (Communist and Nationalist).”²⁴

Brown misinterpreted or over exaggerated the Muslim Brotherhood, which had characteristics of national and religious extremism, but was certainly not Communistic.²⁵ Even so, looking back, his statements about the threat of any combination of neutralism, pan-Arabism and Soviet influence through Egypt were prophetic considering the Free Officers Coup had only occurred weeks prior, on 23 July 1952, and Gamal Abdel Nasser had not yet risen to the ultimate leadership of Egypt.²⁶ The specter of pan-Arabism only increased the importance of the UGTT to the free labor movement as a regional counter-weight to Egypt.

Back in Tunisia, on 5 December 1952, the assassination of Hached dealt a tragic blow to Brown’s efforts. Preceding the assassination, a *colon* terrorist group called *Le Main rouge* (the Red Hand) circulated fliers protesting the “enslavement of Tunisia” by “imperialist American grocers” and “against Farhat Hached the American.”²⁷ To the French *colons*, Hached was an American collaborator. Fortunately for Brown, he had left Tunisia two days before Hached and his car were riddled with bullets, his head crushed in. As evidence of Brown’s fearlessness and dedication, he was back in Tunis ten days after Hached’s death.²⁸

24. Ibid.

25. John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, 4th ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 140-144.

26. “International Report by Irving Brown, Delivered to the 71st Annual Convention.” The author found multiple copies of this document, including several different places in the GMMA and also in the records of the Algiers US Consulate. Understandably, an unknown State Department official had written in the margin of the Tunis copy, “This is all highly debatable.”

27. Hahn, 192n10.

28. Rathbun, 306-7.

In the long run, the elimination of Hached was a factor in the post-independence instability in Tunisia, which undermined Brown's hopes for building a lasting democratic trade union movement, society, and state. In the short term, Brown was not deterred, and Hached's assassination became a focal point for the ICFTU's campaign to support the UGTT's trade union rights and Tunisia's nationalist movement.

The ICFTU released a statement just hours after Hached's death. It noted that his death was a tragedy of colonial injustice, since the French government had previously confiscated his passport, preventing him from attending the ICFTU executive meeting then in session. The month prior, the ICFTU sent a petition to every delegation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), making the case that the United Nations (UN) should establish a Good Offices Committee to "mediate and settle the conflict between the French Government and the Tunisian people." It also highlighted the French government's prohibition against Hached's continued campaigning abroad.²⁹

Hached's murder became a focal point of Brown's writings and speeches on Tunisia. In an article he wrote in 1953 titled "Tunisia Concerns Us All," Brown attempted to address common misconceptions of critics of the ICFTU and his own relationship with the UGTT. He insisted it was Hached's leadership that kept the UGTT out of France's Communist-led national union, the CGT, after WWII and Hached who withdrew the UGTT from the WFTU in order to affiliate with the ICFTU in 1951. Brown added, "Hached's assassination... is a bitter pill for them [non-Communist, democratic nationalists] to swallow and a blow against free labor's attempt to wrest the Arab masses from totalitarian extremism." Furthermore, "We believe that if

29. Press release of ICFTU, "Tunisian Leader Assassinated," 5 December 1952, in NARA-Tunis, box 71, folder 560.1 "Trade Unions"; press release of the ICFTU, "ICFTU Bid to Solve Tunisian Crisis," 7 November 1952, *ibid.*

an injustice to the labor movement is being committed... it is the concern of the free trade unions everywhere” regardless of national borders. “It is our contention that what is happening in Tunisia, especially as it affects the Tunisian trade unions, is so serious that it constitutes a danger for the entire free world, especially in those areas where the Arab masses are subject to the raging cold war.”³⁰

In the same writing, Brown prophesied two events in one: the bogging down of France in North Africa in a reenactment of Indochina, and the windfall of Western-oriented Muslim governments in Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Jordan: “To wait until the Middle East and North Africa become another Indo-China in order to do on this issue what France now wants us to do on Indo-China would be another example of ‘too little and too late.’ There are untold potentials waiting to aid the Democratic World if we are ready to grant greater justice and equality to the anti-Communist national elements of the Moslem world.”³¹ The nationalist UGTT was the free labor movement’s gateway to North Africa’s “untold potential.”

Surprisingly, however, the war in Indochina indirectly permitted progress toward North African independence in the first half of 1954. Dien Bien Phu was under a siege that would eventually end in ruin, and a panicked French government under Joseph Laniel nearly begged at the March Geneva Conference to end the conflict and thus end France’s presence in Southeast Asia.³² In the interim, Pierre Mendès-France became prime minister and granted the long-sought

30. Essay by Irving Brown, “Tunisia Concerns Us All,” 6 January 1953, in GMMA-Brown, box 11, folder 2, “Brown Writings, ’52-60.” Brown sent this to several French and English language publications, but the author does not know if any published the text in part or wholly. Some of the addressees were employees of *Le Monde*, *Figaro*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

31. Ibid.

32. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, NY : Doubleday, 1963), 344.

request for internal autonomy to Tunisia. His government also provided for new plans for the ultimate goal of full independence for Tunisia.

While Mendès-France negotiated with Zhou Enlai in China and the Viet Minh in Geneva during July, Brown was already in Tunisia preparing for France's long-awaited reforms. *Le Monde*, France's largest, most respected, and politically moderate newspaper, reported Brown's presence as the ICFTU's representative at the UGTT's fifth national congress, which opened on 2 July 1954. The article stated, "After evoking the memory of Farhat Hached, Mr. Brown declared... 'It is full awareness of the struggle which is going on in the world today that I have come here not only to bring you the greeting of my organization, but also to assure you of the total solidarity of all the American trade union movement and, I am certain, of all American people, in the struggle that you lead to improve the standard of life of the masses of your country and to finally obtain your objectives: liberty and national independence.'"³³

The newspaper *Franc-Tireur*, generally supportive of Mendès-France's Radical Socialist party, asked if the Prime Minister would disappoint the palpable optimism of the Tunisians at the UGTT congress. One of the major issues of decolonization was determining the legitimate representative of the people. Citing the "maturity" of the UGTT, the article argued against the neo-colonial justification of having no "*interlocuteur valable*," or valuable intermediary, which was an issue in Indochina and would be again in Algeria. But here, the UGTT seemed to have a commanding presence in the Tunisian independence movement and might be considered as representative of the Tunisian people.³⁴

33. *Le Monde*, "M. Irving Brown assiste au congrès de l'Union tunisienne du travail," 5 July 1954, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 10, "Brown, Irving, '52-'56."

34. *Franc-Tireur*, "Le cinquième congrès de l'Union générale des travailleurs tunisiens a été celui de l'espérance, Allons-nous décevoir cell-ci?" 13 July 1954, *ibid.* Curiously, the editorial staff *Franc-Tireur* made an error, since the UGTT was, in fact, the *Union générale tunisienne du travail*, not "*des travailleurs tunisiens*."

On this issue of being a valid representative of the nation, the article also quoted Brown who spoke for both the ICFTU and the AFL as saying, “The large congress to which we witness today is the proof. We are happy that the UGTT affiliated with the ICFTU, being, not only the first labor organization of Tunisia, but also that it has become one of the most advanced trade union movements of all the underdeveloped countries.”³⁵ Brown thus hammered home the legitimacy of the UGTT as a representative of the emerging Tunisian nation at the imminent arrival of Mendès-France for negotiations for Tunisia’s independence.

The American Consulate at Tunis also covered the congress. Its report to the State Department listed the new officers, including the election of Ahmed Ben Salah as secretary general to replace Boudali who had been acting secretary general since Hached’s death. The report speculated that Boudali would remain influential, and noted that Ben Salah’s biographic profile was in progress. The State Department could not know that within two years, Ben Salah’s position as head of the UGTT would play a role in the disintegration of Tunisia’s nascent democracy, or much later in the 1960s, plan the socialization of the Tunisian economy.³⁶

At the time, however, the new cadre of the UGTT advocated the same policies, both economic and political, as it had under Hached. Most importantly, “Its political aim was stated to be anti-colonialism, but without cooperation with communist organizations. Specifically, the new Secretary General called for opening negotiations with Habib Bourguiba and Tunisian nationalists in order to settle the current turmoil in the country. Continued cooperation and closer relations with the I.C.F.T.U. and labor organizations of the free world were also advocated.” The report concluded with the expressed concern that Brown had given the key note address on

35. Ibid.

36. American Consulate Tunis to State Department, “Fifth Annual Congress of the U.G.T.T.”, 13 July 1954, in NARA-Tunis, box 73, folder 560, “Labor Affairs, General.”

opening day which might anger the French *colons*: “Although the general tenor of his address was strongly anti-communist, he also expressed anti-colonial views which, to date, appear to have elicited no reaction from the Residency General or French groups.”³⁷

Even after the mid-1954 release of many of Neo Destour party members, and the reformist promises of Mendès-France, there were still demonstrations and guerrilla attacks throughout Tunisia. Contrary in spirit to the French offer for internal autonomy, the preeminent leader of the nationalist movement, Neo Destour President Habib Bourguiba, was freed from prison but not allowed to return to Tunisia. Thus, Franco-Tunisian negotiations re-established by Mendès-France were necessarily hamstrung.³⁸

Bourguiba remained active and influential throughout his exile in Paris, and kept in touch with Brown. Brown had met Bourguiba in the 1940s, and reportedly was the first person Bourguiba visited in Paris upon his release in 1954.³⁹ Also, as promised at its national congress, the UGTT continued to support Neo Destour’s leader as the *de facto* leader of the entire nationalist movement.

Bourguiba eventually agreed to the French offer for the establishment of internal autonomy — less than full independence — in April 1955. As historian Kenneth Perkins wrote, “Bourguiba seized the proffered half-loaf rather than futilely insisting on what France had no intention of providing at that moment.” That is, full independence to Tunisia while attempting to suppress the revolution in Algeria. In the process, Bourguiba demonstrated one aspect of his

37. Ibid.

38. Andrew Borowiec, *Modern Tunisia: A Democratic Apprenticeship* (London: Praeger, 1998), 21; Perkins, 113.

39. Rathbun, 303, 307-8.

character that had allowed him to persist as a viable politician — short-term flexibility for the long-term objective of full independence.⁴⁰

In May, Bourguiba returned triumphantly to Tunisia under its first internally autonomous government since the French invasion of 1881. Although he was not a member of that first government, it was dominated by members of Neo Destour, of which he remained party president. Within Neo Destour however, a rift was forming. A minority led by Bourguiba's deputy, Secretary General Ben Yusuf, felt Bourguiba had sold short the principle of independence. This splinter group also had pan-Arab tendencies that echoed the call of Radio Cairo.⁴¹

At the October 1955 national congress of Neo Destour, Ben Yusuf attempted to redirect the party towards a policy for immediate independence. Ben Yusuf's opposition group had broad appeal in its pan-Arab spirit, but that same position threatened the negotiations for self-rule by tying Tunisian nationalism to the anti-colonial struggles of other Arab nations, such as Algeria and Egypt. In the end, the congress backed Bourguiba and expelled Ben Yusuf, who left Tunisia, never to return. With the support of the UGTT and loyal elements of Neo Destour, the opposition was quieted.⁴²

This outcome was perhaps the first major sign of political conformism that would define the bulk of Bourguiba's authoritarian rule over the next several decades. Neither Brown's biography, nor his papers mention these events; however, it is unlikely that he could or would have done anything for three reasons. First, Brown's mission — though political in nature —

40. Perkins, 113-114.

41. Perkins, 114.

42. Clement Henry Moore, "The Neo-Destour Party of Tunisia: A Structure for Democracy?" *World Politics* 14, no. 3 (April 1962): 461-482; 466; Perkins 114.

was focused on the labor movement, and not political parties. Despite his supposed friendship with Bourguiba, Brown's influence was based on his trade union credentials and trade union contacts. Second, if the French were going to grant Tunisia full independence, it seemed dependent on the stability of the newly autonomous government. That meant Neo Destour and Bourguiba were mutually indispensable. Thirdly, pan-Arabism, which was an element of Ben Yusuf's opposition group, was anathema to the AFL-CIO's foreign policy of anti-Communism.⁴³ As Brown professed so many times, any form of neutralism was either susceptible to Communist infiltration, or a Communist front. Under the circumstances, Bourguiba's devotion to democracy deserved the benefit of doubt. The next moment for doubt would come within less than a year and hit the free labor movement closer to home in a dispute between Bourguiba and Hached's UGTT successor, Ahmed Ben Salah.

In the meantime, an insurrection continued in neighboring Algeria, and one French government succeeded another, and then another. France, pressed as it was, finally granted independence to Tunisia and Morocco in March 1956. The Constituent Assembly — not the public — elected Bourguiba as the first Prime Minister of Tunisia under the reign of Amin Bey. From then onward, Tunisia was politically sovereign in both domestic and international affairs, but it remained precariously dependent on France for economic aid, especially food, and military protection.⁴⁴

43. The AFL-CIO merger was not officially complete until 5 December 1955, but the fact of merger was more or less determined by October 1955 at the time of these events in Tunisia.

44. The U.S. National Security Council was gravely concerned with Franco-Tunisian relations, because of Tunisia's precarious economy. In 1956, the French had not made any requests for economic assistance for Tunisia despite the fact that "there is a danger of famine conditions this year, and, because of overpopulation in relation to land, of a continued inability of the Tunisians to feed themselves over a period of years. Ambassador Dillon and the U.S. Consul General in Tunis have recommended that the U.S. should be prepared to furnish economic assistance, in cooperation with France. As in the case of Morocco, a unilateral and confidential study of this question has been initiated." Excerpt from "NSC 5436/1, Progress Report," 4 April 1956, in EPL, WHO, OSANA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Sub-series, box 13, "NSC 5436 – Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria." Since France continued to punish Tunisia

This dependence on foreign aid and investment, particularly from France, but also from the United States, led Neo Destour to avoid severing any surviving ties with France by altering Tunisia's then-liberal economy. Thus, Europeans were allowed to keep their property, which was protected under the law. While Neo Destour professed a desire for social change, primarily through a policy of broad education, some opponents resented the continued, pervasive presence of European ownership of property. Ahmed Ben Salah, the UGTT's secretary general, led this new opposition.⁴⁵ Bourguiba suspected Ben Salah had intentions to transform the UGTT into a labor party in opposition to Neo Destour, and Bourguiba expressed these concerns to Brown.

In September 1956, AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Bill Schnitzler, ICFTU General Secretary J.H. Oldenbroek, and Irving Brown were all in attendance at the UGTT's annual congress. This afforded Bourguiba the opportunity to deliberate with Brown about the challenges faced in Tunisia's first months of independence. For example, during the conference, Bourguiba privately expressed his dismay at the contrast in policy between the AFL-CIO and the U.S. government, the former being conspicuously supportive, the latter still very reserved. Despite the recent shipment of American grain, for which he was grateful, more was needed.⁴⁶

economically in retaliation for Tunisian support of the Algerian rebellion, the U.S. planned to increase its direct economic aid to Tunisia in 1957 and foster closer relations between the two governments. Total U.S. assistance in 1957 to both Morocco and Tunisia was planned to be \$3.57 million and anticipated a sharp increase to \$23 million in 1958, and again to \$50 million in 1959. This would be predominantly developmental assistance with little technical assistance, which would remain the French prerogative. "In view of France's responsibility for meeting commercial requirements, consideration was limited to requirements for meeting famine conditions through direct relief or work relief projects. Agreement in principle has been reached to furnish in the current fiscal year [1956] up to 45,000 tons of grain and consideration will be given to requests for other commodities." Excerpt from policy paper, "NSC 5614/1," 3 October 1956, in EPL, WHO, OSANA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Sub-series, box 18, "NSC 5614 – Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria (2)."

45. Perkins, 131.

46. Irving Brown to Michael Ross, untitled report, 22 September 1956, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 14, "Irving Brown, Writings '56-'57."

In his address to the congress, Bourguiba stressed national unity, rejection of class struggle and all rigid ideologies, increased production, and freedom for Algeria based on negotiations. All but the last reflect Bourguiba's desire to keep Ben Salah and the UGTT subordinate to the Neo Destour party. After the congress, Bourguiba flew back to France with Brown. Brown reported, "He is extremely worried about one, the demagogy and extraordinary ambition of Ben Salah... it has been necessary to keep a close check on him; two, the economic situation and the need for aid from the USA."⁴⁷

Brown had also discussed these issues with Bahi Ladgham, a close confidant of Bourguiba who would hold several Tunisian high offices under Bourguiba. Brown reported that Ladgham "...is extremely worried about Ben Salah and the UGTT which [Ladgham] feels has permitted a form of Communist infiltration but not in the classical sense... In attempting to compete with the opposition [Ben Salah] has resorted to a form of demagogy which assists primarily the objectives of the Communists who wish to see a failure of the present regime now that the French have yielded... independence." Furthermore, "The government will be prepared to do everything in his [sic] power to stop the UGTT from going in this direction or even if necessary to set in motion new trade union forces. He said Bourguiba is even ready if the time arrives to resign from the government in order to go out in the country to fight against Ben Salah and the UGTT and to take the issue to the people."⁴⁸ This was shaping up to be a civil war between the UGTT and the Tunisian government dominated by Bourguiba and Neo Destour, but then Ben Salah made a strategic error.

47. Ibid.

48. "Report from Irving Brown" to Jay Lovestone, 25 September 1956, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 6, "Brown, Irving, '55-'57." Equating the Tunisian government with Bourguiba in this typographic error may have been a sort of Freudian slip on the part of Brown.

In October, Ben Salah left the UGTT and founded the *Union tunisienne du travail* (UTT) with a small group of supporters. This splintering has been variously explained as a division engineered by Bourguiba or as Ben Salah's act of protest against Bourguiba's refusal to establish a planned economy and nationalization of property.⁴⁹ In either case, the Ben Salah-Bourguiba conflict raised tensions within the ICFTU. Tensions were also rising between the AFL-CIO, represented by Brown, and the ICFTU Executive Board on account of differences opinions on what to do about Algeria and how to handle the Suez Crisis as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The ICFTU's new director of operations, Canadian Charlie Millard, wrote George Meany asking him to take advantage of Prime Minister Bourguiba's upcoming UN visit to persuade Bourguiba to mend fences with Ben Salah and restore unity to the Tunisian labor movement. In the conflict between the two Tunisians, the ICFTU instinctively favored the trade unionist Ben Salah over the politician Bourguiba.

Millard extolled the virtues of the UGTT as evidence of its worthiness for AFL-CIO intervention with Bourguiba and the UGTT's continued importance to Tunisia and the free labor movement. Millard wrote to Meany, "But this division has occurred at the very time when the UGTT is being called upon to play such a vital role in the economic and social development of an important country which has just achieved its independence. Moreover, the forthright and consistent position of the UGTT on the issue of Communism over the years had resulted only a few months ago in the final elimination of the Communist USTT from the Tunisian scene."⁵⁰ In turn, Millard avoided criticizing Bourguiba by asserting, "...the people around him have been trying to persuade Bourguiba that the power of the trade union movement represents a personal threat to him and that the progressive economic and social programme recently adopted by the

49. Moore, 466; Perkins, 131.

50. Letter from Charlie Millard to George Meany, 10 November 1956, in GMMA-GM, box 51, folder 22.

UGTT Congress and its aggressive defense of the workers' interests would have the effect of frightening off much-needed capital investment." Contrarily, Millard thought, "The record clearly shows that the UGTT has been determined to steer clear of the kind of chauvinistic, anti-Western and fanatical pan-arabism [sic] which constitutes such a difficult problem for the ICFTU in developing its work in the Arab countries. As you know, the UGTT has consistently refused to join the Arab Confederation of Labor." Thus, Millard wanted AFL-CIO President Meany to ensure that Tunisian labor remained free of its government's direct control.⁵¹

Millard also wrote an appeal to Bourguiba that same day. Because they had never met, Millard took a more restrained tone in his letter to Bourguiba. Millard vouched for the credibility of Ben Salah, and pleaded with Bourguiba to "use your great personal influence and the prestige of your high office to do what you can to divert those responsible for the formation of UTT from the extremely dangerous path which they are now following."⁵² Millard may have believed that UTT was a rebirth of the Communist *Union syndicale des travailleurs de Tunisie* (USTT). Regardless, both letters reveal the ICFTU Executive Board's ignorance, excluding Brown, of the nature of the conflict between Ben Salah and Bourguiba. Ben Salah was, in fact, breaking away from the UGTT, and the UGTT was still very much aligned with Neo Destour.

Everything the ICFTU believed about the UGTT's past was true, and the UGTT had been American labor's *entrée* into the Tunisian nationalist movement. However, the international free labor movement had staked so much upon the political and economic success of Tunisia that the free labor movement of Tunisia was going to take a back seat to Tunisia's overall progress and political stability in independence. Tunisia had been sold by Brown, by the ICFTU, and by the

51. Ibid.

52. Letter from Charlie Millard to Habib Bourguiba, 10 November 1956, in GMMA-GM, box 51, folder 22.

Tunisians themselves to the international media and the American public as the model for Arab nations — anti-Communist and pro-Western. If there were any doubts about Ben Salah's political and economic philosophy, and clearly there were, then Meany was unlikely to interfere with Bourguiba's subsequent clamp down on Ben Salah or the UGTT.

Instead, the AFL-CIO was going to do everything it could to assist the Tunisian government to forge ahead on Tunisia's economic development. Brown wrote, "The concern of Ladgham [and the Tunisian government] relative to the UGTT is tied intimately to his deep concern about the future of their economy. They are in great need of developing independent economic relationships, especially with the USA."⁵³ Brown was confident that the AFL-CIO could provide the Tunisians with American business contacts and the technical advice in negotiating favorable contracts. It is unknown if such services led to any business deals, but it is a clear indicator that the AFL-CIO was not going to risk its model for Tunisian success by adhering to the principle of labor unity or even to labor's independence from government in Tunisia.

Contrarily, the ICFTU Executive Board continued to press the AFL-CIO to action. The ICFTU's two main officers — Oldenbroek and Millard — sent a telegram to AFL-CIO President Meany and to Vice President Walter Reuther on 28 November 1956 making one last appeal: "On occasion Bourguiba dinner we hope you will find the opportunity in your capacities as ICFTU Vice Presidents and members executive board to impress on the Prime Minister the ICFTU's unequivocal and unanimous support for the UGTT and its democratically elected leadership."⁵⁴ It is unknown, but unlikely that Meany or Reuther made any such suggestions to Bourguiba.

53. Letter from Brown to Lovestone, 25 September 1956, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 6, "Brown, Irving, '55-'57."

54. President Becu, Secretary Oldenbroek, Director Millard telefax to President Meany and Vice President

This issue was one facet of the rift that was beginning to form between AFL-CIO and the leadership of the ICFTU. Here it demonstrates the AFL-CIO's unwillingness to interfere with Bourguiba's government, lest the AFL-CIO invalidate its own success story in supporting a free labor movement which in turn played a role in establishing a supposed democracy in North Africa. Ben Salah's splinter union, UTT, and its subsequent suppression by Bourguiba was the perfect situation to maintain the *façade* of the UGTT's integrity as a democratic trade union independent of Tunisian government. Only by saving face on the international stage could Tunisia remain a model for the future propagation of the AFL-CIO's free labor policy as the path to Western-oriented governments in Africa, including Algeria.

Furthermore, Bourguiba was in the United States at the time not only to address the United Nations, but also to meet privately with President Eisenhower, which occurred on 21 November.⁵⁵ Eisenhower thought highly of Bourguiba, and immediately after their meeting, Eisenhower wrote in his diary, "I was struck by his sincerity, his intelligence, and his friendliness. He is grateful for the help we have given him from surplus foods, particularly wheat.... He gave as his biggest problem the existence of the French-Algerian war." In closing, Eisenhower "assured him of America's friendliness, and particularly of its desire to deal directly with each one of the Moslem countries in the effort to promote our common interests."⁵⁶

Eisenhower's meeting with Bourguiba marked a shift in the United States' "middle of the road" policy in response to changing circumstances resulting directly from the Suez Crisis. It was not a reaction to pressure from the AFL-CIO upon the Eisenhower Administration to

Reuther, 28 November 1956, in GMMA-GM, box 51, folder 22.

55. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City, NY : Doubleday, 1965), 103-106.

56. Diary entry, 21 November 1956, in EPL, DDE Papers as President, DDE Diary Series, box 18, "Nov. '56, Diary."

ameliorate relations with Tunisia, but it did support the AFL-CIO's goals. On the one hand, the U.S. wanted to preserve France as an ally within NATO. On the other hand, the U.S. was aware that emerging nations, such as Tunisia, were suspicious of the Franco-American relationship because of France's neo-colonial policies. Eisenhower's condemnation of the Anglo-French seizure of the Suez Canal, and his Middle East Doctrine were declarations to the rest of the world that the American anti-Communist agenda was distinct from the British and French neo-colonial policies, which those nations often claimed to be synonymous with America's anti-Communist agenda.⁵⁷

Paradoxically, in supporting Egypt's sovereignty, Eisenhower gave momentum to Nasser's anti-colonial and pan-Arab message. Therefore, Eisenhower needed to ensure American influence in the Middle East and elsewhere by drawing closer to other Muslim nations, such as Tunisia. The U.S. would no longer defer its Tunisian policy wholly to French attitudes towards North Africa, which were adversely affected by the ongoing war in Algeria. The National Security Council (NSC) advised that "The United States should assist France to the maximum extent possible to adjust its position to the contraction of the French Empire, but our own interests in North Africa, and the importance of a Western orientation for Morocco and Tunisia, may compel us to develop increasingly bilateral policies in this area. Moroccan and Tunisian nationalism could usefully serve U.S. interests as a counterweight to Egyptian ambitions both in North and in Tropical Africa."⁵⁸

57. Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, vol. 2, *The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 381-383, 360-362; Connelly, 37, 123; France, 107; Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 57-58.

58. NSC Policy paper, "NSC 5614/1," 3 October 1956, in EPL, WHO, OSANA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Sub-series, box 13, "NSC 5614 – Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria (2)."

In this context, the meeting between Bourguiba and Eisenhower was an important step forward in American foreign policy that the AFL-CIO would not forfeit by supporting Ben Salah's opposition to Bourguiba or deflecting an encroachment on the UGTT's independence. In Tunisia's first year of independence, Bourguiba did not accept any potential threat to his control, and American labor was going to back him, whether it liked his methods or not. As historian Clement Henry Moore wrote, "The Ben Youssef and Ben Salah stories have set the tone for prudent uniformity in Tunisian political life."⁵⁹

During the remainder of the Eisenhower Administration, Tunisia protected the property rights of the European interests and acted to ensure political stability in order to attract private foreign investment. Tunisia also avoided joining the Arab League or supporting Nasser or his pan-Arab message, though maintaining friendly relations with other Muslim states. Perhaps most importantly, Tunisia did not become a Communist satellite.

These were all favorable outcomes to American labor's support of Bourguiba. Yet this pro-Western orientation of Tunisia proved ephemeral. It came at the cost of Tunisia's free labor movement, which was claimed by Brown and the AFL-CIO as part of American labor's fundamental ideology and was the very purpose of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Ironically, the sacrifice of the UGTT's independence limited American labor's continued influence upon Tunisian policy in the decades to follow. Despite America's economic aid of nearly \$1 billion over the first decade of Tunisian independence, adequate private investment did not follow.⁶⁰

59. Moore, 466.

60. Borowiec, 32.

Over the next thirty years of his presidency (having deposed the Bey and established a Republic in 1957), Bourguiba's domestic and foreign policies vacillated between capitalism and socialism, between Western, Eastern, and Middle Eastern diplomatic orientations. Between 1956 and 1958, Bourguiba restructured the UGTT and Neo Destour to ensure his own authority.⁶¹ He banned the Communist party, but experimented with socialism from 1961-1968, revoking the protection of foreign private property in 1964, which further discouraged foreign investment until another reversal in the 1970s. In foreign affairs he dabbled with neutralism, hosting Communist dignitaries and even joining the Arab League in 1967.

Bourguiba's government proved not to be a friend of the workers. Bourguiba shrewdly brought Ben Salah into the government in 1961. It was a sly conciliatory gesture, because Bourguiba later had Ben Salah tried and imprisoned in 1968 as a scapegoat for the failure of the socialist ten-year plan. In 1978, and again in 1984, labor strikes were brutally crushed.⁶² Without a free labor movement in Tunisia, how could the ICFTU or the AFL-CIO support the state-dominated UGTT as an effective guardian of democracy or an advocate of social justice?

Looking back on Bourguiba's relationship with the UGTT, Brown blamed the ICFTU for failing to rebuke Bourguiba in 1966 and wholly ignored the fact that in 1956 the ICFTU had attempted to get the AFL-CIO to chastise Bourguiba on behalf of the principle of free labor. In 1966, Brown reported that Bourguiba "alienated by force the democratically elected leadership and dictated his choice of their successors to the recent UGTT congress. In his address to the delegates Bourguiba tried to justify his dictatorial methods in the name of anti-Communism. But

61. Moore, 466-7.

62. Borowiec, 32-5; Perkins, 131-135. Ben Salah served as Minister of Planning, and was therefore culpable for the failed economic policy. He later escaped from prison to Libya by way of Algeria. He and his supporters provided many repeated opportunities for Bourguiba to take action against real and phantom plots against the state. Borowiec, 32-34.

so did Hitler and Mussolini and so do Franco and Salazar today.” Reflecting further, in 1983, Brown said the ICFTU was at fault for allowing those delegates to be seated at the ICFTU’s Eighth World Congress as representatives of a non-free labor movement. In Brown’s judgment, “The ICFTU’s capitulation to Bourguiba might very well encourage other governments in the developing countries to emulate the Tunisian regime’s aggression against the UGTT.”⁶³ The reality is that Brown and the AFL-CIO had already capitulated to Bourguiba in 1956.

Even though Brown accused the ICFTU of continuing to associate with a UGTT democratic in theory only, so did the AFL-CIO. Brown also found it easy to blame Bourguiba’s failing mental health for Tunisia’s autocracy, rather than face the fact that AFL-CIO had essentially not opposed Bourguiba’s earliest actions in acquiring dictatorial powers in a perfectly fit state of mind. Rather than protecting Ben Salah’s right to form a separate union, by not acting, the AFL-CIO leadership permitted Bourguiba to take direct control of the Tunisian labor movement as early as 1958 or earlier.⁶⁴

In some ways the AFL-CIO was a victim of Brown’s success, and it was forced to maintain a convenient fiction of “Bourguibism” being “Western” and inherently free so long as it was not Communistic. The ICFTU had been alarmed but ineffective at persuading the AFL-CIO to oppose Bourguiba at the first sign of trouble for the Tunisian labor movement. Not coincidentally, Brown became a leading figure in the never-ending struggle between certain members of the ICFTU Executive Board, such as Robert Bothereau of France and Secretary General Oldenbroek. Not everyone was enthusiastic about the AFL-CIO’s aggressive anti-

63. Irving Brown Report to the AFL-CIO, 1966, in Rathbun, 309; interviews with Irving Brown on 14 February 1983 and 19 April 1983, *ibid.*

64. Moore, 467-468.

colonial and anti-Communist policy goals. These arguments about ICFTU policy would culminate in the AFL-CIO's withdrawal from the ICFTU in 1969.

The Ben Salah-Bourguiba crisis was just one of Meany's and Brown's disagreements with the ICFTU leadership in 1956. The other points of contention related to the Suez Crisis and the Algerian trade union movement as will be discussed in Chapter 4. The chronic conflict within the ICFTU itself comprised one of the challenges to the implementation of American labor's foreign policy in Algeria, where Brown would attempt to promote the Algerian labor movement in the name of the ICFTU as he had claimed to do in Tunisia.

Chapter 4 - Irving Brown and the Algerian Labor Movement, 1950-1959

As established in the previous chapter, Irving Brown's emphasis on Tunisia as the model for Western-style democracy in North Africa made the AFL-CIO more beholden to Habib Bourguiba than Bourguiba was to the AFL-CIO. This dependence extended to Algeria as well, not only because of the state of war that existed there from late 1954 until mid-1962, but also because of Brown's subsequent dependence on Tunisia for contact with the Algerian trade unionists who had fled to Tunisia as exiles. In fact, the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962) overshadowed everything in the region, from Tunisian and Moroccan domestic affairs to relations between France and the United States. Had Brown and the AFL-CIO supported the ICFTU's objections to Bourguiba's authoritarian turn, Bourguiba could have ended Brown's access to both the Tunisian and Algerian trade union movements at once.

As it was, Brown continued to have access to Algerian trade unionists in Tunisia. However, despite any mutual understanding between Bourguiba and Brown on the Algerian question, other factors limited Brown's success in developing a pro-Western, free trade union movement in Algeria. The three broad factors, which Brown was not able to overcome, were the disruption of normal trade union activities after the start of the revolution, the ICFTU's own internal divisions on policy, and the ICFTU's inability to compete with the WFTU and Soviet aid to Algerian refugees and Algerian trade unionists in exile.

In the first five years following the ICFTU's first North African tour, the ICFTU affiliate FO (which Brown had helped create in 1947) worked to establish an anti-Communist union of native Algerians. However, the start of the revolution in 1954 eventually undermined these early

efforts on multiple accounts. First, FO's support for a nationalist union was substantially more controversial since all nationalists became associated with the campaign of violence. Second, a number of organizations came forward, each claiming to be the legitimate representative of the Algerian nation.

Still, the ICFTU desired to establish an anti-Communist, free labor union in Algeria. In addition to opposition from the French FO, the ICFTU Executive Board's decision to support the Algerian labor movement was complicated by two events in 1956. First was the creation of two national unions, the *Union syndicale des travailleurs algériens* (USTA) and the *Union générale des travailleurs algériens* (UGTA), both of which applied for ICFTU membership. Second were Algerian Resident Minister Lacoste's accusations against the ICFTU and the barring of Brown from entering Algeria.

Conflict and indecision within the ICFTU Executive Board regarding other global issues were heightened by the Algerian question. Even while uncertain how to react to the events of 1956, the ICFTU condemned the French government's repression of Algerian trade unionists. The frequent imprisonment of Algerian labor leaders and the exodus of the UGTA leadership with other Algerian refugees to Tunisia raised questions about the credibility of the UGTA in exile as a worthwhile recipient of ICFTU support. By 1957, Brown was very pessimistic about the intentions of his colleagues in the ICFTU Executive Board towards North Africa.

Only the Sakiet Crisis in the spring of 1958 and the rapid response of the Soviet bloc to the Algerian victims served to spur the ICFTU to action. But the ICFTU could not match the WFTU's aid. Moreover, under the new leadership of Charles de Gaulle, French policy shifted towards one of negotiation with the FLN (via the GPRA). Combined, these facts meant the window of opportunity for the ICFTU to make a lasting impression on the Algerians was closing

quickly. By 1959, Brown discounted the ICFTU as being an ineffective tool to guarantee the Western orientation of the Algerian labor movement, and he had little faith in the validity of the Algerian labor leaders who remained.

Ultimately, Algerian labor was so marginalized from the military and political apparatus of the FLN during the revolution that the Algerian labor movement had little or no role in the final negotiations of independence, and it was correspondingly insignificant after the revolution. This was entirely unlike the Tunisian independence movement, where there was a sense within the ICFTU that Neo Destour and the UGTT had accomplished something together.

Irving Brown made his first trip to Algeria as part of an ICFTU North African tour from 19 November to 8 December 1950. It would be his only visit to Algeria until its independence in 1962, due to travel restrictions later placed on him by France. As part of a three-man ICFTU delegation, Brown was taking stock of the development and political orientations of labor movements in Algeria, as well as the general social conditions.

Brown reported that most native Algerian trade unionists belonged to the local branch of the CGT, the same French national union from which he had engineered the split of CGT-FO (FO) in France three years earlier. Fewer native Algerians were members of the local branch of the FO or the *Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens* (CFTC), but the overwhelming majority belonged to the Communist-led CGT. While the CGT's political counterpart, the *Parti communiste algérien* (PCA), lacked large-scale Muslim membership, it had influence over the Algerian labor movement through the CGT, since Algerian nationalists had no union of their own. Indeed, the *Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques* (MTLD), the

preponderant Algerian nationalist political party, encouraged membership in the CGT, all the while claiming to stand apart from the PCA.¹

The MTLD was the political party of Messali Hadj, who had long been active in the Algerian nationalist movement since serving in the French army in World War I. In 1925, Messali founded the *Étoile nord africaine*, a pan-North African (originally) political organization that was periodically repressed by the governments of the Third French Republic. It was continually restyled under the guise of a different organization, but it was always Messali's party. Despite Messali being under house arrest in Paris since 1946, his organization remained the most popular nationalist organization until the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962), when it was eclipsed by the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN).²

Thus, the ICFTU delegation met with MTLD officials in Algeria in 1950. The MTLD officials expressed an interest in attempting to unseat the Communist leadership of the local CGT, but the MTLD would require training. These same officials refused to accept the obvious alternative of joining the local FO unions, which were the product of Brown's similar efforts against the CGT in France. The Algerians suspected Communist leadership in FO's Constantine section and Jewish domination of the Algiers section, neither of which were suitable for Muslim membership. The MTLD proposed that the ICFTU train 50 to 100 MTLD members who had already been in Paris for several months. Thus prepared, the MTLD's trade union activists might

1. Irving Brown, "ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951," in GMMA-IB, box 10, folder 12, "Brown, Writings '47-'85." Brown's report does not provide numerical figures for the memberships of these organizations.

2. Charles Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: a History from 1830 to the Present* [*Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*], Michael Brett, trans. (London: Hurst, 1991), 104-108; Alf Andrew Heggoy, and Robert R. Crout, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Algeria*, African Historical Dictionaries, vol. 28 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1981), 105, 144-145; Horne, 39, 70-77.

then return to Algeria to carry out a campaign to rid CGT of Communists, thus creating an acceptable anti-Communist and nationalist union for Algerians.³

Brown told the ICFTU Executive Board it should consider this proposal and at the very least continue close contacts with the MTLD. The board should also recognize “at the same time that we do not have a labor movement similar to the UGTT...which is recognized and accepted by the French government.” Brown favored adoption of a training program, even though the MTLD “has engaged in foolish and dangerous united front actions with the Communists against the French in order to defend their fight to freedom of press and expression. Whether the time is here or not for granting [ICFTU membership] of outright nationalist trade unions remains to be seen, but at the very least we ought to support greater freedom to the MTLD movement without granting them the right to engage in terrorism or violence as has been charged by the Resident General.” Brown gave such great weight to the importance of North Africa as a whole that he proposed the ICFTU designate a full-time North African operative — which he would become in fact, but not officially — or even a permanent office, which did not occur. A telling sign of the ICFTU’s unpreparedness for the events to come was Brown’s suggestion, at the very least, the hiring of an Arabic linguist for the ICFTU’s Brussels headquarters.⁴

Eight months later, the ICFTU had not yet acted upon Brown’s advice. In a letter to ICFTU General Secretary Jacobin H. Oldenbroek, Brown reaffirmed, “I propose that we bring every kind of informal as well as official pressure to bear on the French Government so that free trade union rights are granted to the natives of North Africa, especially in Algeria and Morocco. Repressive measures in these latter areas are pushing non-Communist Arab forces into Communist Party dominated trade unions.” Therefore, Brown again recommended the creation

3. Irving Brown, “ICFTU Emergency Committee February 20-23, 1951,” in GMMA-IB.

4. Ibid.

of an ICFTU regional conference, a regional bureau, and that an “experienced trade unionist with political understanding be sent to...assist our trade unions in North Africa, Lebanon and Turkey.”⁵

As it would happen, Brown would not return to Algeria for 11 years. In the interim, he was still very busy in Europe and Tunisia. More importantly, it appears that the task of developing the MTLD’s labor movement was left to the FO, as Algeria was legally an integral part of France. In other words, Algerian affairs were considered domestic, unlike issues in Tunisia or Morocco, which were considered foreign territories under French protection. Thus, the ICFTU could not ignore the sovereign responsibility of its affiliate, the FO, to conduct its own labor affairs, even though developing an Algerian nationalist union was an ICFTU objective as part of its entire North African mission.

Accordingly, Albert Lafond, the FO’s secretary for overseas affairs, began the task of assisting the MTLD’s development of an anti-Communist, progressive, and independent trade union movement. In turn, MTLD’s members within the Communist-led CGT began their campaign to break the Communist leadership of CGT. Messali Hadj gave directives to his followers to assist in CGT mass meetings in order to get the MTLD’s message heard and “check any speakers who would attack our party.” It was carefully noted that the “goal is not to destroy the instrument of the struggle that is trade unionism, but to prevent that it be used against the Algerian worker.” At the CGT’s 1953 May Day rally, all of the Communists’ speeches were rendered inaudible with chants of, “Bring back Messali!”⁶

5. Irving Brown to J. H. Oldenbroek, 15 October 1951, in GMMA-IB, box 10, folder 15, “Brown, Writings, '51-53.”

6. Unsigned report, “Syndicalisme en Afrique du Nord,” January 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder “560 - Labor Affairs, 1956.”

Throughout the summer, the MTL D's agitation toward Communist leadership of the CGT and the PCA continued, as did collaboration with the FO and, by extension, the ICFTU. In June, officers of the FO and the MTL D met in Algiers. At the ICFTU's Third World Congress in Stockholm the following month, the ICFTU declared that it would strive "to aid effectively the free trade unions of non-autonomous countries in their labor and national struggle and to help organize free trade unions wherever they do not yet exist."⁷

The same day that the congress closed, MTL D members clashed with CGT members on the streets of Constantine, Algeria. In response, the CGT's Algerian paper, *Le Travailleur algérien*, began a campaign against the MTL D and the ICFTU. Similar to the attacks on Brown in France in the years preceding, the Communist-led CGT accused the ICFTU of dividing the labor movement. The CGT also accused the FO of being the agent of "the employer," and of using American funds to destroy labor's progress in Algeria. Of course, the MTL D's paper *Algérie libre* defended its collaboration with the FO and the ICFTU and, in turn, the MTL D attacked the CGT for being a puppet of the Communist WFTU.⁸

The MTL D's anti-Communist agitation was so effective that, by 1954 the CGT took drastic measures to regain its position within the Algerian-nationalist labor movement. The Algerian branch of the CGT was dissolved and restyled as the *Union générale des syndicats algérien* (UGSA). The UGSA affiliated directly with the WFTU, rather than through France's CGT, to give the UGSA the trappings of an independent national trade union representative of

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

the anti-colonial sentiments of Algerian workers. This proved ineffective at regaining its former numbers.⁹

However, just as the FO had failed to capture the exodus of French workers from the CGT in France in the late 1940s, Messali's organization failed to capture the exodus of Muslim workers from UGSA in 1954. In part, this was because MTLD had not yet created an organized trade union. This delay would prove to be critical, because Messali's theretofore hegemony over Algeria's nationalist movement quickly eroded after the FLN launched the revolution in November.

On 1 November 1954, French authorities responded to the FLN's coordinated attacks across Algeria only hours earlier by rounding up the "usual suspects," which were Messali's MTLD officers in Algeria. The police found them in their beds, in their pajamas. They were unaware of the revolution that had begun. Four days later, the entire MTLD organization was outlawed and various officials of the political party were arrested. This was not a problem for Messali Hadj, who was already under perpetual house arrest in Paris. In fact, it was momentarily useful since the arrests allowed the MTLD to claim a revolution that was not of its making.¹⁰

In reality, the revolution had been started by the FLN, which was not led by any high ranking man of ambition such as Messali, but a committee of his former followers. Calling itself the *Comité révolutionnaire d'unité et d'action* (CRUA), the group was comprised of nine men who had grown disillusioned with the MTLD, whose nationalist agenda had stagnated under Messali. The average age of the nine members of the CRUA was thirty-two, and most had served

9. Report by A. Lafond, "*L'Évolution de la situation outre-mer*," in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 2, "Brown, Irving, '54"; American Consulate Algiers to Department of State, "Labor Report, 1956 – Algeria," 20 November 1956, in NARA-16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

10. Horne, 96-7. Though he remained "leader for life" of the MTLD based in Algeria, Messali Hadj did not return to Algeria until he was buried at Tlemcen in 1974, Heggoy, 144-145.

in World War II, during which they confronted the true nature of their secondary status as colonial subjects. Frustrated by the long and unsuccessful march towards independence, the CRUA resolved, at least for the time being, to ignore political differences that had theretofore marked the Algerian nationalist movement. Instead, the CRUA resolved to create a third force — the FLN — whose sole objective was to use an armed revolution to achieve independence.¹¹

While the FLN began the revolution, Messali would not yield his claim to be the leader of the Algerian nationalist movement and continued to pursue influence within the revolution through his own organization. This led to an internecine struggle between the FLN and the MTLD that also carried over into the international labor movement as both organizations sought to gain the support of sympathetic unions everywhere. In this arena, in 1955, the MTLD still had the advantage, but it was waning due to Lafond's inability to fully materialize a unified plan of action between the MTLD's would-be union and the FO.

As FO's secretary for overseas affairs, Lafond's was hampered by two factors. First was the resistance of the FO's own regional unions in Algeria. European members of the FO had a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo* rather than reforming conditions for the benefit of Muslim workers. This resistance intensified tremendously with the start of the armed revolution in November 1954, even though the MTLD had nothing to do with the armed rebellion, at first. Lafond and other FO officers had difficulty balancing their desire — shared with the ICFTU — to alleviate the injustice of colonialism suffered by Algerian workers and maintaining its anti-Communist *Pieds Noirs* membership in Algeria. A report in the U.S. Algiers Consulate records describes Lafond's ambivalence in late 1955: "His correspondence with the leading activists of the FO in Algeria is a collection of contradictions and hesitations. One senses the scruples of a militant who is divided between his personal tendencies and his national responsibilities. It is

11. Horne, 75-7.

such that he writes to Oran to not reject [Muslim] nationalist militants,” while writing to FO members at “Constantine that it is necessary to avoid, at all costs, to have the air of favoring the establishment of an Algerian central [nationalist union] which would be full of dangers for Algeria and for France.”¹²

Secondly, the MTLD’s steps toward establishing itself as the representative of the Algerian nationalist movement was ultimately upstaged by the FLN’s own efforts to be the representative of the Algerian people. The MTLD’s liaison with the FO was an attempt on the part of Messali to maintain his influence via the labor movement. The MTLD created its own labor union affiliate *Union syndicale des travailleurs algériens* (USTA) in December 1955. However, a new organization, the *Union générale de travailleurs algériens* (UGTA), was formulated as a counter to the MTLD’s bid at controlling the nationalist labor movement in February 1956.¹³

The existence of two would-be national unions posed a dilemma for the ICFTU, but it eventually chose the UGTA. Either option would have posed difficulties for the FO leadership, whose more conservative members, in particular the *Pieds Noirs*, opposed any sort of reforms in Algeria that would undermine the colonial order. Furthermore, the *Pieds Noirs* tied anti-colonialism in North Africa to American dominance in international affairs, specifically citing the AFL-CIO’s influence in the ICFTU and the French labor movement as will be shown. Given the history of the AFL and the FO, any actions by the FO leadership along the lines of the ICFTU intentions in Algeria were vulnerable to accusations by the French public of external influence.

12. Unsigned report, “*Syndicalisme en Afrique du Nord*,” January 1956, in NARA-A16.

13. American Consulate Algiers to State Department, “Labor Report 1956 - Algiers,” 20 November 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, “560 - Labor Affairs, 1956.”

The U.S. Embassy in Paris wrote a report on the French press' response to the formation of the USTA. *Les Échos*, France's national financial paper, accurately identified USTA as an affiliate of Messali's MTLD. *Le Monde*, which tended to be politically neutral and was a balanced representative of French national opinion, expressed the unfounded fear that the USTA was a union arm of the FLN that would "create difficulties for Algerian agriculture which will complete legally the terrorist action of the outlaws."¹⁴ In other words, disruption of European-controlled, commercial agriculture would be absolute. What the rebels did not destroy, the organized Algerians would thereafter refuse to farm.

This fear was based on the increasing occurrence of terrorism in Algeria. Only a few months earlier, the August 1955 Philippeville Massacre turned the liberal, reform-minded Resident Minister Jacques Soustelle into a sympathetic supporter of the most hawkish and pro-colonial elements among the *Pieds Noirs*.¹⁵ This event served to isolate the moderate majorities on either side of the conflict, one of the main functions of terrorism. In December 1955 and January 1956, the number of terrorist attacks and assassinations conducted by the rebels had reached a then all time high, including a sharp increase in the number of civilian targets.¹⁶ Such were the conditions in Algeria that even the moderate *Le Monde* predicted the dire result of USTA's formation: the radicalization of the Algerian working masses.

The American Embassy in Paris reported that the immediate reaction of some of the French was that the U.S. was "playing an underhanded role in North African affairs (in this case

14. American Embassy Paris to American Consulate Algiers, "Paris Press Reports of Formation of USTA," 23 February 1956 in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

15. Horne, "The Conversion of Soustelle," in Chapter 5, in *A Savage War of Peace*.

16. American Consulate Algiers to State Department, "Terrorism in Algeria, December 1955," 9 January 1956, in GMMA-A16, box 18, folder "350 - Terrorists, 1956-58"; American Consulate Algiers to Department of State, "Terrorism in Algeria, January 1956," 1 February 1956, *ibid.*; Connelly, "Appendix: Monthly Tally of Rebel Activity," in *Diplomatic Revolution*, 292.

through the intermediary of the ICFTU).” *Le Monde* took the lead, discussing the likelihood that the FO and its three Algerian departmental branches would oppose admission of the USTA to the ICFTU. As discussed earlier, this was not the original intent of the FO leadership, which was facing increasing pressure from within its organization to end the FO’s liaison with Messali’s MTLD. *Le Monde* further accused the ICFTU of giving propaganda funds and assistance to the MTLD, and it expressed dismay that “Anglo-Saxon influence...should run the risk of compromising the efforts” of the Socialist government of Prime Minister Guy Mollet precisely when it was seeking “to resolve the Algerian problem by appeasement and conciliation.”¹⁷

Brown had expressed doubts about Messali’s leadership and the representativeness of the MTLD as early as 1950. Because of the FLN’s domination of the first full year of the revolution, by 1956, the ICFTU Executive Board shared doubts about Messali, the MTLD, and the new USTA. The situation became more complicated when, on 24 February 1956, nine days after the official creation of the USTA, the virtually unknown UGTA declared its own founding. Therefore, at an April meeting the ICFTU subcommittee resolved to send an investigative delegation to evaluate the prospective affiliates USTA and UGTA.¹⁸

Robert Lacoste, the Algerian resident minister, was deliberately playing to the anti-American fears of his European constituents when he banned Brown from ever entering Algeria on 9 May 1956.¹⁹ The reason was to prevent the ICFTU from sending a delegation to Algeria to

17. American Embassy Paris to American Consulate Algiers, “French Reactions to Reported Foundation of USTA,” 24 February 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder “560 - Labor Affairs, 1956.”

18. Irving Brown report on the ICFTU Sub-committee, 16 April 1956, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 5, “Brown, Irving ‘53-‘57.”

19. American Embassy Paris to American Consulate Algiers “Telegram, Confidential, No. 336,” 10 May 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder “560 - Labor Affairs, 1956.” The American Consul at Algiers, Mr. Clark, relayed to the Paris Embassy via telegram on 8 May 1956 that, “In a friendly manner but with firmness Lacoste told me he had told Mollet he would not tolerate presence Irving Brown Algeria [sic]. He was not, he said, going to have those trouble makers here at this time. Assume from his remarks that rest of party will also be excluded,” in

consider the applications of either of the two national unions, the USTA or the UGTA, which would allow Algerian Muslims to represent themselves in the ICFTU on the same basis as national unions of independent nations. An ICFTU delegation trip to Algeria would not be a violation of any laws, but as a matter of principle, Lacoste could not risk another international organization's recognition of any Algerian organizations founded on the right of self-determination.

For example, FLN delegates had attended the Bandung Conference in April 1955 as unofficial delegates, but garnered the tremendous victory of an official declaration of Algeria's right to self-determination by that mostly Afro-Asian assembly.²⁰ Lacoste could not allow the ICFTU — an international body of even broader representation — to recognize a nationalist Algerian trade union. However, despite his emergency powers and because of the Algerian Revolution's growing international focus as the center of the world-wide, post-colonial struggle, Lacoste could not simply ban the ICFTU from Algeria. He needed a pretense of illicit behavior to justify such a decree.

The French press had been printing stories about a junior staffer of the ICFTU who had been questioned by police at the Algiers airport in February. Despite efforts to smear Jay Krane, the man in question, as an American agent, U.S. State Department records indicate that Krane's itinerary had only included Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. Furthermore, the stop at Algiers was an emergency landing, and Krane, in fact, had never left the airport hotel.²¹ The French press had

"Telegram, Confidential, No. 137," *ibid.*

20. Horne, 130-1.

21. American Embassy Brussels to American Consulate Algiers, "Summary of Conversations Between Embassy Labor Attache and Jay Krane of ICFTU staff on recent developments in North Africa," 28 March 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956." In a conversation between Brown and U.S. Ambassador to France C. Douglas Dillon on or before 9 March 1956, Brown told Dillon that the ICFTU "slipped up" in the Krane situation but the sponsorship of USTA was an ICFTU project, not one of American labor, in "Telegram, Secret, No.

delivered a piece of red meat for anti-American readership, but Resident Minister Lacoste would deliver a life-time supply in the form of a corrupted Frenchman and a trumped up charge: Guy Gomis' "collusion" with Irving Brown.

Gomis was president of the Algiers Junior Chamber of Commerce, and had met Brown at his Paris office on one or more previous occasions.²² Gomis, however, had also been to the American Consulate in Algiers and met with various American officials. This was sufficient pretext for Lacoste to ban both men from Algeria. A proclamation reprinted in *Le Monde* and other French papers stated: "The Minister Resident has decided to remove from Algerian territory a certain Gomis.... Gomis has entered into relations with the special services of a foreign power and with Mr. Irving Brown, well known trade unionist. This individual worked toward the elimination of French influence in North Africa through the constitution of a large North African Trade Union Federation."²³

Both the U.S. State Department and the ICFTU were caught off guard by the Algerian government general, not for a lack of effort to stay informed, but because Lacoste's actions contradicted prior discussions between ICFTU representatives and Prime Minister Mollet. On 23 April, ICFTU President Omer Becu, Secretary General J.H. Oldenbroek, Irving Brown, and Secretary General Bothereau of the FO met with Prime Minister Mollet and Minister Lacoste for the express purpose of discussing a potential ICFTU mission to Algeria.²⁴

113," 9 March 1956, *ibid*.

22. Rathbun, 289-291.

23. Paris Embassy to State Department, "Telegram, Unclassified, No. 161," 10 May 1956, NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

24. American Embassy Paris to Department of State, "Algerian Nationalist Unions: ICFTU and Irving Brown Activities," 30 April 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

U.S. Embassy officials debriefed Bothereau and Brown about these discussions. According to Bothereau, Prime Minister Mollet and Algerian Resident Minister Lacoste were both “non-committal concerning ICFTU’s theories on the North African union problem...but both promised the delegation every facility for visiting and investigating the question in Algeria itself.” Bothereau clearly expected the French authorities to permit the delegation to enter Algeria, but he did express concern that if Brown were to be selected to participate Brown’s presence would have an adverse affect among the Europeans of Algeria and cause trouble for all parties.

Brown’s debriefing focused less on the actual meeting and more on his personal views about the situation. “His opinion is that the present Government has no real policy, no self-confidence and is more or less playing the situation by ear. As evidence that Lacoste has no confidence in his own capacity to bring the drama to a satisfactory denouement, Brown described the Minster as having shaken his finger and said: ‘I will make you a bet, that in two or three years Algeria will be a People’s Democracy.’ Brown said that he took up the bet, on the basis of his firm belief that the Algerian nationalists and trade unionists are not Communists.”²⁵

While the ICFTU seemed a bit stunned after conducting what it had thought of as cold but useful meetings with Mollet’s government, the State Department sought to verify the validity of the French accusations against Brown and the ICFTU. For the rest of the month of May, there was a flurry of State Department communiqués among Algiers, Paris, and Brussels, and between the Paris embassy and various French officials and between the Brussels embassy and the ICFTU. There was general agreement between the State Department and the Quai d’Orsay that a visit by Brown to Algeria was undesirable under the current circumstances. In fact, the State

25. Ibid.

Department had been concerned of a potential assassination attempt on Brown even before Lacoste raised Brown's notoriety with the ban.²⁶ The ICFTU remained publicly silent on the issue for the time being.

AFL-CIO President George Meany, on the other hand, took a moment during the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to give kudos to Brown. As part of the ICFTU, Brown was supposed to "see what can be done to help the workers in Algeria and perhaps bring some order to that troubled country. He has been barred by the French government from going to Algeria. To me, that is a badge of honor of which he can be proud the rest of his life."²⁷ Proud though Brown may have been, his access to Algerian trade unionists was critically restricted.

French papers continued to weave anti-American conspiracy theories. *L'Écho d'Alger* simplified and distorted the facts to suggest that the ICFTU had been directing the USTA since Brown's first and only visit to Algeria in 1950. Furthermore, it reported that the ICFTU delegation was not deciding which applicant union would be best, but whether to also support the UGTA. It recalled the ICFTU's April visit to Paris, but only that it met with the FO's Bothereau, not both the heads of the French Republic and the Government General of Algeria. The article branded Bothereau with being in favor of Algerian independence.²⁸

Not satisfied with the supportive French press, Lacoste went one step further to solidify his anti-American credentials. On 29 May, he went before the French National Assembly and

26. Juan L. Gorrell to Mr. Achilles, internal letter of Paris Embassy, 30 April 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

27. "Daily Proceedings, 29th Convention International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union," Atlantic City, NJ, 11 May 1956, in GMMA-IB, box 3, folder 4, "Algeria Clippings, '56."

28. *L'Écho d'Alger*, "Voici pourquoi Irving Brown est jugé indésirable en Algérie," 9 May 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

gave a speech on his mandate in Algeria. In it, he belittled the ICFTU's global pursuits and maligned Brown: "I have pointed out to [the ICFTU's] representatives other countries in the world where they could exercise their spirit of sagacity. As for Irving Brown, my decision to forbid him access to Algeria is without appeal. Irving Brown has been a master corrupter in North Africa, where he has set up trade unions the essential objective of which is to fight against us. We would be poor Frenchmen if we could not defend ourselves against foreign intrusion. That is why it is well for it to be known that the Algerian problem is an internal French problem which will never be settled on an international plane."²⁹ This argument that the Algerian question was an internal affair would be France's preponderant argument against its growing number of international critics until the war's end. In the meantime, Lacoste did not let his wave of popular support in France and in Algeria go to waste and moved to suppress both nationalist unions with mass arrests of their leaders.

But what was the ICFTU to do in the meantime? Most members of the executive board were hesitant to pick an affiliate without having made a thorough investigation of the merits of each organization's application of affiliation. By banning Brown, Lacoste had effectively banned all of the ICFTU, which had a policy of "all of us or none of us," since the executive board did not want to appear to be bending to the will of the officials of any national government. The ICFTU remained silent on the issue of the ban while Brown was away in Pakistan. In July, the next meeting of the executive board issued no statements about Brown, but it did issue protestations of Lacoste's mass arrests of Algerian labor unionists then occurring.³⁰

29. American Embassy Paris to American Consulate Algiers, "Telegram, No. 1362," 31 May, 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956." See also various French papers from the same date, some of which were on file in GMMA-IB, box 3, folder 3, "Algeria Clippings, '56."

30. American Embassy Brussels to American Consulate Algiers, "Telegram, No. 89," 1 June 1956 in NARA-16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956"; American Embassy Brussels to American Consulate Algiers

On 2 July, an explosion tore through the Algiers office building occupied by the UGTA. Though its leadership had already been imprisoned, the actual union was still operating legally. The government general took advantage of the explosion by seizing the union's files, which it would quickly claim revealed "narrow relation" between the UGTA and the FLN, as well as relations between the UGTA and both East and West international movements (the WFTU and the ICFTU) as reported in the right-wing paper *L'Aurore*. The newspaper recalled that Lacoste had banned Irving Brown, whom it incorrectly called the "Secretary General of the ICFTU."³¹ Of course, this fit the *Pieds Noirs*' conception of America's domination of the ICFTU and its supposed imperialist designs on North Africa.

The press was content to accept the government general's explanation that the explosion was caused by a gas leak, but Algerians did not believe it, nor did the U.S. Consulate at Algiers. Instead, they saw it as an attempt by the French government to prevent the mass-strike being planned for 5 July by Algerian nationalists of every union and by the FLN, which would have been a disastrous show of Algerian unity for the French government.³²

The explosion-*cum*-raid at the UGTA offices coincided with the first day of the ICFTU's mid-year executive board meeting. The Algerian issue was the central focus of the operational discussions while the creation of a new executive office, director of operations, was the leading administrative issue. Brown's report of the meeting reveals the early signs of Brown's dissatisfaction with the ICFTU. The post of director of operations was, in fact, an attempt to

Consulate, "ICFTU Statement Giving Further Details on Arrest of Algerian Trade Union Leaders," 11 June 1956, *ibid*.

31. *L'Aurore*, "Saisi de documents révélateurs: Des personnalités métropolitaines compromises," 3 July 1956, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 16, "Brown, Irving, '56-'61."

32. American Consulate Algiers to State Department, "Labor Report, 1956 – Algeria," 20 November 1956, in NARA-16, box 19, folder "560 - Labor Affairs, 1956."

circumvent the passivity of Secretary General Oldenbroek and inject new vigor into ICFTU policy and operations along the lines of Meany and Brown's foreign policy ideas *vis-à-vis* the Soviets.³³ The first person to hold the post was Charlie Millard, who, to the chagrin of Brown and the AFL-CIO, tended to support Oldenbroek, rather than overrule the secretary general or otherwise foster a dynamic and decisive atmosphere within the ICFTU.³⁴

Turning to Algeria, Brown reported that Secretary General Oldenbroek "could not defend Lacoste but at the same time [the executive board members] were not too eager to repudiate completely the Lacoste accusation" that Brown was corrupt and the ICFTU's mission was to destroy France. Brown noted that everyone at the meeting was careful to discuss all the details about Lacoste's accusation but made no mention of Brown's attempt to defend himself with his 22 May letter to the French press and the ICFTU. The report explained that he had addressed the issue privately just before the meeting wherein "Oldenbroek, Gaddes, Becu, and Krane were present. When Brown referred to the fact that there was no mention of my statement in the document, Oldenbroek suddenly played dumb...He turned in the direction of Krane who very reluctantly had to admit that the statement had been received." Brown speculated, "This means that he [Oldenbroek] was either lying or Krane has sabotaged [sic] by not bringing the statement to the attention of Oldenbroek." This incident is revealing in that Brown was highly suspicious of Krane (Victor Reuther's aide, formerly of the CIO) and that Brown was by no means in control of the ICFTU, contrary to the beliefs of French conspiracy theorists.³⁵

33. Irving Brown, "Report on ICFTU Executive Board meeting of July 2 to 7, 1956," in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 5, "Brown, Irving, '53-'57."

34. Stoner, 113.

35. Irving Brown, "Report on ICFTU Executive Board meeting of July 2 to 7, 1956." For an example of press coverage of Brown's letter to the press, see New York Herald Tribune-Paris, "Irving Brown Denies Asking Algerian Visa," 23 May 1956, in GMMA-IB, box 3, folder 3, "Algeria Clippings, '56." Brown usually referred to himself in the third person for his reports.

After complaining that the executive board had not given the case a balanced presentation in the meeting's agenda, Brown gave a speech saying he did not expect the ICFTU to fight for him, but the AFL-CIO would, because it is "not a personal conflict but involved the entire ICFTU and its future in the colonial world." Oldenbroek then apologized and promised copies of Brown's response to Lacoste would be disseminated among the board before the end of the meeting. Victor Reuther then spoke saying, "In the democratic world it is possible to have disagreements and he for one had them with different individuals," but the ICFTU had a responsibility to protest to the French government and stick by their selection of Brown as a member of the delegation to Algeria. The board decided to write a letter of protest while confirming its choice of delegation members.³⁶

The proceeding day, the Algerian discussion turned to the dilemma of choosing between the competing applications of Messali's USTA and the UGTA, which the French claimed to be an affiliate of the FLN terrorists. Since the ICFTU had not been able to go to Algeria, representatives from the USTA, the UGTA, and one from the FO in Algeria had gone to Brussels for private talks in late June. Oldenbroek prefaced the July executive board debate with the question, "Can we wait?" He cited unsuccessful attempts to get the two Algerian unions to agree to a merger. Brown emphasized, "Oldenbroek spoke very cautiously and avoided making any decisive recommendation and it must be reported also that he never really sought to get a decision" during the private meetings with the Algerians. Brown surmised that Oldenbroek and other advocates of delay took that position "out of deference to [FO Secretary General] Bothereau who is in a difficult situation and who needed a long period of time so he could get his people to go along. On the other hand, everyone from the Moslem side especially our affiliates

36. Ibid.

from Tunisia and Morocco were pressing for the immediate affiliation of the UGTA as one of the most effective ways of not only helping the Algerian situation but also as a means of delivering a blow against the neutralists and Communists who are extremely active in the entire Middle East.”³⁷

There were speeches by advocates of both delay and decision. A motion was made to accept the UGTA, while an amendment was offered to accept UGTA in principle but make it conditional upon the actual departure of the ICFTU delegation. This was a compromise spelling indefinite delay. “After much haggling,” Brown reported, both measures resulted in tie votes. After a ten minute recess, ICFTU President Omer Becu called for a re-vote. Brown noted in his report that this was against the constitution of the ICFTU, but “no one at this time challenged the legality of this procedure.” The amendment to delay was defeated 13 to 7, but the “motion for affiliation of the UGTA was carried, 16 to 2, with two abstentions. Immediately after the vote, Bothereau took the floor to challenge the validity of the vote. He also withdrew from the meeting and stated that he was returning to Paris to consult with his executive group and added that his duties to his national organization came before any responsibility to the international.”³⁸

Bothereau had washed his hands of any future action of the ICFTU regarding Algeria. At the same time, the incident revealed a fundamental weakness of the democratic nature of the ICFTU, which was its *raison d’être*.

The French press did not react favorably to the ICFTU’s acceptance of the UGTA. In June 1956, Albert Lafond, the FO’s secretary for overseas affairs, had already broken ranks with FO Secretary General Bothereau and published thinly veiled criticisms of Brown in an article

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

entitled “The Game of International Relations” in *La Dépêche*. Then, during and after July’s ICFTU executive meeting, *Combat* published the following articles: “Protect Us from Our Friends” and “The ICFTU Makes Five Decisions Hostile to France.” Throughout July, similar articles attacked the FO’s relationship with the ICFTU.³⁹

Under this mounting pressure, after 1956, Bothereau was personally compromised on all Algerian debates in the ICFTU Executive Board. While his personal convictions did not necessarily change, he was continually offering caveats and conditions on the FO’s stance *vis-à-vis* ICFTU resolutions and actions on Algeria. Despite the disadvantage of democracy, the free will of the ICFTU’s membership was the fundamental basis of the ICFTU’s moral superiority over the Soviet-controlled WFTU. Brown could not force the FO, the French union he had helped create, to lend its support to the formation and development of the nationalist UGTA, which sympathized with the FLN and desired Algeria’s independence.

This state of affairs was reinforced by several events in 1956, which all produced the same result: Brown’s increasing dissatisfaction with the ICFTU’s performance under Oldenbroek’s leadership. In Brown’s estimate, the ICFTU could have given more substantial support to the Poznań strikes in Poland in June, should have defended Egypt’s right to own the Suez Canal, and should have decried the Soviet oppression of the Hungarian revolution, but it did none of these things.

In an 8 August letter to Jay Lovestone, Brown’s superior at the AFL-CIO’s Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC), Brown reflected soberly on the weaknesses of relying upon the ICFTU to achieve the AFL-CIO’s labor policy abroad: “Frankly, the Suez Canal situation has made me re-think a lots [sic] of things which once again reinforce me in my belief that the ICFTU cannot or will not play a really independent role [from the British or the French] on the

39. See GMMA-IB, box 3, folder 3, “Algeria Clippings, ‘56.”

basic questions that have been raised by the colonial issue. I think at this late date after statements from the WFTU and the Arab Confederation of Labor, the fact that there is nothing from the ICFTU on the Suez question is the measure of the bankruptcy of this so-called international organization.” Brown lamented, “I don't know whether I made myself clear in this letter but I think you have some appreciation of the difference between working out a policy or a resolution back home and the actual physical participation in the work of a movement abroad wherein the official positions our friends are few and the resistance to our militant, dynamic anti-communist position is varied. In other words, it is difficult to work in committees, in organizations with other nationalities if one is deprived of the complete moral and material support from his base.” In terms of a “base,” he may have been referring to the unspoken divisions between the AFL and the CIO or perhaps the lack of U.S. government support for AFL-CIO foreign policy under President Eisenhower. Either way, his disappointment is clear. In a sympathetic letter a few months later, Lovestone wrote colorfully of the ICFTU being “worth its weight in soiled tissue paper.”⁴⁰

Unbeknownst to Brown, Lovestone, or any of the ICFTU Executive Board members, the Suez Crisis would develop into a watershed moment of the twentieth century for the United States and the United Nations (UN). President Eisenhower’s response effectively ended any practical expectation of French or British neocolonialism, and increased the likelihood of self-determination worldwide. Namely, the Eisenhower Doctrine declared that any Middle Eastern nation could request American military intervention if it was being threatened by armed aggression from another state. The UN’s own credentials as the place for reasoned debate and

40. Letter from Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 27 August 1956, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 6, “Brown, Irving, ‘55-‘57”; letter from Lovestone to Brown, 26 November 1956, *ibid.*

peaceful resolutions were coming to the fore with the resolution of the Suez Crisis and strengthened by American support for the UN Security Council's authority in this matter.

Meanwhile, the Battle of Algiers (30 September 1956 – 24 September 1957) was increasing the FLN's global exposure through deliberations on the Algerian question in the UN. Shortly after the Suez Crisis, the FLN would claim control over the Algerian labor movement and gained international credit for organizing the Algiers general strike (28-30 January 1957) that served to demonstrate Algerian unity under the FLN.⁴¹ This marginalized the credibility of competing nationalist organizations, such as the UGTA or the USTA. In the following months, the UGTA — the horse ICFTU had bet on — was marginalized even further as its beleaguered leadership became detainees in French “camps” or refugees in Tunisia. With each series of arrests, the UGTA selected a new set of officials, each time younger and less experienced. What role was there left for the UGTA to play or the ICFTU under FLN hegemony of the revolution?

Prior efforts by the UGTA had shown considerably less effective at gathering international attention than the FLN's Algiers general strike. In January 1957, UGTA Secretary General Allal Abd-el-kader (perhaps the third or fourth man to hold that office in less than a year) sent a plea to the AFL-CIO, the ICFTU, the UMT (of Morocco) and the UGTT from an office in Algiers. It described bands of young *Pieds Noirs* looting Algerian shops without any intervention by the police on 29 December. It claims a “massacre” of postal workers, streetcar drivers and other workers without citing any figures. Streetcar drivers staged a 48-hour strike and the telegraph workers staged a 24-hour strike. The letter announced that there would be a general strike of 24 hours on 3 January. Furthermore, about a dozen union officers — both of the UGTA and its affiliates — were arrested and placed in the concentration camp at Berrouaghia. Even

41. Connelly, 125-135; Horne, 190-192 and “The World Takes Notice,” Chapter 11.

though Lacoste had not outlawed the UGTA, the government general continued to seize the UGTA's publications, imprison its officials, and deny travel papers. Thus, Allal Abd-el-kader was not able to attend the ICFTU's African Regional Conference that month in Accra, Ghana.⁴²

In French Algeria, Abd-el-kader declared, "Democratic liberties and labor legislation are 'flouted' and arbitrary orders of requisition multiply against our brother-functionaries. The ICFTU must manifest its solidarity more effectively and more concretely. The Algerian workers do not understand that the ICFTU has thrown the total mobilization of all the unions of the world to sustain the Hungarian workers in their heroic combat for liberty and independence and that [ICFTU] contents itself to only platonic manifestations regarding the Algerian workers in the struggle for the liberation of the enslaved country." The plea went on to suggest that the ICFTU stage symbolic strikes, especially by the Federation of Ports and Docks "in order to signify to the French Government the willingness of all the workers to make respect the trade union liberties in Algeria, to make stop the war and to demand the new search of a negotiated solution. We absolutely count on the ICFTU for an immediate intervention, powerful and effective."⁴³ Such recognition from the ICFTU was not forthcoming for its Algerian affiliate, the UGTA.

And so, Brown soldiered on in the form of personal diplomacy to advance American labor's mission in Algeria, despite the obstacles inside the ICFTU. At Tunisia's first anniversary celebration on 24 March 1957, Brown was present as the representative of AFL-CIO President Meany, but not necessarily the ICFTU, which was represented by Secretary General Oldenbroek. The Tunisian press billed the meeting as a sign of North African labor unity, including independent Morocco and warring Algeria. Algeria was a focal point of discussions, including

42. *Union générale des travailleurs Algériens*, "Appel à la confédération internationale des syndicats libres," 1 January 1957, in GMMA-JL, box 4, folder 9, "Algeria, '57-'59, '62-'65"; Stoner, 100-104.

43. UGTA, "Appel à la confédération internationale des syndicats libres," 1 January 1957, in GMMA-JL.

Brown's address. There was also optimism about Eisenhower's Middle East Doctrine, and what it might mean for Tunisia, Morocco, and even Algeria. Brown said,

The American trade unions are opposed to the policy actually pursued in Algeria. The recognition of Algerian independence is indispensable to the pacification of the situation. This will be by the negotiation and not by military measures that true 'pacification' can be brought to Algeria. The position of American trade unions represents the true voice of the profound sentiment of the American people. And sooner or later the official policy of the American government will end up coinciding with the true sentiments of the American people. Because that which is actual practice in Algeria is a contradiction with the American policy of the Middle East, that is to say the Eisenhower doctrine.⁴⁴

Thus, Eisenhower's response to the Suez Crisis and the announcement of his Middle East Doctrine inspired optimism that U.S. government policy for North Africa might shift in the same direction, including Algeria. While the U.S. did draw stronger direct ties with Tunisia and Morocco, which were by then independent, the same was not true of Algeria, which America's French allies still claimed as part of sovereign France.

Despite this fundamental difference between the state of affairs in Algeria and Tunisia, in early 1957, Vice-President Richard Nixon's visit to Africa encouraged Brown and the North Africans. Nixon's public report praised the trade unions of Ghana, Morocco, and Tunisia. Moreover, "The leaders of these countries have recognized the importance of providing an alternative to communist dominated unions and they, thereby, are keeping the Communists from getting a foothold in one of their favorite areas of exploitation. In this connection, I wish to pay tribute to the effective support that is being given by trade unions in the United States to the free trade union movement in the countries which I visited. These close and mutually advantageous relationships are in the national interest as well as in the interest of developing a strong labor movement." The report suggested that, "It is vitally important that the United States Government

44. *La Presse - Tunis*, "Le Meeting de l'U.G.T.T.," 25 March 1957 in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 10 "Brown, Irving, Writings, '55-'58"; *Le Petit Matin - Tunis*, "Il ne peut y avoir d'indépendance totale sans unité," 26 March 1957, *ibid.*

follow closely trade union developments in the Continent of Africa and that our diplomatic and consular representatives should come to know on an intimate basis the trade union leaders in these countries. I believe, too, that American labor union should continue to maintain close fraternal relationships with the African free trade union movement in order that each may derive the greatest possible advantage of the wisdom and experience of the other.”⁴⁵

Brown sent a copy of Nixon’s report to UGTA Secretary General Rachid Ben Abdul-Aziz in Tunis, who was thankful to have it, but quick to ask if Brown was following up on his promise of future AFL-CIO funding that he made at the Accra conference. It is important to note that Ben Abdul-Aziz was the fourth man to hold — or claim to hold — the office of UGTA Secretary General. Aissat Idir was the first man to hold the office, but he was imprisoned on 23 May 1956.⁴⁶ According to the U.S. Consulate at Algiers, the 26-year-old president of the Algerian postal union, Rahmane Dekkar, claimed to be Aissat’s successor as secretary general of the UGTA, and sought assistance throughout 1956 from the consulate to escape Algeria. This request for assistance was denied.⁴⁷ The letter from January 1957 cited above indicates that in Algiers a man named Allal Abd-el-Kader was secretary general of the UGTA. By March, Brown was corresponding with Ben Abdul-Aziz whom the Tunisian press referred to as the secretary general of the UGTA in exile, but with whom Brown had conversed at Accra, Ghana, also in January. A year earlier, the ICFTU had debated about whether the UGTA or the USTA

45. “The Vice President's Report to the President on Trip to Africa,” for release to Sunday A.M. papers, 7 April 1957, in EPL, WHO Central Files, Official File, OF116-LL, box 594, folder “116-NN-Vice President’s Africa Trip.”

46. Rachid Ben Abdul-Aziz to Irving Brown, “*Assassinat de Aissat Idir*,” [after 26 July 1956], in GMMA-IB, box 2, folder 14, “Algeria ‘48-‘61.”

47. “Memorandum of Conversation,” between Rahmane Dekkar and Grimma Johnson, 15 August 1956, in NARA-A16, box 19, “560 - Labor Affairs, 1956.”

represented the Algerian workers and settled on the UGTA. But by 1957, one might have reasonably asked, “Who represents the UGTA?” or even, “Who does the UGTA represent?”

As late as July 1958, there appears to have been doubt from the U.S. Departments of State and Labor whether Ben Abdul-Aziz in Tunis was the legitimate secretary general of the UGTA. Ahmed Tlili, a Bourguiba confidant and new secretary general of the UGTT, held discussions with U.S. Labor Department officer Arnold Steinbach, who plied Tlili for intelligence on the UGTA. Tlili assured Steinbach that Ben Abdul-Aziz was legitimate and the UGTA in exile was still a strong and effective organization even inside war-torn Algeria. Tlili cited the fact that Ben Abdul-Aziz still collected dues from members all over Algeria as evidence of his legitimacy.⁴⁸

The validity of Ben Abdul-Aziz or the UGTA in exile in Tunis cannot be confirmed by the present study. However, there are many parties who could have benefited from the appearance that Ben Abdul-Aziz and the organization established at Tunis was the only legitimate representative of the UGTA. Funding this person and his office could serve as a tool for influence within Algeria after independence. Thus, the Tunisians, the AFL-CIO, the FLN, or the WFTU could have been funding Ben Abdul-Aziz as the supposed leader of the UGTA.⁴⁹ The

48. American Embassy Tunis to the Department of State, “UGTT Leader’s Comment son US Policy re Algeria, North African Labor Federation and Other Subjects,” 17 July 1958, in NARA-TUNIS-C, box 8, folder “560.1 Classified UGTT.”

49. Smuggling of weapons and money did occur during the Algerian war. The FLN proved that it was possible for arms of Eastern bloc origin to be smuggled into Algeria by sea and desert caravan. Furthermore, Algerian migrant workers in France could and did make payments to agents of both the FLN and the MTLD throughout the war. The money was then smuggled out of France into the hands of revolutionaries for whatever expenditures were needed whether diplomatic or military in nature, whether inside Algeria or abroad. In this particular system the Algerians often had the support of Frenchmen sympathetic to the revolution such as the Jenson Network. But, how likely is it that tens of thousands of Algerian workers who were paid starvation wages before the war and many of whom were imprisoned or forced to resettle during the war, were sending excess wages successfully across the fortified Morice Line to Tunisia even while the UGTA leadership was imprisoned? For more on the Jenson network and collection of funds inside France, see Horne, 236-8. A full account of the weapons smuggling can be found in Mohamed Fathi Al-Dib, *Abdel Nasser et la Révolution Algérienne* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1985).

only organization unlikely to have been fronting the UGTA in exile was the ICFTU, because it was divided in its opinions and financially troubled (as is discussed below). It suffices to say that there was reasonable doubt about the very nature of the UGTA in Tunis, with which Brown was in contact. By extension, it was doubtful that the AFL-CIO or any other organization could command decisive influence in Algeria through this organization if it was not a legitimate representative of Algerian workers, or if it was the tool of the FLN or some other organization.

In light of this, the ICFTU Executive Board's support of the Algerians remained minimal. Even as Brown continued to work with the ICFTU to prepare the Fifth World Congress of the ICFTU at Tunis in July 1957, he was disappointed by the failure of the ICFTU to adequately support the UGTA or the Algerian's revolution.

Brown also believed that his opponents in the ICFTU might attempt to change locations of the Tunis congress to a location outside North Africa. He told Lovestone that the Tunisian preparations were so far advanced that "it will be impossible for the ICFTU to change the location" to some other country. Perhaps these suspected machinations to relocate the international meeting were meant to be a punishment to Tunisia for Bourguiba's handling of Ben Salah and the UGTT months earlier, or meant to undermine the AFL-CIO's agenda in North Africa entirely. Brown admitted, "Most of our Tunisian friends are aware of some of the maneuvers to change the location....Of course, I have already alerted our Moroccan friends to the maneuvers and they have agreed to be ready if necessary to receive the Congress in Casablanca."⁵⁰

To restore momentum for the AFL-CIO's pro-Algerian policy inside the ICFTU and to reassure the North Africans of American support, Brown told Lovestone how important it was

50. Letter from Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 9 April 1957, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 12, Brown, Irving, '57."

that AFL-CIO President Meany attend the ICFTU World Congress in Tunis. Brown thought the congress would be a “tremendous platform for whatever we want to do. Bourguiba himself is extremely concerned about the fact that a strong American delegation come inclusive especially of President Meany. Tunis has really become a springboard not only for North Africa but for the whole vast movement which is beginning to grow throughout Africa.”

The letter concludes with second-hand kudos from Nixon: “Our Tunisian and Moroccan friends told me that when Nixon met them he started out by a great declaration concerning the role of free trade unions in the under-developed areas and how much admiration he had for my work and that he was a personal friend of mine for over ten years. I cite this in order to indicate to some people back home the importance above all today of our independent relationship and contact with trade unions abroad, especially in Africa and the Middle East.”⁵¹

However, a month later, Brown had lost enthusiasm for the ICFTU’s upcoming Fifth World Congress. In part, he may have been disheartened by Meany’s decision to not attend the congress. More certainly, Brown’s frustrations with the ICFTU Executive Board were not being resolved. Brown’s report to Meany of 17 May 1957, had critical remarks about their ICFTU colleagues, including Sir Vincent Tewson of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC). For one, Tewson had an aide in attendance at board meetings, which was expressly forbidden by the ICFTU constitution, and Tewson acted “as though he were still the President of ICFTU.” More importantly, much like Secretary General Bothereau of France’s FO, Tewson accepted “the official British position...even now with a conservative government.... This leads to his accepting a pro-European Union position while maintaining all of the Commonwealth reservations;

51. Ibid. Curiously, Brown also mentioned the accommodations including air conditioning in reference to his suggestion that Meany attend. Meany did not attend, instead sending AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Bill Schnitzler. Comfort or health may have been a consideration of Meany to avoid Tunis in July.

agreeing to anti-colonial programs but always managing to tone down statements and slow down actions where the British colonies are involved; going along with an anti-communist orientation but always seeking to weaken the strength of the statements and positions under the cover 'let's be positive.'"⁵²

In some of his most damning appraisal of the global free labor movement Brown continued,

Although the word 'co-existence' is not mentioned any more or very rarely, there is no doubt that *in fact* coexistence is the order of the day as testified by the increasing exchange of missions between East and West in all fields.... The initial effects of the Budapest uprising have worn off and the CP is once again back in business with new and different approaches but with no basic objectives changed.... The labor movement as a whole plays no decisive role, lacks initiative and at best goes along with the major proposals coming from governments or political parties.... The ICFTU reflects the above but is still on paper anti-communist and everything the AFL-CIO would want but the execution is quite different. Furthermore, there is very little that can be done at the [upcoming ICFTU Fifth World] Tunis Congress to bring about a change. From the point of view of policy and progress, the General Secretary cannot be attacked while if anyone is to be criticized on fundamental questions it will be the Director of Organization [Charlie Millard]...It is quite an anomaly to see an American-designated candidate as the champion of neutralism and what could be called 'anti anti-communism.'⁵³

52. Untitled report by Irving Brown, 17 May 1957, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 8, "Irving Brown, writings '54-'57." This report is one of many wherein Brown's deep understanding of the French political scene is apparent. "It is quite obvious that the Mollet government remains in power primarily and solely because of its Algerian policy. Under a so-called socialist cover, all other politicians and parties – with the exception of the C.P. and Mendès-France – are quite content not to bring down the government since no one but a socialist could carry out the present Algerian policy with so little protest in recent times. However, this is changing as not only does the small opposition in the socialist party begin to increase but in the country generally as the cries of protest over 'atrocities' [a curious use of quotes] by the French Army in Algeria mounts...the last vote of confidence for Mollet could really be termed 'vote of toleration' as most French newspapers admitted. The vote was not a majority of the Assembly but only of those voting and by a margin of some 30 votes." But it also shows his cynicism, that there was an attempt to cover up the war expense as capital investment "by launching of the European-African economic community." And lastly, French colonial motives "under more or less apparent cover is now appearing under anti-communism or as in the case of the Suez, the anti Pan-Arab [sic] crusade. While Russia seized on the Suez aggression in order to cover up and justify its actions in Budapest, the French government has seized upon the Hungarian events and anti-communism in general to hide its real motivations, namely attack and destroy Nasser in the mistaken notion that this is the way to destroy the rebellion in Algeria and lighten the French burden there while maintaining its hold on Algeria." Mollet would fall later that month, as the longest serving Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic, at slightly longer than a year.

53. Ibid., 24-25. Emphasis original.

Similarly, Brown reported that he had been in Marseille during the FO's most recent national council meeting and that he spoke to delegates from all over France and read reports from which,

One can conclude re the labor situation in the country as follows: 1. Declining confidence in the continuation of the present Algerian policy but no idea of a different policy; therefore, no change in what amounts to a passive acceptance of the status quo. This is also due to the fact that the pro-Lacoste group — especially from Algiers and the government employees union — are vociferous, passionate, dedicated and aggressive in pushing their point of view...4. A marked increase in the feeling of resentment towards the USA, especially aggravated by the Suez and Algerian situations where it is quite clear that not only American labor but the American government is in opposition to French policy. 5. Although still basically and violently anti-communist, there is a tendency of some importance to equate the evils of the USA and the USSR, especially as related to the questions of the colonies.⁵⁴

And yet, despite these discouraged words about the ICFTU and the FO, Brown took heart in the Eisenhower Doctrine as a sign of things to come, although it would not apply to Algeria as Brown may have hoped. His faith in the doctrine was so much so that he contradicted his own assessment about the value of the international labor movement:

American foreign policy with all of its drawbacks and in spite of the sensibilities of the Europeans holds out new hopes and possibilities, especially in the vast colonial and ex-colonial areas. The actual development of an independent line while still attempting to maintain the essentially necessary Atlantic Alliance is countering Soviet drives, especially in the Middle East and Africa. This emphasizes the absolute necessity for American labor, while maintaining its alliance in the ICFTU, to engage in and expand its independent policy and program, especially as it affects the anti-Soviet and anti-occidental form of imperialism. The ICFTU cannot and will not do what American labor can and must do in the present world struggle. This means also that the Eisenhower doctrine in the Middle East and Africa must be implemented by a labor policy and personnel. Labor is a decisive element in the Middle East (witness Nixon's report) where so far the USA has been obliged to play with the Kings and with little or questionable support of the masses, where the communists and Moslem fanatics

54. Ibid., 22-23.

are so active. It is important for the American labor movement to concentrate its energies on this task just as much as on the ICFTU and the Tunis congress.⁵⁵

Despite the absence of AFL-CIO President Meany, the Fifth World Congress of the ICFTU in Tunis was a great opportunity for Tunisia to showcase social and economic progress, if in a small way, during its first year of independence. It was an even greater opportunity for the UGTA and the Algerian independence movement to gain the support of the collective ICFTU membership that the ICFTU Executive Board had failed to provide until then.

Despite his glum predictions, Brown did acknowledge a few positive results of the Fifth World Congress. Primarily, it was the first ICFTU congress held outside Europe, and thus well attended by non-European delegations, especially from Africa. A second benefit was “the sharp accent on the anti-colonial theme and the struggle for national independence, especially as indicated in the acceptance of the resolution on Algerian independence and the sending of a special ICFTU mission to Kenya.”

However, Brown’s assessment of the congress remained mostly pessimistic: “There was a lack of direction and perspective for the future on the part of the leadership, namely the Secretariat of the ICFTU.... Most delegates reacted badly to the original speeches of Oldenbroek and Millard.” Tewson of the British Trade Unions Congress (TUC) had the nerve to “attempt to develop the theory of good and bad colonialism” which could hardly have been more offensive to the many delegations of newly independent or soon-to-be independent nations. Brown complained that the conference did nothing to “organize the Congress in such a way as to dramatize one or two big issues which would enable the ICFTU to play a role in the present world situation, especially in relationship to such issues as [nuclear] disarmament, Hungary,

55. Ibid., 26.

Algeria, atomic energy or even the recent purges in the Soviet Union.”⁵⁶ Thus, even though the various delegations of the ICFTU World Congress as a whole were vocally supportive of Algerian independence, the ICFTU Executive Board was still divided on a course of action. In fact, Algerian independence and the UGTA remained a dead letter for the ICFTU until the Sakiet Crisis in spring 1958.

On 8 February 1958, the French air force bombed the Tunisian town of Sakiet in retaliation for ground fire delivered from the area earlier in the day. This violation of Tunisian sovereignty and bombing of civilians brought global attention to the Algerian refugee crisis in Tunisia, and a new opportunity for Brown to stir the ICFTU into action in support of Algerian independence or the UGTA.⁵⁷ Brown immediately traveled to Tunisia to gauge the effects and determine opportunities. Although encouraged by the relationship developing between the U.S. government and the Tunisian government, the Tunisians “expect positive and eventually decisive action by the U.S.A. not only to resolve Franco-Tunisian relationships but also, at least the beginnings of a real effort to resolve the Algerian war.” Furthermore, “Every Arab government — whether pro or anti-Nasser — is anxiously waiting to see whether the Bourguiba policy of moderation and anti-communism will be rewarded by concrete results for the nationalist movement in North Africa, inclusive of Algeria.”⁵⁸

By early 1958, Brown had come to accept that the UGTA had no influence within the FLN. But he still believed that UGTA represented “the growing impatience and criticism found amongst all Algerians relative to the U.S.A. They refuse to believe that the U.S.A. could not

56. Letter from Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 30 August 1957, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 12, “Brown, Irving, ‘57.”

57. Horne, 249-50.

58. Irving Brown, “Confidential,” 24 February 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 14, “Irving Brown, Writings ‘58-‘59.”

change French policy is [sic] she so desired. In spite of this increasing disillusionment, the U.G.T.A. remains dedicated to the pro-Western orientation — but in the long run they will submit to whatever policy the F.L.N. formulates. This is especially true to the extent that the international free trade union movement (the ICFTU) or any of its national affiliates have been unable to influence effectively or change what appears to be the free world's policy in Algeria as now represented by the French.” Thus, in no uncertain terms, Brown had come to realize the limitations — at least, in the case of Algeria — of the trade union movement’s ability to influence the Algerian independence movement’s leading organization, the FLN. Moreover, should Algeria become neutral or Soviet-oriented after independence, the blame would squarely fall at the feet of the ICFTU.⁵⁹

In sharp contrast, Brown wrote,

My personal relationships are good and somewhat intimate with the Algerian [labor] leaders and they...have gone to such lengths as to express a certain comprehension of America’s need to go along with the French on diplomatic levels but have pointedly posed the question as to whether or not there isn’t some way on the non-diplomatic level that the Americans can demonstrate a material and actual aid to the rebels — whether this be done through the trade unions, Red Cross, etc. They claim that this would not only maintain the prestige of the non-communist world but would assist them immeasurably in holding the pro-West and anti-communist line (inclusive of shoring up the authority of Bourguiba amongst the Algerians). By implication, these leaders have indicated that this would strengthen those F.L.N. elements who would eventually accept moderate and transitory solutions re the Algerian question — especially as I have been suggested and proposed by Bourguiba.⁶⁰

These are precisely the same arguments Brown had made from the beginning, and now he would repeat and amplify exactly what he wanted to hear from the Algerians.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

Unfortunately for Brown, the Soviet bloc was already far ahead of the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU in assisting the victims of Sakiet. Messages of sympathy and pledges of support came from all throughout the Soviet bloc. More importantly, a “Soviet boat arrived on February 17 loaded with food, clothing, blankets and medicines for the Algerian refugees. The WFTU has voted 1000 pounds [\$2,800] to the UGTT; the CGT 500,000 French francs [\$1,500]; as well as many other C.P. [Communist Party] organizations behind or on this side of the iron curtain. The free world’s reaction — especially in the labor field — has been pitifully small.” The best the West could offer was that, “the greatest satisfaction was expressed by Tunisians, and especially the trade unionists, concerning the AFL-CIO Council resolution re Sakiet. This was featured very prominently in the press and on the radio.”⁶¹ In a slightly earlier report, Brown wrote that the ICFTU had voted for (but not yet delivered) 350,000 French francs, about \$1,000, to the UGTT. Therefore he recommended “very strongly that AFL-CIO send a minimum of \$2800 [sic] and if possible a maximum of \$5,000 to the U.G.T.T. for victims of Sakhiet Sidi Youssef. In addition, we should consider some direct assistance to the Algerian trade unions — I can tell you that there is growing resentment among the Algerians towards the U.S.A. and now this is being directed also against the American trade unions.”⁶²

At the next subcommittee meeting of the ICFTU in March 1958, those present, including Schnitzler and Brown for the AFL-CIO, Oldenbroek of the Netherlands, and Bothereau of France, discussed North Africa, among other issues. They received a report co-authored by the North African affiliates (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) which the subcommittee, in turn, referred to the Solidarity Fund Committee, which some weeks later did carry a motion to use

61. Ibid.

62. “Report from Irving Brown – Tunis,” 12 February 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 15, “Brown, Irving, ‘56-‘58.”

\$50,000 for the UGTA. Other actions proposed by the four North African affiliates included increasing funding to the refugees, increasing publicity on the Algerian War, and renewing the ICFTU's complaint to ILO, which had first been filed in 1956 upon the first suppression of the UGTA. According to Brown's summary, the only point to which Bothereau objected was the idea that ICFTU and its affiliates should protest the creation of the Morice Line, a defensive barrier between Algerian and Tunisia. Thus, Bothereau was still sympathetic to the idea of anti-colonialism, but sensitive to French military interests. Overall the acceptance of these suggestions by the ICFTU subcommittee reflected a renewed effort on the part of ICFTU leadership as a response to the Soviet-bloc response to the Sakiet bombing.⁶³ This subcommittee also agreed to attempt to resend a delegation with Brown to Algeria — a certain failure — but for the first time agreeing to send the AFL-CIO's Bill Schnitzler if the French government denied Brown entrance, again. As events would have it, the ICFTU would not send a delegation and Brown would not make it to Algeria until its independence in 1962.

Instead, the Sakiet bombings caused another parliamentary crisis in France. French Prime Minister Félix Gaillard had accepted the idea of an Anglo-Saxon arbitration as a resolution between France and Tunisia, and in the process was voted out of office by the French National Assembly.⁶⁴ The parliamentary crisis of thirty-seven days climaxed in the events of *Treize Mai* (13 May). In a word, mass public demonstrations across Algeria and a near-invasion of Paris by French army forces based in Algeria, all culminated in the pseudo-legal appointment by the National Assembly of Charles de Gaulle as Prime Minister on 1 June. The calculus for Brown had changed — or had it?

63. Untitled report by Irving Brown, 22 March 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 15, "Brown, Irving '56-'58."

64. David Bell, Douglas Jonson and Peter Morris, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of French Political Leaders Since 1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 165; Wall, *France, the United States*, 126-133.

As early as 25 March, while Prime Minister Gaillard was still struggling to maintain his office, Brown speculated that de Gaulle might return to power. Brown weighed the potential positive and negative outcomes in the case of a de Gaulle government and the avenues by which de Gaulle might come to power. Of the latter, Brown identified the two which precisely came to pass: the National Assembly was unable to form a new coalition with a solution for Algeria, and a *Pieds Noirs* front with the military establishment in Algeria would bring de Gaulle to power. Brown's information led him to believe that once in power, de Gaulle might make peace with the Soviets, who were less of an immediate threat than the malfunctioning constitutional system of France, and thus for de Gaulle, NATO was not indispensable. Also, depending on the nature of de Gaulle's ascent to the premiership, Brown worried that an anti-fascist front might sweep away his prior efforts in Europe by unifying members of the left with the PCF and its labor union, the CGT. Ultimately, "Above all, the danger of de Gaulle coming to power under extraordinary and almost anti-constitutional conditions lies in the fact that France would depart definitely from a more or less anti-Soviet, pro-Atlantic and European Unity [sic] policy and move towards a neutralist, nationalist and anti-European program."⁶⁵ This is what would happen during the next decade of de Gaulle's leadership, but at the time, it changed little for the issues facing Brown and the ICFTU regarding the UGTA and Algeria. In the immediacy of *Treize Mai*, Brown wrote almost daily reports and analyses to Meany, the sum of which was "wait and see."

In the meantime, the ICFTU did begin sending large-scale financial assistance to the UGTA. By the end of 1958, the ICFTU spent \$55,000 on labor education programs and Algerian refugee assistance.⁶⁶ A review of the 1957 budget during the ICFTU's June 1958 finance

65. Irving Brown, "De Gaulle: Menace to Free World's Alliance," 25 March 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 2, "Brown, Writings, '52-'60."

66. Irving Brown to Michael Ross, 21 October 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder19, "Brown '59, July-

committee meeting reveals that this aid to the UGTA was a major commitment by the ICFTU. The organization's various current assets were then worth about 51.6 million Belgian francs (\$1,032,000), and its 1957 expenditures had been 40.4 million Belgian francs (\$808,000). Projecting 1957's figures forward suggests that the ICFTU may have increased its expenses by more than 6% to deliver this funding to the UGTA in 1958, a significant increase when one considers that 1957 also saw the ICFTU's first annual deficit of about 181,000 Belgian francs (\$3,260). A fundamental challenge facing this international organization was that even as its membership grew, its financial situation deteriorated. The wealthier European and North American affiliates carried the bulk of the financial burden, and less affluent member-unions were given indefinite extensions or waivers according to the 1957 budget report.⁶⁷ Thus, the ICFTU was beginning a major financial effort to assist the UGTA in 1958.

Despite the arrival of long demanded support, the financial assistance did not buy the UGTA's fidelity to the ICFTU. Instead, it spurred the Algerians on to even more mercenary tendencies as the Eastern bloc continued its own campaign for Algerian loyalty. In September, the German Democratic Republic's *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB) had already given half a million marks (\$24,000) to the UGTA and pledged to continue monthly payments for an additional annual sum of approximately \$11,500.⁶⁸ Thus, one affiliate of the WFTU itself posed significant competition to the ICFTU's entire financial aid to the UGTA. Moreover, the FDGB and other Iron Curtain countries also began hosting members of the UGTA in their respective countries. For example, FDGB hosted an Algerian delegation in East Germany in

December." Curiously, \$20,000 of this was spent on olive oil — a North African staple food.

67. "Financial Report for 1957," 3-5 July 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 6, folder 14, "Financial Sub. Comm., June 28, '58."

68. Unsigned report, "International Trade Union Committee for the Support of Algeria Meeting Began Sept. 12, 1958," in GMMA-JL, box 4, folder 10, "Algeria, '58."

October 1958, and the WFTU established a school for African trade unionists in Budapest, Hungary.⁶⁹

While the FDGR courted the UGTA in September and October, major changes were occurring in the very nature of the Algerian question. In September, the FLN established the *Gouvernement provisoire de la république algérienne* (GPRA). Then, in October, de Gaulle took a measurable turn in French policy towards Algerian independence with his “*Paix des Braves*” speech. Both signaled the beginnings of a move to the middle and were the necessary first steps toward the negotiations that would eventually bring the Algerian War to its conclusion in 1962.

On 19 September 1958, the GPRA pronounced its own creation from Cairo, but established its capital-in-exile in Tunis. The organization thus hedged its bets for broad recognition from the West and the Middle East. Almost immediately, GPRA received official recognition as the government of Algeria from other Arab states. Communist China and other Soviet bloc countries recognized the GPRA as well. Both Russia and the U.S. ignored the new organization. Ferhat Abbas, the aging moderate Algerian political leader, was selected as the first president of the GPRA. This move brought an image of French-cultured professionalism and moderation to the GPRA, which may have rendered negotiations more palatable for the French.⁷⁰

On 3 October, during his second Algerian tour, de Gaulle announced his massive new program for Algerian economic development called the Constantine Plan. Brown told Lovestone, “De Gaulle seems to be moving cautiously in the right direction on Algeria. He is now engaged

69. Unsigned note, “Algerian and Sudanese Trade Unionists Visit,” 22 October 1958, in GMMA-JL, box 4, folder 10, “Algeria, ‘58.”

70. Connelly, 194-196; Horne, 315-7. Russia feared alienating de Gaulle and the French whose anti-Americanism was growing because of the U.S. position, or non-position as it were, on Algeria. France possessed much more geo-strategic value than Algeria for both the U.S. and Russia.

in an open fight with the Algerian ultras [the most conservative *Pieds Noirs*]. This is good as a start.” How de Gaulle would open negotiations with the rebels remained unclear to Brown.⁷¹ Then on 23 October, de Gaulle startled many at his first press conference as prime minister, in which he offered complete amnesty to the FLN and at the very least prospects of negotiations for an independent Algeria. Although the terms were not acceptable to the GPRA, it did at least recognize that there was now a “dialogue” with the French government, which had been publicly absent until then.⁷²

Brown was much more enthusiastic, and recognized this as a turn towards real negotiations, no matter how small. He prepared a press release declaring, “Those among us who have never hesitated to say what they thought about the insufficiencies of the colonial and international policy of certain nations of the free alliance, ought not fail to welcome the opportunity offered by the chief of the French Government to find a solution to what has been a long war, cruel and very hard on Algeria.” Turning to the other party, “Therefore, in this spirit, speaking privately, I would like to express my conviction that the Algerian national movement ought, leaving the terrain of propaganda on which the two parties are confined, to choose the voice of concrete propositions, to eliminate the reservations, the doubts, and the conditions which can be attached to the offer of General de Gaulle.”⁷³ The prospects for negotiating peace had turned for the better, though the Evian negotiations were still nearly three years away.

While French developments were promising, developments within the UGTA were not. At the November 1958 ICFTU Executive Board meeting, the Tunisian representative, UGTT

71. Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 15 October 1958, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 3, “Brown, Irving ‘58.”

72. Horne, 320.

73. Untitled French press release by Irving Brown, 30 October 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 11, “Brown, Irving, Writings ‘56-‘58.”

Secretary General Ahmed Tlili, expressed his concerns that the UGTA had a new “directing committee.” Tlili “discovered that Rachid [Ben Abdul-Aziz] who had been closely working with the ICFTU and with the Tunisians for the past three years, had been dropped from the leading councils of the UGTA and that Dekkar (Charfi) was now in the leading position of the organization. Furthermore, [Tlili] was critical of the fact that the UGTA had accepted to go to East Germany and he told the board he regarded this as a serious mistake and that such relationships with communist unions were incompatible with the principles and actions of free trade unions.” Tlili interpreted this as weakness resulting from the imprisonment of the best Algerian trade union leaders or who “have been eliminated in other ways.” Despite the UGTA’s “third class caliber” of leadership, Tlili thought that the UGTA’s most recent request for \$200,000 for schools and clinics was justified, and if delivered, it would strengthen the relationship between the UGTA and the ICFTU against the Eastern bloc.⁷⁴ Thus, the ICFTU was facing a request it could not possibly match from a trade union affiliate whose leadership it did not trust.

Secretary General Oldenbroek then spoke about a meeting he had with the UGTA delegation returning from East Germany. The UGTA delegates had told Oldenbroek “that since they had been offered material support by Eastern Germany it was impossible for them to refuse. They claimed that had they refused it would have been used against them by communists... especially in Algeria.” Oldenbroek informed them they had violated ICFTU policy, but they in turn “replied that they had made it perfectly clear to the East Germans that they were a part of the ICFTU and they had no intentions of having any relationships with communists either on a trade union basis or any other way.” They had also said “that it was difficult for them not to

74. Report by Brown, “ICFTU Executive Board Meeting – Brussels,” 24 November 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 11, folder 11, “Brown, Irving, Writings ‘56-‘58.”

accept aid which was...being given on a humanitarian ground.” From the UGTA’s explanation, it was clear that they were growing desperate enough or comfortable enough to treat with the Communist trade union movement. Despite the UGTA’s violation of the ICFTU’s trust, the international free trade union movement had no other option but to continue the competition with Communists for the post-war loyalty of the UGTA.⁷⁵

In January 1959, the UGTA sent a request to the ICFTU for legal counsel in the case of 14 Algerians facing trials at the *Tribunal permanent des forces armées françaises à Alger* for the crime of “endangering state security.” For this purpose, the ICFTU hired Henri Rolin, a Belgian lawyer and politician. Rolin managed to bring about acquittals for ten of the suspects, including the UGTA’s first secretary general, Idir Aissat, who had been in prison for nearly three years. Rolin visited with Paul Delouvrier, the highest ranking French official in Algeria, to whom “Rolin expressed the hope that it might be possible to re-establish normal trade union activity.” Even Bothereau was inspired by the episodes to make public appeals for the restoration of the freedom of association in Algeria. The ICFTU subcommittee reported that several weeks after their acquittals, the whereabouts and status of the supposedly free men were unknown save one of the sentenced men. Still another representative of the ICFTU was sent to follow up on the men, but his visa was denied. By the ICFTU’s estimate, “There is certainly a systematic sabotage of the policy proclaimed by de Gaulle.”⁷⁶

Then, rather suddenly, the French Embassy in Brussels responded on 9 March that nine of the acquitted men were released, but Aissat was in the hospital in Algiers. The embassy

75. Ibid.

76. Report by Brown, “International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Sub-committee, Geneva, 14-17 March 1959,” in GMMA-IB, box 6, folder 17, “Sub-committee Meeting, March 14-17, 1959.”

further told the ICFTU that it could send letters to him there.⁷⁷ The nature of Aissat's condition was not then stated; however, the UGTA sent a letter to inform the ICFTU that Aissat's arms and legs were badly burned as part of an attempted suicide. One of the most contentious issues of the Algerian War was widespread use of torture by French forces. The UGTA laid the blame on the army: "One of our comrade-laborers, Aissat Idir, suffers still in the hands of the French parachutists, five months after his acquittal by the French tribunal."⁷⁸

On 23 July 1959, French authorities reported that Aissat had committed suicide. The UGTA released a statement accusing the French of assassinating Aissat and evoked many similar instances of prominent Algerians who reportedly committed suicide, died trying to escape, or died by accident while in French custody. It also evoked the memory of Farhat Hached, the first secretary general of the UGTT, who was assassinated shortly after a string of threats from a *colons* terrorist group and after the French government had confiscated his passport.⁷⁹ The ICFTU made the appropriate declarations about the injustice committed during Aissat's last years and the need for an investigation into his death, but one never came.⁸⁰

The UGTA obviously hoped to benefit internationally by associating itself with the UGTT's history as much as possible. Had Aissat been freed, he might have played the role in Algeria that Hached had in Tunisia. Beyond the martyrdom of their first secretary general at the hands of the French, the parallels between the UGTA and the UGTT ended there. UGTA leadership never enjoyed the confidence of Brown that UGTT leadership had enjoyed. Brown

77. Ibid.

78. UGTA press release, "Aissat Idir en Danger de Mort," 23 June 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 2, folder 14, "Algeria, '48-'61."

79. UGTA press release, "Assassinat de Aissat Idir," 26 July 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 2, folder 14, "Algeria, '48-'61."

80. Heggoy, 57-58.

was disillusioned with the UGTA by the time of Aissat's death in 1959. This disillusionment grew throughout 1959 as the ICFTU failed to stop the UGTA's interactions with the WFTU, and as Brown saw it, the ICFTU's credibility and usefulness declined along with the UGTA's.

In a letter to Lovestone in February 1959, Brown complained that the UGTA was becoming too close to the Communist dominated WFTU: "Only last week the two UGTA delegates who were in Conakry [Guinea] passed by Rome on their way to Tunis. They utilized the visit to meet with the trade union officers of the CGIL [an Italian affiliate of the WFTU] and issued a joint statement with Novella, General Secretary of the CGIL. In addition, they did not even have the courtesy to meet with their brother trade unionists in CISL and UIL which are affiliated to the ICFTU." In addition to this breach of protocol, Brown suggested that the same delegates were incompetent since, "in Conakry the UGTA speaker did not even mention the fact that his comrades who had been arrested some years ago in Algiers had been acquitted only a couple of days before the opening of the UGTAN [*Union générale des travailleurs d'Afrique noire*] congress. In fact, they made no reference whatsoever to the leadership of the UGTA in Algeria where you have the real leaders and workers." Brown called the UGTA leaders in exile "opportunists." Lastly, "I think they fear actually the liberation of the regime in Algeria in as much as it will free those who are the real working class leaders and who have been in the trade union movement for years. Those who visited Conakry are not only young but struck me as being irresponsible and in many ways feathering their own nests."⁸¹

To his growing doubts about the UGTA were added his continued doubts about the ICFTU and European trade unions in general. In June, Brown wrote to Lovestone, "This may sound bizarre but I have my reasons for suggesting that there be little said re my possible future

81. Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 11 February 1959, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 15, "Brown, Irving, '59."

role in the International [ICFTU]. I become less and less enthusiastic about it and regret very much that one cannot really discuss the basic problem of the role of America and the American labor movement. Even after being back just one or two days in Europe, I see this thing even clearer than ever, that even with an International organized under the best circumstances there would still be a real, basic and urgent need for a certain kind of American labor activity which is not directed against the ICFTU but which is supplementary and essential in the direct struggle against Chinese and Soviet penetration.” That penetration was made possible by a lowered defense. Brown lamented “...the growing capitulation everywhere to the thesis of love and peace with the Russians. Even such papers as *Le Figaro* are going the way of all flesh.”⁸²

A month later, Brown was again writing Lovestone about the issue of the ICFTU’s leadership. “I can tell you that the ICFTU has been definitely hurt by all of this internal conflict which people attempt to hush up rather than to discuss in an open and frank basis. As a result, at the very time that in Africa and Asia as well as Latin America a new and effective Communist offensive is under way, the ICFTU is acting not only in a paralyzed fashion but under attack by its own people. This is an impossible situation.” In such a state, “it is hard for the masses or for the advanced elements in the under-developed areas to become very enthusiastic about what is becoming a tarnished shingle.”⁸³

It is within this context that tensions between the UGTA and the ICFTU began to mount. The September issue of the UGTA’s newspaper, *L’Ouvrier algérien*, announced the enrollment of six *stagiaires*, or interns, in an African trade union school run by the WFTU in Budapest, Hungary. On 14 September, ICFTU Secretary General Oldenbroek wrote a letter to the UGTA

82. Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 5 June 1959, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 15, “Brown, Irving, ‘59.”

83. Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone, 27 July 1959, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 15, “Brown, Irving, ‘59.”

explaining that he was “astounded at the thought that you could send *stagiaires* to attend these courses held in a country where the workers of and the entire population arose in revolt against the dictatorial domination of the Hungarian Communist Government, a revolution which was put down with bloodshed by Soviet tanks and aircraft.” He offered the UGTA the opportunity to defend itself when the next subcommittee of the executive board would meet at the beginning of October.⁸⁴

The UGTA replied with a letter that bluntly stated, “The despatch of UGTA *stagiaires* to trade union schools in Communist countries is not a new development. At the beginning of the year, we had already sent some members to attend courses in the German Democratic Republic and in Yugoslavia.” The UGTA rationalized its collaboration, “In view of the need for our Centre to train the greatest possible number of leaders, we want to take advantage of all the possibilities.” It then turned the onus of supporting the UGTA on the ICFTU by reminding them, “So far only two sister organizations, the FGTB (Belgium) and the SCB (Switzerland), have had a feeling of solidarity in this matter, by offering limited courses for two or three of our comrades.”⁸⁵

Brown’s 21 October letter to Michael Ross, director of the AFL-CIO’s Department of International Affairs, confirms the minimal number of ICFTU affiliated scholarships for the UGTA. For example, the ICFTU’s Solidarity Fund Committee agreed to pay the airfare for two Algerians traveling to Belgium for a program there, with an additional \$2,000 set aside for similar future travel expenses. Brown also cited scholarships for Algerians in West Germany, but not the source or amount, and he said the Swiss and Scandinavians *might* be “considering this

84. [Irving Brown to Jay Lovestone], “Relations with UGTA,” 1-2 October 1959, in GMMA-JL, box 12, folder 15, “Brown, Irving, ‘59.”

85. *Ibid.*

question and, of course, as I have indicated in my report, the offers from the East are quite extensive.”⁸⁶

ICFTU aid to the UGTA was falling short, but so was the UGTA, by Brown’s estimation. His previous letter to Ross of 19 October said flatly, “I am not too impressed by the UGTA leaders except for maybe Djilani and a young, dynamic fellow by the name of Boussid who is in charge of most of their refugee work.”⁸⁷ A more detailed report of 20 October said, “There is growing criticism against the UGTA concerning the enormous number of trips being made to various parts of the world. Even one of the leading figures in the FLN told me that many of the Algerian workers are commenting on the fact that a good number of their officers are always ‘*en voyage*.’ This has led to the current joke that the UGTA really stands for ‘*Union Générale des Touristes Algériens*.’”⁸⁸

Brown also cited growing Tunisian criticism of the UGTA leadership’s close relations with Communist organizations such as the WFTU and his own concern for the far more conspicuous presence of “food, machinery, autos, clothes, beds, medical supplies and even complete equipment for a small clinic,” of Eastern European or Soviet origin. The West was represented by a Volkswagen bus and by cans of American-made cheese, both of which were delivered by a Swiss relief agency, not the U.S.⁸⁹

Brown proposed supporting the UGTA’s refugee programs, which included two-week worker seminars and vocational training of the orphans at the children’s homes it operated in

86. Irving Brown to Michael Ross, 21 October 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder19, “Brown ‘59, July-December.”

87. Irving Brown to Michael Ross, 19 October 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder19, “Brown ‘59, July-December.”

88. Untitled report by Irving Brown, 20 October, 1959, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder19, “Brown ‘59, July-December.” Emphasis original.

89. Ibid.

Tunisia. The UGTA estimated that it would cost \$6,000 to sponsor four workers' seminars per year to train about 200 Algerians.

The UGTA's estimate for the funds needed to improve the orphanages serving about 500 children was a much larger commitment of \$41,000. Brown explained that besides basic schooling, the older boys were learning some "building trades and automobile mechanics." But again, like elsewhere, "the beds come from East Germany as well as the blankets.... Most of the equipment and food and machinery being used came from Russia and several East European countries."⁹⁰

Brown used the report to push for an AFL-CIO-only solution. He knew, "the difficulty in raising money for such relief purposes but I am confident that there is a need not only because of humanitarian reasons but because of the entire trade union and political situation," but believed various American trade union leaders were only waiting for the national AFL-CIO lead. Brown even volunteered himself: "I am personally ready to assist in at least starting the program and working with the UGTA and the Tunisians for possibly a month and then, if we could find someone speaking French, it would be of tremendous value." Furthermore, "I must say that [the Algerians] are really hopeful that this time we will be able to meet some of their needs. Furthermore, I think...it would be good to have some kind of an AFL-CIO program for the Algerians. Once again, it need not have to be done without informing and consulting with the ICFTU. However, I must add that on my last trip to Tunis the feeling re the ICFTU is not too warm."⁹¹ Brown's feelings towards the UGTA in the fall of 1959 reflected his complete lack of faith in the ICFTU's ability to adequately meet the need of the free trade union movement of Algeria, let alone compete with the WFTU's attempt to do the same.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

And yet, he was still very optimistic about the UGTA's potential to embrace Western ideology and influence Algeria in independence. "I am still convinced, however that the UGTA leaders want to remain with us and be really more active as a trade union movement than they have been up to the present. I am also counting on the fact that once peace is restored to Algeria we will find the real, honest-to-goodness trade union leaders there."⁹²

In light of the situation, and even his own opinions at the time and earlier, Brown's optimism was mistaken. Brown and the UGTA itself had looked to the UGTT and Tunisian independence as a model for Algerian trade union development in the context of an extended armed conflict. The ICFTU, which had been the principal free labor supporter of the UGTT, was divided and incapable of making similar gestures towards the UGTA. There were questions about the legitimacy, the competence and even loyalty of the UGTA leadership. Out of desperate self-interest, whether humanitarianism or selfish opportunism, the UGTA was not ashamed to accept aid from the Eastern bloc, when aid from the ICFTU and the Western bloc was so lacking.

The UGTA itself had uncertain influence over labor affairs within Algeria, where the FLN dominated events within the Algerian native population. Instead, the UGTA efforts focused on basic survival needs of some 123,000 or more refugees in Tunisia, and to a very limited extent, on the task of actual trade union development among a few "opportunists" of the labor movement in exile.⁹³

Instead, from 1958 onward, the FLN developed the GPRA as a representative of the Algerian people acceptable to de Gaulle's government for the basis of negotiations. And the FLN

92. Ibid.

93. Untitled report by Brown, 22 March 1958, in GMMA-IB, box 7, folder 15, "Brown, Irving, '56-58." The figure represents refugees registered with the International Red Cross and is therefore likely an underestimate. There were an additional 50,000 registered, Algerian refugees in Morocco.

continued through its foreign representatives to lobby the United Nations delegations of foreign governments. The UGTA had no role in the negotiations at Evian. Even if it had, the UGTA would likely have followed the FLN's lead of socialized economy and close relations with Nasser and the Eastern bloc, as these nations had been most outwardly and materially supportive of Algerian independence. Thus, even if Brown's efforts to organize and westernize the UGTA had been successful, they would not have made a difference in the political and social orientation of Algeria in independence. Instead, the UGTA has served as one of the means by which the FLN sustained one-party rule since independence.⁹⁴

94. Judith France gives a harrowing account of President Ahmed Ben Bella's treatment of the UGTA leadership, and the further subordination of the UGTA to the ruling FLN under President Houari Boumedienne, 171-176.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

In conclusion, Europe was the weak link in the Western Alliance against the Soviet Union immediately following World War II. Many Europeans, including the French, had nothing but high regard for Communists, and thought of them as allies and victors against fascism, or were Communists themselves. Austere government measures to revive France's ailing economy made Communist ideology particularly appealing to the French labor movement, which was dominated by the Communists in the French national union, the CGT.

Thus, the CGT became the primary target of the AFL's FTUC, represented by Irving Brown. Unable to expel the Communist leadership from within the CGT, the anti-Communist opposition broke away with the assistance of Brown to form the CGT-FO. From 1947 until 1953, the FTUC was amply funded by the U.S. government. In particular, the Marshall Plan (1948-1952) permitted Brown to expand his operations, including the creation of the Mediterranean Committee. This committee was a maritime organization which worked directly with transportation unions to keep Marshall Plan goods flowing into Europe, despite Communist opposition on a local level at ports, on ships, and so on.

Although these operations were successes, they earned a mixed reputation among the French, some of whom thought of Brown as a manipulative foreigner and an American agent. He personified the future domination of the Free World by the United States of America, and they resented the implication that France was no longer a world power. Brown represented just one of many thorny issues of Franco-American relations in the middle of the twentieth century. Despite his reputation for being an American agent, after 1953 Brown received no assistance in his activities from the U.S. government under the first term of the Eisenhower Administration.

If Europe was the first battle ground in the Cold War, the emerging nations of the underdeveloped world were the second. There, American labor was the vanguard of the Western opposition to Communism. The FTUC had already lost the U.S. government's support for Brown's European operations, and the FTUC would not receive new support for Brown's expanding anti-Communist agenda in North Africa. Thus the AFL turned toward the ICFTU, of which it was a founding member. The principal tenet of the ICFTU was free labor, which was meant to be both democratic in structure and independent of government. This was in direct opposition to the older international labor organization, the WFTU, which included the unions of Communist governments. The ICFTU's members, including the AFL, argued these were inherently not free.

However, the ICFTU's first members were predominantly North American or European national unions, and the Cold War was a global phenomenon. Tunisia became a model and stepping-stone for the expansion of the ICFTU's free labor movement, as well as the AFL's anti-Communist agenda. This agenda depended upon the ICFTU's international trappings to avoid the Communist accusation that the AFL's mission was an act of American imperialism. Brown's mission in Tunisia, which was for both the ICFTU and the AFL, began somewhat smoothly when Tunisia's UGTT withdrew from the WFTU and joined the ICFTU in April 1951, a few months after the first meeting between Brown and UGTT Secretary General Farhat Hached. Moreover, Brown made repeated contact with Habib Bourguiba, the president of the Tunisian nationalist party, Neo Destour. In 1954, French Prime Minister Mendès-France moved toward negotiated independence for Tunisia, which received internal autonomy in 1955.

Unfortunately, Farhat Hached was soon assassinated by a *colons* terrorist group, the Red Hand. In the meantime, Bourguiba became the *de facto* leader of the Tunisian nationalist

movement and the first prime minister of fully-independent Tunisia in 1956. Hached's eventual successor as secretary general of the UGTT was Ahmed Ben Salah, whose socialist and pan-Arab philosophy was of doubtful benefit to the AFL-CIO's anti-Communist agenda. The AFL-CIO was also unfavorable toward neutralism or regionalism which might claim to be independent from the East-West, Cold War struggle. Therefore, the AFL's hope for a Western-oriented Tunisia was increasingly placed on Bourguiba as head of the Tunisian government, rather than on the UGTT under Ben Salah.

This became evident at the end of 1956, when a crisis developed between Ben Salah and Bourguiba. Ben Salah failed to gain support for his pan-Arab ideals within the UGTT and split off to form a separate union, the UTT. Bourguiba interpreted Ben Salah's actions as a power play and a threat to the regime. Ben Salah's UTT was suppressed, and Bourguiba was able to restructure and control the UGTT throughout his regime. The ICFTU instinctively favored Ben Salah and the principle of free labor and lamely asked the AFL-CIO to weigh in against Bourguiba who, at that very moment, was in the U.S. visiting with the AFL-CIO and President Eisenhower. The AFL-CIO's acceptance of Bourguiba's actions and continued support for his government revealed that building anti-Communist allies for the Western Alliance was at least more important than the principle of free, independent labor.

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was a watershed moment in Franco-America relations, which theretofore had essentially permitted the French a free hand in their neo-colonial policy. The relationship between the U.S. and Tunisia could serve the dual purpose of bolstering the U.S.'s reputation in the developing world by distinguishing U.S. anti-Communist foreign policy from French neocolonialism and bolster Tunisia itself as a counterweight to pan-Arabism led by Nasser. Thus, the November meeting between Eisenhower and Bourguiba was a reaction to

changing world circumstances, which Brown had been professing for years. Furthermore, it was proof positive of Brown's promises to the other African nations that the U.S. cared about them and wanted their friendship. Thus, the AFL-CIO chose to sacrifice the principle of free labor rather than accuse Bourguiba of acting like an autocrat, because it could not afford to undermine the developing, official Tunisian-American relationship. This must have been deeply disturbing to the leadership of the ICFTU, which had an increasing number of conflicts with Brown and the AFL-CIO over the next decade.

In the short-term, the decision to back Bourguiba meant that Brown could continue to work with the Tunisians, and more importantly, gain access to the Algerian labor movement. From 1951 to 1955, only the FO — an ICFTU member union — actively worked with Muslim workers to oppose Communist influence in Algerian labor unions. However, Muslim workers, led by the nationalist political party of Messali Hadj, the MTLN, refused to join the FO. Eventually, the MTLN resolved to create its own union, the USTA. If the ICFTU had accepted the USTA, it would have garnered recognition from an international body for a nationalist, Muslim union dedicated to Algerian independence from France. However, after 1954, the principal leader of the nationalist movement was not Messali Hadj, but the cadre of the FLN, which reacted by proffering its own candidate as the representative national labor organization, the UGTA.

Faced with a dilemma, the ICFTU made the logical conclusion that the merits of each organization should be determined before making a decision. However, in May 1956, the Algerian Resident Minister Robert Lacoste banned Brown from entering Algeria, labeled him a "Master Corrupter," and implied that Brown was an agent of the U.S. government. This played directly to prevailing anti-American sentiment among the French, especially the *Pieds Noirs* of

Algeria. Brown eventually favored the ICFTU's acceptance of the UGTA's application rather than the USTA's, on the grounds that the latter was no longer representative of the Algerian labor movement.

In a controversial ICFTU Executive Board meeting in July 1956, Robert Bothereau of the FO walked out after an unconstitutional revote accepted UGTA membership. Despite having worked so closely together to fight Communism in the French labor movement a decade earlier, the FO and the AFL-CIO could not agree upon French policy in Algeria or the ICFTU's corresponding policy. Even though the ICFTU Executive Board admitted the UGTA, Brown criticized the ICFTU's leadership in the handling of the two applications, and also its feeble handling of Brown's treatment by the French government in Algeria. In the following year, the ICFTU continued to develop its relationship with Tunisia, which hosted the ICFTU's Fifth World Congress in 1957, and did what little it could to support its affiliate member from Algeria, the UGTA.

French suppression of the Algerian labor movement and other harsh measures during the Algerian Revolution created a refugee crisis. Most Algerian refugees were concentrated in Tunisia, including various individuals claiming to represent the UGTA. Brown communicated with these Algerian trade unionists, but the benefits were marginal for several reasons. The separation of the UGTA from war-torn Algeria meant the practical functions of trade unionism, such as wage improvement, working conditions, and political activism, were essentially non-applicable. In turn, the UGTA had little role in the political aspects of the revolution which was being fought by the FLN inside Algeria and pursued by its own representatives abroad. After 1958, the FLN was represented by the GPRA, which would immediately gain recognition as a

legitimate and representative government from some nations, and which would eventually negotiate the Evian Accords with the French government, all without the UGTA.

Moreover, the UGTA activists with whom Brown and the ICFTU worked were of questionable competency and loyalty. Brown suspected that most were taking advantage of the free labor movement as a meal-ticket or a base of power and influence should Algeria achieve its independence. Even among the Algerians there was a perception that the UGTA members were simply finding a way to get out of North Africa. In terms of loyalty, even the tepid ICFTU General Secretary Oldenbroek condemned the UGTA for accepting Communist aid and sending its members to Eastern bloc nations for education programs.

Not until after the Sakiet Crisis of 1958 did the ICFTU begin sending substantial aid to the UGTA and other Algerian refugees in Tunisia. Brown toured the bombing sight himself, as well as the homes full of Algerian orphans. What he found was the material culture of the Eastern bloc. The WFTU had been hard at work in the humanitarian mission that the ICFTU had been neglecting for months. The ICFTU was a labor organization, not a humanitarian aid group, and the tremendous effort and coordination by the Soviet Union and the WFTU stood in sharp contrast to the comparatively underfunded and divided ICFTU. Even when the ICFTU began substantial efforts to aid Algerian refugees in 1958, it did not surpass the Communist aid, nor was it likely to surpass Communist influence on the Algerians. By contrast, the United States remained decidedly neutral on the Algerian question while Charles de Gaulle and the GPRA moved towards a negotiated settlement from 1959–1962.

This study has shown the failure of the AFL-CIO, represented by Brown, to use an international organization, the ICFTU, to effectively influence two national union organizations in Tunisia and Algeria. The American intent was to establish democratic and independent

national labor organizations that would in turn influence the governments of their nations to become pro-Western and anti-Communist.

In the case of Tunisia, this was a result of the AFL-CIO's own decision to support the nominally democratic politician Bourguiba over the pan-Arab trade unionist Ben Salah. To be fair, this was a practical decision. On the one hand, President Eisenhower was finally opening his arms to post-colonial peoples in a key region astride Africa and the Middle East. On the other hand, Tunisia was Brown's first "success" story in Africa, and he needed to remain in Bourguiba's good graces if the ICFTU was to have any influence on the Algerian labor movement. However, Bourguiba's actions against Ben Salah, and later the UGTT, were counter to the ideology of the ICFTU and the free labor movement. AFL-CIO's acceptance of Bourguiba despite his blatant violation of the Tunisian labor movement's independence complicated relations between the AFL-CIO, represented by Brown, and the ICFTU Executive Board.

The ICFTU's handling of the Algerian labor movement was even more awkward. At the outset, it had to deal simultaneously with two competing applications by the USTA and the UGTA, and the banning of one of its (*de facto*) executives from Algeria. In accepting the UGTA's application, the executive board alienated its French affiliate, the FO. The Americans were growing frustrated with the ICFTU's lack of determination, as were the Algerians, who began accepting aid from the Eastern bloc. Pushed by a refugee crisis and the Sakiet Crisis, the ICFTU merely reacted to events and the competition displayed by the WFTU for the Algerians' loyalty. Moreover, the ICFTU did not — indeed, could not — surpass or even match either the Communists' humanitarian efforts or labor development efforts.

This study potentially lends itself to two much broader points about the Cold War. First, it shows the failure of a superpower, herein represented unofficially by American labor and

Irving Brown, to use an international organization to conduct its policy interests because it was contrary to the interests or ideology of the other members of that international body. This is not a contradiction to Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution*, which argued that the FLN effectively used internationalism to influence other nations to eventually give overwhelming support for Algerian independence. Rather, this study suggests that internationalism in the Cold War worked to the benefit of smaller nations and against the superpowers, at least in this case. Despite thoroughly outdoing the ICFTU in aiding the Algerians in both humanitarian and labor development programs, the WFTU had marginal influence in North Africa in the long run as well.¹

In this case study, the AFL-CIO desired to export the ideology of democratic and independent labor unions in order to galvanize a broader nationalist movement towards anti-Communist and pro-Western societies and governments in North Africa. This clearly failed because of the shortcomings of the ICFTU and Brown's relationship with the ICFTU, the compromised relationship with Tunisia, and the dysfunctional state of the UGTA of Algeria.

This brings us to the second broader point, which was that factors internal to each country were more important than the ideological aspects of the Cold War and Brown and the ICFTU's individual efforts to influence the North Africans within that conflict. Islamism and nationalism proved to be far more relevant to the average Algerian or Tunisian than Communism, Capitalism, or democracy.² Thus, this study might serve as an example and a warning about the feasibility of exporting democracy or free labor, or any other ideology in a modular fashion.

1. Willard A. Beling, "W.F.T.U. and Decolonization; A Tunisian Case Study," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 2, no. 4 (December 1964), 551-564.

2. Christopher Alexander, "Opportunities, Organizations, and Ideas: Islamists and Workers in Tunisia and Algeria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 4 (November, 2000), 465-490.

Brown himself realized that Cold War neutralism was prevailing on the African continent already in December 1958, when he attended the All African People's Congress at Accra, Ghana. According to Brown, the weakness of the ICFTU was evident, because the topic of organizing a pan-African trade union kept recurring. "The American unions still have a reserve of good will but this is being lost also as many begin to identify the American trade unions with the ICFTU.... The counterpart to this ideological basis of Pan-Africanism [sic] is the concept of neutralism and/or neutrality which characterized the majority of the delegates in the conference.... There was a sincere feeling among many that Africans should try to not only avoid what they term the struggles and conflicts of Europe but that a united Africa could play a serious role in bringing the East and West together."³ Despite this concern for neutralism, Brown was beginning to realize that African neutralism was preferable to Communist domination.

Today, we see this as the precursor to the transition to *détente* that would not begin in earnest until after the Cuban Missile Crisis. But neutralism was a fact with which Brown and the AFL-CIO would have to live. Even George Meany thought about closing Brown's Paris office and bringing him back to New York in 1961, because the expense of having an AFL-CIO representative permanently abroad had begun to exceed the benefits. Brown's new interest for the ILO in Geneva apparently succeeded in convincing Meany otherwise, since Brown stayed in Paris for 28 more years, representing the AFL-CIO in Europe until his death in 1989.⁴

3. Brown's Report on the All African People's Congress, n.d. [5-14 December 1958], in GMMA-IB, box 11 folder 16 "Irving Brown, Writings '58-'60"

4. Rathbun, 258-259, 279; Goulden, 378-384.

List of Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CGT	<i>Confédération générale du travail</i> (Communist)
CGT-FO, or FO	<i>Confédération générale du travail — Force ouvrière</i> (ICFTU affiliate)
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States
FDGB	<i>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i>
FLN	<i>Front de libération nationale</i> (Algerian rebels)
FTUC	Free Trade Union Committee (AFL, AFL-CIO)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labor Organization (UN)
ITS	International Trade Secretariats
GPRA	<i>Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne</i> (FLN)
MTLD	<i>Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques</i> (Messali Hadj)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Alliance
NSC	National Security Council (U.S.)
PCA	<i>Parti communiste algérien</i>
PCF	<i>Parti communiste français</i>
UGSA	<i>Union générale des syndicats algériens</i> (WFTU affiliate)
UGTA	<i>Union générale des travailleurs algériens</i> (ICFTU affiliate)
UGTAN	<i>Union générale des travailleurs d'Afrique noire</i> (Pan-African)
UGTT	<i>Union générale tunisienne du travail</i> (ICFTU affiliate)
USTA	<i>Union syndicale des travailleurs algériens</i> (MTLD)
USTT	<i>Union syndicale des travailleurs de Tunisie</i> (Communist)
UTT	<i>Union tunisienne du travail</i> (Ahmed Ben Salah's breakaway from UGTT)
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WFTU	World Federation of Free Trade Unions (Communist International Union)

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