



STUDENT INTERNATIONALISM AND THE GLOBAL COLD WAR

The International Union of Students in Socialist Prague

Mikuláš Pešta

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Student Internationalism and the Global Cold War

*The International Union of Students in
Socialist Prague*

Mikuláš Pešta

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Let's look around the world.

An Algerian student takes exams at the University of Moscow; his little brother in a Tunisian refugee camp is given a basic school education by GDR students through a contribution to the Solidarity Fund from the proceeds of their voluntary brigades; a Japanese student gains new courage to fight for the democratisation of her homeland from the solidarity of her Brazilian colleagues; a Brazilian student draws on the experience of a Cuban students' booklet on the national revolution; a Cuban student introduces a Bolivian colleague to the fight against illiteracy; an Iraqi student is treated in a sanatorium in China; in a young African country, students eat in a canteen equipped by their European colleagues; an Indonesian student participates in an international seminar for chemistry students with colleagues from all over the world; an Italian athlete competes at the Universiade in Sofia; a Polish student corresponds with a colleague from Ghana; a Hungarian troupe performs at a French cultural festival; from all over the world, expressions of solidarity and material aid flock to the places where students are on the front lines of the struggle for the freedom of their homeland; student delegates from dozens of countries come to youth and student festivals, conferences, congresses, seminars to get to know each other and strengthen friendships between themselves and their nations.

The International Union of Students is behind all of this, and all those mentioned are part of it, and millions of others, even the students of our country.

–15 years of the International Union of Students, Prague 1961

Education: A right, not a privilege

–An IUS campaign, from 1977 onwards

'We don't need no education!'

–Pink Floyd, Another Brick in the Wall, 1979

Contents

List of figures	xii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Introduction	1
1 Prehistory	23
2 From universal internationalism to the Cold War	49
3 The Golden Age	83
4 Representing the students of the world	141
5 Crises and reforms	171
6 Post-mortem and resurrections	197
Conclusions	221
Appendices	226
Abbreviations	230
Sources	233
Index	257

Figures

Note for the reader: Figures 1 to 10 can be found grouped between Chapters 2 and 3; Figures 11 to 19 can be found grouped between Chapters 4 and 5.

- 1 President Edvard Beneš speaks at the first celebration of the International Students Day in 1941 in London. Source: ČTK
- 2 President Edvard Beneš welcomes the IUS delegation led by Josef Grohman at the Prague Castle, February 1947. Source: ČTK
- 3 Participants of the 1946 World Student Congress in front of the venue in Prague. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 4 Giovanni Berlinguer at the laying of the cornerstone of the student sanatorium in Třebotov. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 5 Delegates from Korea, India, Italy and Poland at the IUS Congress. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 6 Alexander Shelepin, c. 1950. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 7 Giovanni Berlinguer, Josef Grohman and Tom Madden, 1950. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 8 Scottish delegation at the 1951 World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 9 Jiří Pelikán receives a pin from a student delegation. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 10 Jiří Pelikán and Yuri Gagarin at the IUS Congress in Leningrad in 1962. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 11 Vietnamese and Bulgarian students in conversation at the 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students in Sofia. Source: Alamy
- 12 Protesters against the Vietnam War at the 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students in Sofia. Source: Alamy
- 13 The IUS General Secretary Fathi El Fadl with Czechoslovak cosmonaut Vladimír Remek and Cuban hosts at the 1978 World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 14 IUS poster for the campaign 'Education: A right, not a privilege'. Source: NAČR, col. MSS

- 15 IUS poster for a disarmament campaign. Source: NAČR, col. MSS
- 16 The new IUS building, 1974. Courtesy of Radan Hubička and Radim Hubička
- 17 The IUS delegation led by Frieder Bubl bringing support to SWAPO camps in South Angola, including scholarships, 1979. Courtesy of Frieder Bubl
- 18 Josef Skála speaking at the celebration of the IUS 40th anniversary in 1986. Source: ČTK
- 19 Josef Skála awards the Medal of 17th November to Miloš Jakeš, 1989. Source: ČTK

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¹ Mikuláš Pešta, 'A Hub of Anti-Colonialism: Prague's International Organizations in the Transnational Socialist Network and Global Cold War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 59, no. 3 (2024): 492–513; Matthieu Gillabert, Lidia Lesnykh, and Mikuláš Pešta, 'Student Internationalism in the Global Cold War: The Foundation and Split of the International Union of Students', in *International Organizations and the Cold War: Competition, Cooperation and Convergence*, ed. Sandrine Kott, Eva Maria Muschik and Elizabeth Roehrlich (London: Bloomsbury, 2025), 131–44; Mikuláš Pešta, 'Polozapomenutý listopad. Mezinárodní den studentstva a jeho překrývaná paměť', *Paměť a dějiny* 15, no. 3 (2021): 90–100.

Introduction

In the court of Klementinum, the building formerly of Charles University, now hosting the Czech National Library, stands a statue of a 'student of Prague'. It was erected to commemorate the heroic role of the Prague studentship in the defence of the city during the Swedish siege at the end of the Thirty Years War. Students as the conscience of the nation and guardians of liberty is a recurring trope in Czech historical mythology. From the fighting on the barricades in the liberal revolution in 1848 to the Velvet Revolution in 1989, students were remembered as the pioneers of change and the nation's vanguard. Students opposed the Nazis in 1939 and paid dearly for it, as many were imprisoned and Czech universities remained closed for six long years in consequence. Students were the only ones who publicly protested against the communist takeover in 1948 – at least a part of them, while others were enthusiastic about building a new society. Some of the greatest Czech martyrs of the twentieth century were students – Jan Opletal and his colleagues, who were executed by the Nazis, and Jan Palach, who decided to burn himself to death in a desperate attempt to wake the society from the lethargy after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Prague was important not only nationally but also for transnational student activism. In 1946, students from around the world gathered in the capital of Czechoslovakia to build a new federation, trying to make the student struggle international. The Second World War had just ended, and a new international order was born from its ashes. The horrors of the largest conflict in human history also gave rise to efforts to start anew – to build an international community that would prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

The International Union of Students (IUS) embodied these hopes for a new world, representing the ideas of anti-fascism, anti-colonialism and democracy. Many of the young students assembled to establish the new organization had experience from the resistance against the Nazis, from concentration camps or from the front lines. The horrible tragedy created a historic moment of unity; the creation of a universal international federation of national student unions. But the dream did not last long. The ideals and political goals of students were not understood by everybody in the same way. Only a couple of years after its foundation, member unions started to

disaffiliate in the wake of the intensifying Cold War, as the IUS sided more and more with the East. In the early 1950s, a rival organization called the International Student Conference (ISC) was set up in the West, and the IUS's scope and reach withered. The ongoing decolonization brought in new members and created opportunities for fresh anti-colonial projects, tipping the balance back in favour of the IUS. A funding scandal in 1967 effectively killed the ISC, leaving the IUS as the only student federation with global and universal claims once again. Subsequent decades saw membership growth and other trends – massification and individualization of tertiary education in the West echoed in the East and South, and traditional international student activism seemed to become increasingly obsolete. Regionalization and détente created new possibilities for cooperation with the West. A new path towards inclusiveness and interconnectedness set out in the late 1980s was abruptly distorted by the 1989 revolutions that toppled socialist regimes in East Central Europe. In the 1990s, the IUS struggled to find a place in the new international order until it finally ceased to exist in the early 2000s.

The case of the IUS tells the story of the post-war world. The Cold War lies at its centre – indeed, the conflict in which, like so many others, the IUS was forced to pick sides, which influenced most aspects of its existence. But the history of the IUS is much more than just that. It is also a story of the evolution of the students' role in society and changing practices of student activism and internationalism, which has gradually depoliticized since the 1970s. It is a story of emancipation and national liberation, the pursuit of development, the democratization of education and the eradication of illiteracy. And it is also a story of an international organization and its officials in socialist Prague.

The idea of writing a history of the IUS is not new. During the Cold War, several attempts were made to tackle the topic – both from the side of the IUS officials and from its critics in the West. Western historians and political analysts usually did not give the IUS much credit. It was a 'communist front organization', and that was it – it was only a gear in the Soviet propagandistic machine and as such was entirely subservient to Soviet needs and wishes.¹ Perhaps to counter the histories told by the West, many IUS officials were obsessed with the idea of writing the IUS history from their perspective – from the Palestinian Mazen Hussein who started a manuscript but never managed to finish it to the Sudanese IUS General Secretary Fathi El Fadl who wrote the history as his PhD thesis, to a duo of Polish authors who published their account in the late

¹ John Jay Barr, 'Communist International Front organizations: An Analysis of the International Union of Students' (MA Diss., University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1965); Paul Magnelia, 'The International Union of Students' (PhD Diss., Université de Genève, Genève, 1967); one work is in this regard exceptional – the PhD thesis of the US political scientist Philip Altbach, who presented an informed and relatively balanced view at the IUS. Philip G. Altbach, *The Student Internationals: An Analysis of International and Regional Student Organizations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin and Washington, DC: Office of Education, 1970).

1980s.² Czechoslovak IUS Presidents Josef Grohman, Jiří Pelikán and Josef Skála all called for an independent history of the organization – especially after 1989 when the Western Cold War narrative prevailed.³ In 1990, just after the earthquake that shook the IUS structure, the organization proposed to appoint an independent researcher to write an academic and impartial history of the IUS.⁴

The first academic account of the organization appeared in 1996 when the Belgian historian (and former student activist) Joël Kotek published his book *Students and the Cold War*.⁵ The book focuses on the IUS and its sister organization, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), in their clash with their Western counterparts in the early Cold War. Kotek interprets the two East-based organizations as Soviet-dominated from the very start, in fact established as a part of a communist scheme. In his interpretation, they were run by ardent communists or naïve ‘fellow travellers’ – a term describing people who were not communists but sympathized with the cause and helped it with their non-partisan authority.⁶ Former IUS officials interviewed for this book who read Kotek’s work had strong objections to the portrayal of the organization, which is pictured as a part of the Soviet design for a communist cultural offensive from the very start. Tom Madden, one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the IUS and its first general secretary, was not pleased by Kotek’s book at all. In his 200-page-long unpublished manuscript, he tried to correct what he saw as Kotek’s mistakes and misinterpretations. ‘It is improbable that there will be any published history of the IUS, offering an alternative appraisal to that of Joël Kotek’s doctoral thesis,’ he complained. ‘There are published and unpublished memoirs by other IUS critics (...); but none that I know of which speaks in its defense.’⁷

Another scholarly contribution to the debate was authored by a US political scientist, Karen Paget. In her book, *Patriotic Betrayal*, she presents the story of the ISC, the Western mirror organization to the IUS.⁸ As the major Cold War adversary, the IUS naturally plays an important part in her narrative. With a much more nuanced

² Mazen Hussein, *Cold War in the Universities. IUS and the Unity of the International Student Movement*, unfinished and unpublished manuscript, given to the author by M. Hussein; Fathi El Fadl, ‘Der Internationale Studentenbund und der Kampf um die antiimperialistische Einheit der Studenten’ (PhD Diss., Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, Berlin, 1984); Witold Nawrocki and Leszek Kamiński, *Za lepszy świat, za lepszy uniwersytet: Szkice z dziejów Międzynarodowego Związku Studentów* (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985).

³ Josef Grohman, ‘Most Wonderful Period of My Life’, *World Student News* 20, no. 7 (1966): 2–3; A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, Národní archiv České republiky (NAČR), f. Mezinárodní svaz studentstva (MSS), unprocessed collection, box History of the IUS; Josef Skála mentioned that he intended to write the history himself at one point. Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

⁴ Summary Report on the Informal Consultative Meeting of Student Organizations on ‘The Future of the International Union of Students’, 3 December 1990, Cité des mémoires étudiantes (CME), Aubervilliers, box UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

⁵ Joël Kotek, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).

⁶ Michael David-Fox, ‘The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The ‘Cultured West’ through Soviet Eyes’, *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 2 (2003): 300–335.

⁷ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁸ Karen Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal: The Inside Story of the CIA’s Secret Campaign to Enroll American Students in the Crusade against Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

approach, Paget depicts in particular a political history of the ISC and its secret link to the US government; the agenda of the ISC (as well as the IUS) outside of politics is not at the centre of Paget's attention.

It is not the purpose of this book to offer a defence of the IUS that Tom Madden called for. Nor do I want simply to complement Paget's book by describing the history of covert manipulation by the other side. I want to show that the picture of the IUS as a 'communist front organization' and as a hub of spies is far from complete – there is so much more to the story. The IUS was an international organization that promoted student mobility and sports, channelled student activism and influenced the global debates on development, decolonization and student rights. I frame the history of the IUS by setting it in three interconnected historiographical debates. First, the research for this book reflects the debate on the Global Cold War and its cultural front, the role of international organizations in it and the impact of decolonization. Secondly, it is framed by the history of student internationalism, examining the changing role of students in society over the twentieth century. And thirdly, the book frames the IUS spatially, as a transnational space inside socialist Prague and as a part of a transnational socialist network.

The Global Cold War and international organizations

The understanding of the Cold War has undergone substantial changes in the past twenty years. The triumphalist Europe-centred interpretation that prevailed in the 1990s and which suggested that the clash between Soviet totalitarianism and Western liberal democracy was always inevitably going to end with the West's political, economic and moral victory was largely abandoned in the 2000s. In particular, Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* became a seminal work in the field.⁹ Since its publication, the scholarship has focused on the various other aspects of the Cold War, and especially the role of the 'Third World'.¹⁰ The focus of Cold War studies shifted to the process of decolonization. These two histories were until then largely interpreted separately; while the Cold War was a matter of rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union (or West and East), decolonization was a matter of relations

⁹ Odd Arne Westad, *Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ The Third World is a geopolitical concept the first use of which is often attributed to the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, who used it in reference to the *tiers état* from the *ancien régime* France, implying the discrepancy between its size and lack of power (peripherality). The term also suggested the non-alignment in the Cold War. Over the years, it was heavily problematized and in the scholarship that is concerned with the asymmetries between world's regions, it was largely replaced by the term 'Global South', which is often used synonymously and interchangeably. In this book, there is a slight difference; I use the term Global South in a geographical sense, more or less in the meaning 'post-colonial countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America'. The Third World is used more in a political sense, drawing from Vijay Prashad's concept of the Third World as an anti-colonial project. Both terms are used without quotation marks, even though I am aware of their contested nature. Alfred Sauvy, 'Trois Mondes, Une Planète', *L'Observateur*, 14 August 1952, 5; Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008).

between the imperial centres and their dependent territories overseas (or West and South). However, as many scholars have recently argued, state socialist countries were an integral part of the global processes that produced new states in the Global South.¹¹

While Joseph Stalin did not prioritize the territories outside of Europe in his designs, the change in Soviet leadership after his death, as well as the growing anti-colonial movement in the Third World, resulted in a new era of East–South relations. In Khrushchev’s geostrategic designs, decolonization was an opportunity to boost the USSR’s position through an alliance with the new states. Anti-colonialism thus became an essential part of Soviet socialist ideology.¹² It became a framework for various activities in the Global South – expert missions and developmental projects financed or co-financed by the socialist states, scholarship programmes for students at Eastern European universities and even the simple trade exchange.¹³ The international project *Socialism Goes Global* became a flagship enterprise of this field of East–South relations, introducing the concept of *alternative globalization*. This process was presented as a valid alternative to liberal globalization, even though it was ultimately unsuccessful – meaning that socialism was constructing global and genuine identities, imaginations and networks.¹⁴ Viewing ‘alternative globalization’ as a term implying economic context, I use ‘socialist internationalism’ in this book to describe the growing interconnectedness and shared identities in the landscapes of culture, science, education and politics. While the socialist internationalism project collapsed after 1989, it cannot be viewed as completely unsuccessful. Developing in opposition to but also in cooperation with liberal internationalism, it helped shape the global debates.

¹¹ E.g. James Mark and Tobias Rupprecht, ‘The Socialist World in Global History: From Absentee to Victim to Co-Producer’, in *The Practice of Global History: European Perspectives*, ed. Matthias Middell (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 81–113; Eric Burton, Anne Dietrich, Immanuel R. Harisch, and Marcia C. Schenck (eds.), *Navigating Socialist Encounters: Moorings and (Dis)Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2021); Sara Lorenzini, ‘Comecon and the South in the Years of Détente: A Study on East–South Economic Relations’, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 21, no. 2 (2014): 183–99.

¹² It already had been a part of the communist ideology in the early days of the Comintern. While it was relatively sidelined with the concept of ‘socialism in one country’ and later in the Popular Front era, the anti-colonial dimension was always present in the international communist movement. Ann Garland Mahler and Paolo Capuzzo, ‘Introduction’, in *The Comintern and the Global South – Global Designs/Local Encounter*, ed. Anne Garland Mahler and Paolo Capuzzo (New York: Routledge 2023), 1–46.

¹³ See, for example, Łukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Marcia Schenck, *Remembering African Labor Migration to the Second World: Socialist Mobilities between Angola, Mozambique, and East Germany* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); Constantin Katsakioris, ‘The Socialist Countries, North Africa and the Middle East in the Cold War: The Educational Connection’, *Contemporary European History* 30, no. 4 (2021): 597–612.

¹⁴ The project’s main outputs are: James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Steffi Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); James Mark and Paul Betts (eds.), *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Kristin Roth-Ey (ed.), *Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War: Socialist Internationalism and the Politics of the Particular* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2023).

For example, it contributed to the cause of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States; the fear of US administrations that the unequal position of African Americans might undermine their position in the struggle for the hearts and minds of Africans in the newly decolonized countries and make them sympathetic to the Soviets became one of the incentives to pursue new federal legislature.¹⁵

The development of Cold War scholarship did not mean only decentring Europe but also focusing more on various other forms of contact. One of the most important – and crucial for the topic of student internationalism – was the cultural Cold War. In this field, researchers have particularly focused on transnational and trans-bloc circulation of cultural production, understood by Annette Vowinckel, Marcus Payn and Thomas Lindenberger ‘as a very broad set of techniques, images, habits, mentalities, ways of producing and consuming, forms of communication, self-descriptions, and patterns of daily life’.¹⁶ An important part of the culture in the post-war world, however, was also how the Cold War affected its production; how the states used it as a tool in their political and ideological battles.¹⁷ The most common example is how superpowers exerted influence over intellectuals – be it the peace movement, organized by the Soviet Union, or the Western Congress for Cultural Freedom, sponsored by the CIA.¹⁸

Youth and student activism made up an important front in the cultural Cold War. Joël Kotek and Karen Paget stressed the significance of the IUS and its Western counterpart in the battle for cultural superiority, with both sides of the Cold War funding this fight. The ‘East’ had a strong hand in this game; the Soviet vision of the post-war reconstruction appealed particularly to young people. The socialist world even launched a cultural mega-event to assert dominance in the field of youth culture – the World Festivals of Youth and Students. The Festivals, organized biannually and later at a longer interval, created unique spaces for the mass encounter of progressive youth from the East, West and South.¹⁹ The IUS was a junior partner in the Festivals organization, but held other events on its own – such as the World Student Congresses or the World Student University Games.²⁰

¹⁵ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 152–202.

¹⁶ Vowinckel, Annette, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, ‘European Cold War Culture(s)? An Introduction’, in *Cold War Cultures. Perspective on Eastern and Western European Societies*, ed. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus Payk and Thomas Lindenberg (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 1–17.

¹⁷ For contributions in this field, see for example, Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Simo Mikkonen, Pia Koivunen (eds.), *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003); Kyrill Kunakhovich, *Communism’s Public Sphere: Culture as Politics in Cold War Poland and East Germany* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2023); Gordon Johnston, ‘Revisiting the Cultural Cold War’, *Social History* 35, no. 3 (2010): 290–307.

¹⁸ Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Vladimir Dobrenko, ‘Conspiracy of Peace: The Cold War, the International Peace Movement, and the Soviet Peace Campaign, 1946–1956’ (PhD Diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2016).

¹⁹ For the most comprehensive account of the Festivals, see Pia Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and the Soviet Cultural Diplomacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

²⁰ Lidia Lesnykh, ‘Sport at the World Festival of Youth and Students: Between Olympic Ideals and Socialist Internationalism’, *Frontiers in Sport and Active Living* 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2020.567095>.

In accordance with this historiographical development and under the influence of transnational history, one of the trends in the 'Global Cold War' approach is the growing focus on non-state actors. The inter-state diplomatic relations, it is argued, can only tell us so much – and many individuals and institutions significantly influenced the course of the Cold War and paint a very different picture of it. Among these non-state actors, international organizations hold a prominent position. Their role in the international system as well as their number grew dramatically throughout the twentieth century and beyond.²¹ Recent scholarship has shown how intergovernmental and especially international non-governmental organizations contributed to global cultural cooperation, the circulation of scientific knowledge and cooperation on international issues across the Iron Curtain.²²

In addition to their role in the Cold War, it was also examined how international organizations affected the process of decolonization. In an introduction to the 2022 special issue of the *Journal of Global History* concerning this relationship, Eva Maria Muschik proposed to distinguish three scholarly approaches, according to the functions that international organizations played in relation to decolonization:

- (1) The most prevalent approach views international organizations as public forums for negotiating the meaning of decolonization more generally and the decolonization of specific places in particular.
- (2) Another approach examines international organizations as hubs for forging both anti-colonial and inter-imperial alliances.
- (3) A third presents international organizations and their employees as historical actors in their own right, who sought to respond to and shape the process of decolonization, rather than simply follow the lead of government representatives.²³

Since this book focuses among other things on the IUS's anti-colonial aspect, these three approaches will also be reflected, with me specifically subscribing mainly to the second point – seeing the IUS as a hub, and a part of larger transnational networks.

Even though the term 'international non-governmental organization' (INGO) is mostly associated with the liberal era of the post-1989 world, the phenomenon it describes goes far back in time. It can be traced back to the nineteenth century, the early forms of transnational activism, or even to earlier histories.²⁴ The first big

²¹ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

²² See, for example, Michel Christian, Sandrine Kott and Ondřej Matějka, 'International Organizations in the Cold War: The Circulation of Experts beyond the East-West Divide', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Studia Territorialis* 17, no. 1 (2017): 35–60; Eva Maria Muschik, *Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945–1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022); Sandrine Kott, *Organiser le monde. Une autre histoire de la guerre froide* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2021).

²³ Eva Maria Muschik, 'Special Issue Introduction: Towards a Global History of International Organizations and Decolonization', *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 2 (2022): 1–18.

²⁴ Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20–44.

leap in internationalization came in the late nineteenth century. The era before the First World War saw the emergence of humanitarian and cultural structures such as the International Red Cross and the International Olympic Committee.²⁵ The phenomenon grew so significantly that even the Union of International Associations was founded in 1907 to map the international non-governmental landscape.²⁶ Further internationalization happened in the interwar period with the rise of the international system based on the League of Nations, and after the Second World War. Since the 1970s and beyond the 2000s, there has been another huge wave of the establishment of INGOs, even though some pointed out that this was largely due to regionalization and fragmentation.²⁷ The increase after 1989 (more than 45,000 in 2000)²⁸ created a debate on the rise of the 'global civil society'.

While scholars have interpreted INGOs as producers of internationalism and globalization, they mostly focused on the Western organizations facilitating liberal globalization, or the universal international organizations within the UN network. Similarly, the scholarship on the role of actors who constructed the international structures predominantly inspected the actors of Western origin. The actors from the East are often not a part of the picture.²⁹ Just so, the socialist INGOs, one of which the IUS is considered to be, mainly seated in Eastern Europe, were so far only rarely seen as significant co-producers of internationalisms. These organizations were mostly founded after the Second World War and represented diverse gender, professional or social groups – besides the IUS, there was the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Federation of Trade Unions and many others. Even though they were founded as universal, the Cold War division caused splits in them and made them effectively pro-communist. In Western historiography, these organizations were seen mostly as 'communist fronts'. This book's objective is to take up one of these socialist INGOs – the IUS – and show it as a co-producer of socialist internationalism and a catalyst of alternative globalization; to present a

²⁵ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press 2013), 11–44; Norbert Götz, 'The Emergence of NGOs on the World Stage', in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, ed. Thomas Davies (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 19–31.

²⁶ Daniel Laqua, Wouter Van Acker and Christophe Verbruggen (eds.), *International Organizations and Global Civil Society: Histories of the Union of International Associations* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

²⁷ Davies, NGOs, 123–73.

²⁸ Shamima Ahmed and David M. Potter, *NGOs in International Politics* (Boulder: Kumarian Press, 2013), 19.

²⁹ Those who have worked on Eastern actors in international structures include for example, Louis H. Porter, *Reds in Blue: UNESCO, World Governance, and the Soviet Internationalist Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023); Barbora Buzáßsyová, *The Eastern Bloc and Sub-Saharan Africa: Czechoslovakia, UNESCO and Development Aid from the 1960s and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2024); Bogdan Iacob, 'Malariaology and Decolonization: Eastern European Experts from the League of Nations to the World Health Organization', *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 2 (2022): 233–53.

global history of the IUS detached from the traditional bipolar historiography. To achieve that objective, the book pays more attention to the topics of decolonization, national liberation and development, as well as the non-European actors who promoted them within the IUS network; in other words, interpreting the IUS through the lens of global history.

To call the IUS and other socialist oriented socialist-oriented organizations 'non-governmental' is not self-evident; there are many possible understandings of the term 'INGO'. The traditional categorization of international organizations works with two groups: intergovernmental organizations and INGOs.³⁰ An intergovernmental organization is a label describing bodies in which national governments are directly represented, such as the UN-affiliated organizations (UNESCO, International Labour Organization). The term INGO applies mostly to non-profit organizations with international membership or federations of national member organizations. In reference to the IUS and other East-based socialist-oriented organizations, the term has not been widely used. Aside from their general marginalization in the post-Cold War historiography, the reason was also their close relations with socialist countries; not just dependency on their money but also state control over their member organizations. In the case of the IUS, the member organizations included Komsomol for the Soviet Union, *Československý svaz mládeže* (Czechoslovak Union of Youth, ČSM) for Czechoslovakia, *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth, FDJ) for East Germany, etc. – the national student or youth unions. But membership in these unions was hardly voluntary in state socialist countries; they gathered the vast majority of youth and students and refusal to join them could have had social consequences. Their leaders were appointed and supervised by the state and party structures – they were a part of the umbrella organization system with different names in different countries – the National Front, the Fatherland Front or the People's Democracy Front. Stemming from the idea of a broad alliance going back to the interwar popular fronts, these umbrella organizations united all permitted political parties, and also social movements, pressure and interest groups, including the youth and students unions, all that under the organizational control of the 'leading force' in the society, that is, the national communist or workers party.³¹ It can be argued, of course, that even in socialist countries, the youth and student unions were not completely 'governmental'; in that sense, the relations within state socialist regimes were a constant negotiation, and depended on a specific country, specific time and specific actors. At the same time, recent scholarship has explored the possibilities of activism or human rights promotion within the official structures

³⁰ Iriye, *Global Community*, 1–8.

³¹ For the system in individual European socialist countries, see Stanislav Zdobinský et al., *Státní zřízení Evropských socialistických zemí* (Praha: Orbis, 1973); For the functioning of the National Front in Czechoslovakia, see Karel Kaplan, *Národní fronta 1948–1960* (Praha: Academia, 2012).

of socialist dictatorships.³² But in general, it would be difficult to label the youth and student unions in state socialist countries as NGOs.

However, socialist-oriented international organizations, such as the IUS, were not composed solely of the unions from state socialist countries. During most of the IUS's history, most member organizations were from non-socialist countries, be it from the Global South or even from the West. Many of them were entirely independent of their home states, that is, they were NGOs in the traditional sense of the word. In some cases, the member unions were even illegal in their home countries.

On the other hand, we must not disregard the money and influence. The IUS, as well as many other socialist-oriented organizations, was dependent on finance from the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. Especially the Soviets, Czechoslovaks and East Germans were very influential in the IUS Secretariat and held high positions; it would be hard to imagine that an agenda would be pursued against their will. Then again, even in the West, INGOs are often dependent on state or government money, their functioning is influenced by the requirements of the donor, and limited by the legal structure of the host country.

How to categorize the IUS, then? Given the nature of most member organizations, it was certainly not an intergovernmental organization. One might say that just two categories (intergovernmental and international non-governmental) are not enough; the strong state presence of the socialist countries made the IUS and other socialist-oriented organizations some sort of a hybrid structure. One approach trying to nuance the two bloc categories is the introduction of the term QUANGO – a quasi-autonomous-NGO – labelling hybrid organizations 'that admit both private individuals and government agencies as members and are largely financed by public funds'.³³ Yet another term is GONGO – a government-organized NGO. The term was introduced by Mosiés Naím, who tried to warn that some self-labelled NGOs are in fact pursuing governments' agenda:

Some gongos are benign, others irrelevant. But many (...) are dangerous. Some act as the thuggish arm of repressive governments. Others use the practices of democracy to subtly undermine democracy at home. Abroad, the gongos of repressive regimes lobby the United Nations and other international institutions,

³² Ana Kladnik, 'Local Self-Governance, Voluntary Practices, and the Sinnwelt of Socialist Velenje', in *Making Sense of Dictatorship: Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945*, ed. Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik and Martin Sabrow (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2022), 83–109; George Bodie, 'Introduction to Everyday Internationalism: Socialist–South Connections and Mass Culture during the Cold War', *International Review of Social History* 69, no. S32 (2024): 1–12; James Mark and Peter Apor, 'Home Front', in *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation*, ed. James Mark and Paul Betts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 318–57; Ned Richardson-Little, *The Human Rights Dictatorship: Socialism, Global Solidarity and Revolution in East Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Paul Betts, 'Socialism, Social Rights, and Human Rights: The Case of East Germany', *Humanity* 3, no. 3 (2012): 407–26.

³³ Lucile Dreidemy, *Internationale Politik ohne staatliche Akteure? Das Wiener Institut für Entwicklungsfragen und die sozialdemokratischen Nord-Süd-Netzwerke im globalen Kalten Krieg*. Habilitationsschrift vorgelegt der Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Wien, Wien 2023, 20.

often posing as representatives of citizen groups with lofty aims when, in fact, they are nothing but agents of the governments that fund them.³⁴

As examples of dangerous organizations, he mentioned those that advocate for Cuba's or Venezuela's causes in the international forums. While the category of a GONGO itself could be useful, the division of 'benign' and 'malign' GONGOs is dubious, as it depends very much on a person's perspective. And furthermore, as stated above, the line between GONGOs and 'real' NGOs would still remain somewhat blurry, as the money is often of governmental origin. In the case of student organizations, it is the case all the more, as students often lack the resources.

There is another argument – the IUS considered itself an INGO and was recognized as such by other international organizations like the UN or UNESCO. For these reasons, I chose to call the IUS an INGO in this book. Of course, one must do that bearing in mind that the IUS was financially and organizationally dependent on the state socialist countries and that there was a presence of the secret services. The development of the Cold War significantly affected the discussions, the functioning and the legitimacy of the IUS – the evolution of the IUS was impacted by events such as the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, intervention in Afghanistan, and martial law in Poland, Stalin's death and Khrushchev's secret speech, perestroika and the liberal revolutions of 1989. In the Cold War, many INGOs were political and stirred international debates, whether out of their own conviction or serving their donors. Others, however, worked strenuously on the de-escalation of the conflict, working on trans-bloc bridge-building and promoting universal human rights, such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International.³⁵ The INGOs were platforms in which people from all three worlds met, and as per Matthew Evangelista, even 'organizations whose Soviet members required official approval of the Communist Party provided opportunities for informal exchange of ideas that deviated from and in some cases ultimately influenced official policy'.³⁶ As I am trying to show, the student movement could play such a bridge-building role, even pioneering communication in the Cold War.

Student activism and internationalism

Czech sociologists Jan Keller and Lubor Tvrdý have characterized the changing role of education in the twentieth century using three spatial metaphors: first, it was a temple, a sacred place for a narrow elite designed to raise new generations to serve the system. Second, it became an elevator; an instrument for wide masses to improve their social status via skills and knowledge. And third, in the 1970s, education gradually turned

³⁴ Moisés Naím, 'Democracy's Dangerous Impostors', *The Washington Post*, Saturday, 21 April 2007. See also Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2013), 331.

³⁵ Daniel Laqua, *Activism across Borders since 1870: Causes, Campaigns and Conflicts in and beyond Europe* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2023).

³⁶ Matthew Evangelista, 'Transnational Organizations and the Cold War', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 400–21.

into an insurance company, where individuals chose their fields to be better prepared for the job market and equipped against its whims.³⁷

These metaphors could be contested and indeed they have been; perhaps such a process was not universal and had different courses in different places, and the chronology of these stages could also vary. And the roles of education were not as singular but rather overlapped; education as a social elevator works to some extent until today. But still, Keller and Tvrdý encapsulated the overall trend of the evolution of education's role in society. The process of massification of tertiary education swept through North America, Europe – both East and West – and Japan, and subsequently also through the Global South (in many countries, it is still a process in progress). Governments have gradually adopted the idea that an educated society is not a threat but rather an asset in terms of economic growth and quality of life, and have supported the construction of educational infrastructure.³⁸ While in interwar Europe university students constituted only about 2 per cent of their age cohort, this number rose slowly during the 1950s. In Japan and the United States, the portion was bigger, reaching up to 8 per cent in the later 1940s.³⁹ The true explosion started in the 1960s and continued beyond the year 2000; between 2000 and 2007, the percentage of the age cohort enrolled in tertiary education grew from 19 per cent to 26 per cent, while in many countries the number is beyond 50 per cent.⁴⁰

The process of massification of tertiary education was accompanied by other trends and processes that reinforced one another. One cause – but also a consequence – is the gradual transformation of society that was unrolled sometime during the 1960s and that was already observed by contemporary authors such as Daniel Bell, Radovan Richta and Peter Drucker. These authors, whether they refer to the phenomenon as the 'scientific-technical revolution' or 'knowledge society', agree that there was a significant qualitative shift in the structure of knowledge production, coinciding with the changing social, economic and cultural fabric of society. The concept of a 'society of knowledge' is also closely linked to that of the 'second modernity' – or 'liquid modernity' (or 'post-modernity'), marking the transition from industrial to post-industrial society, which is, among other things, characterized by the plurification of knowledge.⁴¹

Among the effects of this process, which we can see, however, also as causes or parallel interrelated processes, are the trends of individualization and globalization,

³⁷ Jan Keller and Lubor Tvrdý, *Vzdělanostní společnost: Chrám, výťah a pojišťovna* (Praha: Slon, 2008).

³⁸ Peter Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

³⁹ Daniel Laqua, 'Student Activists and International Cooperation in a Changing World, 1919–60', in *Internationalists in European History: Rethinking the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jessica Rheinisch and David Brydan (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 161–81.

⁴⁰ Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg and Laura E. Rumbley, *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution. A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 2009), vi–vii.

⁴¹ For the overview, see Nico Stehr, *Knowledge Societies* (London: Sage, 1994), 5–17. See also Radovan Richta, *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution* (Prague: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1969, original 1966); Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity*.

both part of greater structural changes in post-war societies. The two processes accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s – in the East, they were delayed by the nature of state socialist structures. Globalization, accompanied by the rise of neoliberalism, meant the removal of economic barriers, a revolution in information technology and the increased construction of global networks.⁴² Individualization was brought about roughly at the same time; the ideas that ‘there is no society’ and that everyone should take care of themselves have spread since the 1980s. But it was not only driven by economic factors; it also meant a fallout from collective action and collective solutions to societal problems in general.⁴³

One of the results of the massification of tertiary education and transition to a ‘knowledge society’ – or in other words, the turn of education from the temple to the elevator to the insurance company – was also democratization. Opening the gates of universities to a much larger portion of the young generation increased accessibility significantly, even though there remained limitations. In state socialist countries, the talk of ‘democratization of education’ might sound even provocative, as the notion of state socialist education is associated mainly with Stalinist purges and political conditioning. However, in the sense of democratization as accessibility, socialist countries expanded the opportunity to study to large social groups that were excluded before, as shown by Agata Zysiak in the example of communist Poland.⁴⁴ In most capitalist countries, access was not conditioned politically but rather economically – whether a student’s family could pay the tuition. In all three worlds, but especially in the Global South, the number of students was determined by the limited capacity of universities. But in general, the possibility of tertiary education opened to a big portion of the world’s population, which meant also social mobility and opportunities.

These changes affected the organization of the university management and also the education itself. The university environment was always highly institutionalized and with strict hierarchies and power relations, as Pierre Bourdieu has shown in his *Homo Academicus* – a fact that the students highly criticized.⁴⁵ In the West, massification became a burden for state budgets; in the 1980s, governments found a solution in the neoliberal turn and started cutting the public funding for universities, turning them into entrepreneurial institutions.⁴⁶ The economization of universities is also reflected in the curricula and how students approached their studies – in Keller and Tvrdý’s

⁴² Even though the term is contested and can have different meanings. See Frederick Cooper, ‘What Is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective’, *African Affairs* 100, no. 399 (2001): 189–213; Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁴³ See, for example, Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002).

⁴⁴ Agata Zysiak, *Limiting Privilege: Upward Mobility within Higher Education in Socialist Poland* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2023).

⁴⁵ Even though Bourdieu distanced himself from the radical protests of May ’68. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, original 1984).

⁴⁶ Walter Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume III: Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century (1800–1945)*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–31.

terms, universities transitioned into insurance companies. In the East, universities had different functions – the Soviet model subordinated universities to the national economy.⁴⁷ Even there, the studies were massified as a part of the socialist modernity project. After 1989, Eastern European universities oriented themselves towards the West and adopted some of the neoliberal recipes, and most post-socialist countries abandoned the tuition-free model.

These trends naturally affected student internationalism, student politics and what was understood by student interests. Individualization also changed education, fragmenting students as a social group and weakening their efforts to be a political force. Another factor was the protest movement in the 1960s and 1970s that formed at the end of the 1960s partly in response to the massification process and that mobilized students – but in an autonomous, anti-institutional way. In other words, there were more and more students, but they were less and less organized.

The history of education, however, is only important for this book because of its recipients – the students. As Manja Klemenčič pointed out, university students have always been ‘a distinct social category, with distinct social identity, social roles, and rights’. They have an impact on the formation of higher education, in particular through their representative organizations. They have specific student agency – ‘capabilities to navigate and influence higher education and broader social environments’.⁴⁸ However, the proportion and characteristics of this social group evolved throughout history, along with the evolution of the function and scale of education. When discussing the students as a social group, one must also differentiate between the students and the youth. Not all young people are students, and not all students have to be young. The relations between the two categories also evolved throughout the twentieth century – at the beginning of our story, just after the Second World War, students were the elite among youth and their interests could differ quite a lot, while at its end, they represented a large portion of the youth and their goals became more aligned. But still, youth internationalism had different goals and different priorities and took different forms of action.

With the changing status of the students’ social group in the second half of the twentieth century, the practice of student internationalism evolved, too. One of the biggest changes was increased mobility. In the modern era, students have been moving for education since the nineteenth century, but only after the Second World War did this phenomenon boom, along with the implementation of scholarship programmes. The Cold War was a golden age for scholarship programmes – they had political meaning, were used as a tool of development and cultural diplomacy, and states invested in them. Scholarships permeated the Iron Curtain and reached all

⁴⁷ John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 27–30 and 58–68.

⁴⁸ Manja Klemenčič, ‘The Key Concepts in the Study of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education’, in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education*, ed. Manja Klemenčič (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 7–38.

three worlds of the Cold War.⁴⁹ In the long run, international arrangements, exchange programmes and the harmonization of national tertiary education programmes enabled scholarships and student mobility on such a scale. The most successful example is the Erasmus programme in Europe, introduced at the end of the Cold War, and the harmonization of the university study system within the Bologna process at the end of the 1990s. The reform introduced the unified structure and the credit system in Europe and even had a global impact.⁵⁰

All this development was also reflected in the international student politics. The IUS was, above all, a federation of national student unions from the countries of the world – a fact that is often forgotten or sidelined by historians who focus primarily on the Cold War dimension of the IUS story. By design, the IUS was meant to be a smaller version of the United Nations, even though the limited membership of Western students hindered this purpose. The practice of the IUS was, however, very much influenced by the specifics of the fact that the delegates and Secretariat members of the IUS were students – they were young people, with their student status being bound to the university enrolment. The fact that people study only for a relatively short time means there is a big fluctuation in delegates, compared to other international organizations. They are also relatively inexperienced, as many could not focus on the work in an INGO entirely because they had to study at the same time. All this leads to relative instability. Some student unions tried to overcome this obstacle by nominating fresh alumni to positions of student functionaries – still relatively young people who would become professionals and focus solely on their positions. This approach, practised by many members of the IUS as well, however, had different problems – a sort of detachment from the everyday student life.

Another problem, as was already discussed in the previous segment, was political dependence. A US scholar, Philip Altbach, who authored a study on student internationalism in the early Cold War, stated that only ‘a few of the international student organizations have been formed by a student initiative, although most have represented the interests of adults in international student affairs. Some have been financially self-supporting, but most have been dependent on adult sponsorship’.⁵¹ It is true that, in principle, students usually do not have access to funds and are therefore dependent on outside financing, which makes them prone to political influence. This factor also played a part in the case of the IUS and its biggest competitor, the ISC.

To divert the attention from the Cold War conflicts, even though they are present in this book, I try to keep the students in the picture. Throughout the chapters, we can thus observe the IUS contribution to student mobility and improvement of student life, the issuance of the International Student Identity Card, the support of student tourism, organization of and participation in student sports events, or cultural

⁴⁹ Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith, ‘A World of Exchanges: Conceptualizing the History of International Scholarship Programs (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries)’, in *Global Exchanges: Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World*, ed. Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 1–29.

⁵⁰ Joseph Piro, *Revolutionizing Global Higher Education Policy: Innovation and the Bologna Process* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁵¹ Altbach, *The Student Internationals*, 7.

programmes. Even though the structure and political vision of the IUS, as I argue, distanced the organization from grassroots student problems, initiatives like these kept bringing it back.

This book is concerned with student internationalism. In the introduction to a 2016 special issue of *Contemporary European History*, Jessica Reinisch iterated that they ‘sought to reclaim “internationalism” as the most fitting broad umbrella term for the complex social, cultural, political and economic connections between individuals from different states, regions and locales’. She then continues that ‘the collection as a whole aims to think about “internationalisms” in the plural, and thereby to avoid the temptation to identify the most authentic or pure (and to dismiss the rest)’.⁵² I subscribe to that perspective. The internationalisms certainly overlapped and were in contact – the practice may be challenging to categorize. Sandrine Kott speaks of the ‘convergence of internationalisms’ in the 1960s – a concept that acknowledges the plurality and distinctiveness of internationalisms but also their interconnectedness.⁵³ Glenda Sluga argued that internationalism and nationalism are not in opposition; on the contrary, nationalism is a constituent element of internationalism.⁵⁴ This can be very well observed in socialist internationalism, too. Socialism was, by definition, internationalist, highlighting the solidarity based on class across borders. At the same time, however, after the Second World War, nationalism became a crucial part of the socialist ideology. All this pertained to student internationalism, too. The IUS was always meant as a federation of patriotic students from individual countries; it never spoke against nationalism. But the student problems were transnational, and the IUS addressed them accordingly.

There was one more level on which the IUS and other student organizations dealt with ‘education’ – that was the training that the members of the Secretariat received by working in it. Almost all former IUS officials interviewed for this book agreed that the time they spent working in the IUS Secretariat was the best school they could ask for. They were tasked to work on an international scale, negotiate at international conferences, defend their ground, argue their cases and find compromises. They travelled around the world, spoke at the United Nations or UNESCO and met with prominent politicians and heads of state. In this sense, the IUS developed not only the students who received scholarships or used the organization’s discount card but also the workers of the Secretariat. World leaders have often gained their first experience with politics in the student movement and the IUS jumpstarted several of them – several functionaries who worked at the IUS later became prominent politicians. At the end of the 1940s, before the split, future Prime Minister Olof Palme represented Swedish students in Prague. The post-socialist President of Romania Ion Iliescu worked in the IUS in the 1950s. And many more delegates in the secretariat assumed important positions or pursued extraordinary careers: Faisal Mekdad, minister of

⁵² Jessica Reinisch, ‘Introduction: Agents of Internationalism’, *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 195–205.

⁵³ Sandrine Kott, ‘Cold War Internationalism’, in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 340–63.

⁵⁴ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 1–9.

foreign affairs of Syria; Alexander Shelepin, a member of the Soviet Politburo, László Kovacs, minister of foreign affairs of Hungary, Jerzy Koźmiński, Polish ambassador to the United States; Ahmed Al-Wahishi, Yemeni ambassador to Russia; Jacques Vergès, a prominent French lawyer; Giovanni Berlinguer, Italian doctor, communist politician and brother to the Italian Communist Party's chairman Enrico Berlinguer; Rajko Tomović, Yugoslav scientist and pioneer of robotics. Others have followed up on their experience with international organizations and moved on: Pallab Sengupta from India became secretary general of the World Peace Council; Mohammed Fall from Senegal, a regional director for UNICEF. The IUS presidents, almost all of them were Czechoslovaks, also made it into the history books: Jiří Pelikán was a director of the Czechoslovak Television during the 1968 Prague Spring and later, having found refuge in Rome, one of the leaders of the anti-communist opposition in exile. He even became a member of the European Parliament representing the Italian Socialist Party. Miroslav Štěpán became a powerful figure in the Communist Party apparatus and is most infamously known for his role in the police suppression of the 17th November student demonstration which sparked the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Josef Skála, the last IUS president from the Cold War era, became notorious as a leader of the conservative wing of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and the party's candidate for the president of the Czech Republic in 2023. The book does not apply a biographical approach but a few trajectories are followed to demonstrate this formative aspect of the IUS.

Transnational socialist network

In 1996, Czech émigré historian Karel Bartošek published his book *Les Aveux des archives* in Paris. In his book, inspired by discussions with French historian Annie Kriegel, he referred to Prague as 'Communist Geneva' due to its role as a host to numerous international organizations, as well as to several international political immigrant communities. In the emerging Cold War, it was in particular the Greeks, the Italians, the Spanish and others who found refuge in Czechoslovakia. After the split between Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito, Czechoslovakia became home to many Yugoslavs who turned against their leader's revolt.⁵⁵

Prague, as Bartošek argued, thus became an important centre of the socialist world. He drew from his own experience, as in many ways, his life trajectory was typical for intellectuals of his generation; a devoted Stalinist in the 1950s, a reformist in the

⁵⁵ Konstantinos Tsivos, *Řecká emigrace v Československu (1948–1968): Od jednoho rozštěpení ke druhému* (Praha: Dokořán, 2012); Ondřej Vojtěchovský, *Z Prahy proti Titovi: Jugoslávská prosovětská emigrace v Československu* (Praha: FF UK, 2012); Maroš Timko, 'Czechoslovak-Spanish relations (1918–1977)', PhD Diss., Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, Praha, 2022, 48–157; Philip Cooke, 'Red Spring: Italian Political Emigration to Czechoslovakia', *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 4 (2012): 861–96; Doubravka Olšáková, 'V krajině za zrcadlem: Političtí emigranti v poúnorovém Československu a případ Aymonin', *Soudobé dějiny* 14, no. 4 (2007): 719–43; Milan Bárta, 'Právo azylu: Vznik politické emigrace v Československu po roce 1948', *Paměť a dějiny* 5, no. 1 (2011): 15–22.

1960s and a dissident-turned-exile after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In his interpretation, Prague's international organizations and communities were nothing but an outpost of Moscow's power structures, and the individuals in the 'Communist Geneva' were either direct agents of Stalin's schemes or at best useful idiots whose work served the same purpose.⁵⁶ This interpretation followed up on the traditionalist Cold War historiography which argued that the organizations based in Prague and other cities of the Eastern Bloc served as front organizations; their seeming universalism and umbrella-like character were only as good as a cover and legitimization tool for the real agenda, which was to disseminate Soviet cultural propaganda. This system of front organizations was supposed to be modelled after the interwar system of Comintern-affiliated organizations which also strategized to incorporate non-communists to broaden its scope and legitimize their activities.⁵⁷

Indeed, the subordination of the Prague-based international organization to Moscow's directives was real, at least in Stalin's time. During the whole course of the Cold War, the IUS and other 'democratic international organizations', as they called themselves, stayed very clearly on the side of the East, seldom criticizing the situation in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in their official production. However, I do not think that this is the only possible interpretation of the socialist-oriented INGOs. In this book, I attempt to present an alternative perspective, using the example of the IUS.

The image of the IUS as a tool of Soviet propaganda becomes more complex when we consider the problem of its actorship. Suppose we aggregate the opinions expressed by the representatives of the IUS Secretariat in the international arenas and in the official printed production. In that case, we can get a sense of what could be the 'IUS ideology'. If we aggregate its official initiatives, interactions of its representatives and organized events, we can personify the IUS and establish its agenda. However, in this book, I interpret the IUS not only as an *actor* but also as a *network*; in other words, a system of individuals, organizations and institutions interconnected by mutual relations. That is not to say that a network cannot be an actor at the same time. On the contrary, as Bruno Latour says, every network has an agency – every actor is, in fact, a network.⁵⁸

The sociologist Manuel Castells famously conceived globalization as the formation of networks, ultimately leading to the creation of a 'network society'.⁵⁹ In combination with the concept of alternative globalization,⁶⁰ we can argue that alternative globalization was forming an alternative network society. This alternative network society was constructed by a variety of actors – governments and state institutions,

⁵⁶ Karel Bartošek, *Les Aveux des archives: Prague – Paris – Prague 1948–1968* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 49–84.

⁵⁷ Bernard S. Morris, 'Communist International Front Organizations: Their Nature and Function', *World Politics* 9, no. 1 (1956): 76–87.

⁵⁸ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996).

⁶⁰ Mark, Kalinovsky and Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations*, 1–31.

political parties, international NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, national unions, informal groupings, pressure groups, media, universities, public intellectuals and artists, and other institutions and initiatives. In this book, I call this vast web of connections and relations a *transnational socialist network*.

There are various other spatial conceptualizations of socialist internationalism, including the links with the Global South. The idea of the *Republic of Letters* was originally conceived to address the interconnectedness, unified language and processes of the cultural production of the Enlightenment. Recently, Rossen Djalalov used it to frame the space of cultural production and identity construction between the Second and the Third Worlds.⁶¹ As Djalalov says, forming an identity is based on cultural production – one's adherence to the network is a matter of identification with it (imagined community).⁶² A research project *Relations in the Ideoscape*, headed by Birgit Schäbler, used Arjun Appadurai's concept of *Ideoscape* as one of the currents of globalization to tackle the ideological and cultural knowledge transfers between the Middle East and socialist Europe, finding forms and actors of the *socialist ideoscape*.⁶³ Another spatial approach is Marcia Schenck's *Black East*, a variation of the *Black Atlantic*, designed to encapsulate the heterogenic entanglements between the African and Eastern European socialisms and shared experiences of African expatriates in socialist countries.⁶⁴ In their conceptualization of the Eastern Bloc, Steffi Marung, Uwe Müller and Stefan Troebst argued that the socialist international organizations, including the IUS, are one of the dimensions that constitute the Bloc as a distinct space.⁶⁵

The *transnational socialist network* that I propose encompasses its transnational nature, a variety of actors and both vertical and horizontal relations between them, and the spatiality of its centres and peripheries.⁶⁶ The introduction of the term

⁶¹ Rossen Djalalov, *The People's Republic of Letters: Towards a Media History of Twentieth-Century Socialist Internationalism* (PhD Diss., New Haven: Yale University, 2011); Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶² Rossen Djalalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third World* (Montreal: McGill's Queen University Press, 2020), 3–31.

⁶³ Birgit Schäbler and Constantine Katsakioris, *Relations in the Ideoscape: Middle Eastern Students, Activists and Intellectuals in the Eastern Bloc between Knowledge and Power* (De Gruyter, forthcoming); Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Theory, Culture and Society* 7, no. 2 (1990): 295–310.

⁶⁴ Marcia Schenck, 'Constructing and Deconstructing the 'Black East' – a Helpful Research Agenda?' *Stichproben: Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 18, no. 34 (2018): 135–52; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London/ New York: Verso, 1993).

⁶⁵ Steffi Marung, Uwe Müller and Stefan Troebst, 'Monolith or Experiment? The Bloc as a Spatial Format', in *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*, ed. Matthias Middell and Steffi Marung (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 275–309.

⁶⁶ For transnationalism and networks as a space concept, see Manuel Castells, 'Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society', *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1 (2000): 5–24; Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421–39; Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 124–9; Philipp Ther, 'Comparisons, Cultural Transfers, and the Study of Networks: Towards a Transnational History of Europe', in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 204–25; Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel, 'Space and Scale in Transnational History', *The International History Review* 3, no. 4 (2011): 573–84.

‘transnational socialist network’ also requires some discussion as to the understanding of the term ‘transnational’. The new Cold War history approaches are not only about widening the lenses and including the world outside Europe and North America but also about different methodologies. The fields of transnational and global history which had been developing since the 1980s helped alter the focus from nations and states to other types of actors. The Cold War history, until then often associated with walls and isolated worlds, started to take on new contours. In the book, I use both terms ‘international’ and ‘transnational’, often seemingly interchangeably. As per Daniel Laqua, ‘one way of making sense of such differences in usage is to consider “international” in terms of the *scale* (people coming together from several different nations) whereas the term “transnational” refers to specific characteristics (activists cooperating with each other beyond national borders, borrowing ideas from abroad or travelling to meetings with activists).’⁶⁷ The two terms can thus be used to describe the same thing, only from a different perspective. I find this distinction reasonable and use it as well – the IUS thus operates in both international and transnational sense.⁶⁸

But back to networks. A network is a concept that I find a very suitable tool not only for the conceptualization of a heterogeneous space of globalization but also for any INGO. A network can well encapsulate the spatiality of the INGO – not only its centre and the Secretariat but also the role of local and regional partners. The socialist-oriented INGOs had a polycentric character, as shown by Victor Devinatz in the example of the World Federation of Trade Unions – as opposed to the Soviet-controlled communist monolith, as it was described by the Western counterparts.⁶⁹ The IUS was no different, as is an objective of this book to show. The IUS was a federation of student organizations, each of which had a different form; some were parts of a state-dependent national-front type of structure (such as in state socialist countries), some were federations composed of various university and sectoral unions created ad hoc to meet the requirement that each country is represented by one member organization, some only represented a particular group of students. Some of the member organizations were represented in the Secretariat which ran day-to-day operations, some only attended Congresses or ad hoc events. It had strong relations with regional partners in Latin America (La Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes; OCLAE) and Africa (All-African Student Union; AASU), it organized many events and initiatives in collaboration with them or the national unions. The hierarchies were not always strictly set – in many cases, the IUS could have only served as a junior partner. The IUS network served as a channel for knowledge transfers – the Secretariat gathered a lot of information from the member unions or field workers, aggregated them, and distributed them in the network via its publications and resolutions. The knowledge was thus not produced only in the centre in Prague but within the entire network.

⁶⁷ Laqua, *Activism across Borders since 1870*, 7.

⁶⁸ For further theoretical discussion on transnationalism, see, for example, Clavin, ‘Defining Transnationalism’.

⁶⁹ Victor G. Devinatz, ‘A Cold War Thaw in the International Working Class Movement? The World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 1967–1977’, *Science & Society* 77, no. 3 (2013): 342–71.

Prague lay in the centre of this network as it hosted the permanent Secretariat; and because of that, several congresses, executive committee meetings and other events also took place there. Even though this book is trying to show the heterogeneity of the IUS network, the role of Prague as a center of socialist internationalism is still not insignificant. There were other international organizations on which Bartošek built his image of ‘Communist Geneva’, aside from the IUS: in 1946, the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) was founded in Prague. At the height of the Cold War, several organizations were expelled from the West and replaced by new ones: the International Radio and Television Organization relocated to Prague from Brussels in 1950. The World Federation of Trade Unions, established in 1945 in Paris, was moved in 1951 – first to Vienna and in 1956 to Prague. In 1951, Prague became home to the World Peace Council, before it relocated to Vienna in 1954 and finally to Helsinki in 1968. In 1958, the Christian Peace Conference was founded in Prague, attempting to conflate Christian ecumenism with Marxist socialism. And finally in the same year, the Czechoslovak capital became home to the *Problems of Peace and Socialism* (in the English-speaking world often known as the *World Marxist Review*), a theoretical journal uniting communist and worker parties from all over the globe to replace the Cominform dissolved two years earlier.⁷⁰

Prague as a material space that connected these INGOs works as an important hub; the officials of the above-mentioned INGOs could meet, discuss and make friendships. This was also important in relation to the local population – how they were entangled with the international organizations. Did the delegates live in a bubble inside of Prague? Did they make friends among Czechoslovaks? Did they have romantic relationships, did they get married there? All these questions are important not only for the history of the IUS and other INGOs but also for Czechoslovak history. The global history of the Czechoslovak capital has not yet been well explored. One of the first attempts at setting the history of Prague into the global context was made by Marta Edith Holečková, who published a book on the Global South students at the University of 17th November.⁷¹ Recently, the topic has also been picked up by Chad Bryant and his stories of alienation in the picturesque city.⁷²

The history of Prague as a node in the transnational socialist network, as a hub of anti-colonialism, is a part of this book. On the example of the IUS, I attempt to show that the Czechoslovak capital played an important role in the socialist world – and

⁷⁰ Some of these organizations have already received scholarly attention: Immanuel Harisch and Eric Burton, ‘The Missing Link? Western Communists as Mediators between the East German FDGB, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and African Trade Unions in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s’, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 103, no. 1 (2023): 1–20; Kaarle Nordenstreng, *The Rise and Fall of the International Organization of Journalists Based in Prague 1946–2016* (Praha: Karolinum, 2020); Günter Wernicke, ‘The Communist-Led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements: The Fetters of Bipolarity and Some Attempts to Break Them in the Fifties and Early Sixties’, *Peace and Change* 23, no. 3 (1998): 265–311; Ladislav Beneš, ‘“Remarkable Ways”. Secondary Dimensions of International Organisations in the Cold War, the Case of the Christian Peace Conference’, *Communio Viatorum* 64, no. 2 (2022): 150–73.

⁷¹ Marta E. Holečková, ‘University of 17 November in Prague. Students from Third World Countries in Czechoslovakia, 1961–1974’, *Cahiers du Monde russe* 63, nos. 3–4 (2022): 631–52.

⁷² Chad Bryant, *Prague: Belonging and the Modern City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021).

not only for hosting socialist INGOs. The role was partly inherited – building on the interwar period and on the first post-war years – and partly constructed, as many organizations found refuge there even after the Cold War started. That is not to say that Prague challenged the position of Moscow as the capital of the communist world. Nevertheless, it presented an alternative; if not real, then at least symbolic.

The transnational socialist network, of which the IUS was a part, stretched to the rest of the socialist world and beyond. The closest allies were the other ‘democratic international organizations’: World Federation of Democratic Youth, the IUS’s main partner, was originally seated in Paris and then found home in Budapest. The Women’s International Democratic Federation, also expelled from Paris, was operating in East Berlin. Some of these INGOs were also seated in the West or the South, such as the World Federation of Scientific Workers in London, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers in Brussels, and even the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization in Cairo.⁷³ Together, the whole cluster of ‘democratic INGOs’ amounted to more than twenty. It varied over time, however, as the concept was not defined and depended on who participated in the joint discussions, coordinated by the World Peace Council. Besides the socialist INGOs, the IUS also found other partnerships – with student – or education-oriented INGOs in the West, regional organizations, governments, universities, public intellectuals, writers, students and workers. It interacted with the intergovernmental organization, in particular UNESCO. Together with the WFDY, it co-organized the World Festivals of Youth and Students, one of the Cold War mega-events. Not all partners in the networks were socialists; it is one of the objectives of the book to find out how the IUS could have contributed to the debates and agendas on students and education at the global level.

While the book draws from the field of global history and aims to reinterpret the International Union of Students through its lenses, the fact also remains that for a better part, its history is rather European-centred. To a large extent, the IUS was an organization embedded in Europe, its history and traditions of student activism. It was founded by Europeans, it was located in Europe and Europeans (mostly from the East) played crucial parts in its direction. This book is also based mostly on European archives. But still, it is a story of the globalization of its ideas, practices and networks. Next to globalization, however, we can also observe the process of regionalization – including Europeanization. During détente, the overcoming of the Cold War boundaries meant deepening of the pan-European cooperation, to some extent at the expense of non-European topics. In a way, the book can be read as a journey from Europe to the world and back.

⁷³ Yulia Gradska, *The Women’s International Democratic Federation, the Global South, and the Cold War. Defending the Rights of Women of the ‘Whole World’* (London: Routledge, 2021); Doubravka Olšáková and Gordon Barrett, ‘World Federation of Scientific Workers’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Non-State Actors in East-West Relations*, ed. P. Marton, G. Thomasen, C. Békés and A. Rác (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 1–14. Geoffrey Roberts, ‘Science, Peace and Internationalism: Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the World Federation of Scientific Workers and the Origins of the Pugwash’, in *Science, (Anti-)Communism and Diplomacy. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in the Early Cold War*, ed. A. Kraft and C. Sachse (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 43–79.

Prehistory

The history of students is bound to the history of universities. In Europe, this history of universities goes as far back as the eleventh century. The first institution of this kind was established in Bologna in 1088, according to the traditional (yet contested) chronology. Other parts of the world, such as China or the Arab states, had higher education schools of even older dates, even though they were not called universities. In the centuries to follow, the institution of the university spread continuously throughout the Apennine and Iberian Peninsula, France, the British Isles, German lands, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

The idea and organizational form of a medieval European university were to some extent inspired by the higher education institutions of the Islamic world, the tradition of which went back to the eighth century and the schools associated with mosques, as some authors argue.¹ Western European knowledge production, until then peripheral in the global context, started drawing from the Greek and Arabic worlds in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; with the development of medieval cities, so did the hubs of learning – the universities – thrive.² Despite cultural transfers and influences, however, the medieval university can be considered a European institution. As Walter Rüegg argues, it was a ‘community of teachers and taught, accorded certain rights, such as administrative autonomy and the determination and realization of curricula (courses of study) and of the objectives of research as well as the award of publicly recognized degrees, it is a creation of medieval Europe, which was the Europe of papal Christianity’.³ At the same time, the university was not a European export product, and it was not until the Enlightenment that the new university model spread worldwide.

The medieval Church guaranteed the universality of university education – the same curricula and degrees, the education in the same language made teachers and students a transnational social group, if one may use the term ‘transnational’ for the period before the invention of modern nations. This universality led to the ‘academic pilgrimage’, meaning that one could ‘begin his course at one university, usually the nearest, and continue it at another, or at several others’.⁴ This high mobility level

¹ Walter Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume I: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3–34.

² Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1957).

³ Walter Rüegg, ‘Foreword’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume I Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xix.

⁴ Hilde de Ridder Symoens, ‘Mobility’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume I*, ed. Hilde de Ridder Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 280–304.

among students and staff (which also made the circulation of knowledge possible) was not matched in modern European history, perhaps until the end of the Cold War. A university was essentially open to anyone who was baptized with no other requirements; the university itself was a rather fluid community gathered mostly around the personalities of teachers.⁵ In early modern times, the relative unity of the world of learning in Europe was broken by the cracks in the unity of the Church – the Reformation. Other changes also occurred – the establishment of naval routes, the beginnings of colonization and the pushing of the boundaries of the European world.⁶ All these led to a growing diversity of educational institutions.

This chapter presents a short history of student internationalism before the foundation of the IUS in 1946. It goes from a general overview spanning centuries and decades to a more detailed story during and immediately after the Second World War. It is not intended to be exhaustive; I consciously stress the ideological, political and organizational strains that led to the creation of the IUS.

Student internationalism before the Second World War

A significant change came with the Enlightenment. The ‘disenchantment’ and rationalization led to a new approach to knowledge and its learning. This approach led to a general tendency to categorize the world, the foundation of research societies, and a new form of science.⁷ Under the influence of the changing understanding of what knowledge was during the Enlightenment, as well as the evolving understanding of what a nation-state was following the Napoleonic wars, a new model of a university developed.

In France, the Napoleonic regime introduced a ‘French model’ in which the primary role of universities was to train the state bureaucracy.⁸ In 1810, a new university opened for the public on the initiative of German scientist Wilhelm von Humboldt and on liberal proposals by Friedrich Schleiermacher – a secular university that would focus on research as well as education. A Humboldtian university, as this model was henceforth called, gradually spread to France, the United Kingdom, the United States and other parts of the world core. Humboldt’s vision was one of an autonomous university that could perform research independent of the political desires of monarchs and governments. At the same time, however, with the growing role of nation-states, the universities became bound to their infrastructure. The states funded and supervised universities, making tertiary education a part of their educational systems. This contradiction significantly undermined the idea of university autonomy.⁹

⁵ Rainer Christoph Schwinges, ‘Admission’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume I*, ed. Hilde de Ridder Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 171–94.

⁶ Walter Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume II: Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. Hilde de Ridder Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3–42.

⁷ Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge Volume II: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

⁸ Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of University in Europe: Volume III*, ed. Walter Rüegg.

⁹ Debaditya Bhattacharya, ‘The University in History: From “Idea” to Impossibility’, in *The Idea of the University: Histories and Contexts*, ed. Debaditya Bhattacharya (London: Routledge, 2019), 1–39.

The institution of a Humboldtian university continued to spread even into the twentieth century.¹⁰ With the adoption of the European model of a nation-state by the rest of the world after the dissolution of empires, the idea of a university as a part of the state infrastructure became universal as well. In the first half of the twentieth century, educational systems in Japan, China, Egypt and Latin America were gradually Westernized.¹¹ In the twenty-first century, most tertiary education institutions worldwide are constructed after this European model. The modern university is an originally European institution and inherently colonial. For a long time, it served to consolidate the world hierarchies through disseminating epistemic colonialism – a fact that is becoming an object of criticism after the postcolonial turn.¹²

The spring of nations in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century meant a revolution in the identity and imagination. It redefined many aspects of human existence, including international relations and student life. Students were a social group significantly affected by rising nationalisms; they were often (although not always) a progressive force, a new intelligentsia that spearheaded the struggle for national unification or liberation from multinational empires. With students' new social and political role in European societies came new forms of organization. In Germany, the struggle against Napoléon ignited the national cause, and students started organizing themselves in student associations called *Burschenschaften*. In 1818, the General German Burschenschaft (*Allgemeine Deutsche Burschenschaft*) was created to unite all German students. It was far from universal – there were only male students, and it was conditioned by ethnic-based nationality, meaning that, for example, German students of Jewish origin were excluded.¹³ Students in other parts of Europe also played essential roles in national movements and emancipatory efforts, as in Italy, Poland, Hungary, the Czech lands and France. In 1848, it was students who stood on the barricades and fought on the forefront, demanding constitutions and liberalization.¹⁴

The unionization of students occurred at first at a regional level, or the level of a university. On the national level, the first student associations formed with political or religious agendas – such as young socialists or young Catholics. At the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of 'students as such' was born – meaning that student organizations would not take part in political activism but rather would deal only with

¹⁰ Edward Shils and John Roberts, 'The Diffusion of European Models outside Europe', in *History of University in Europe: Volume III*, ed. Walter Rüegg, 163–230.

¹¹ Christophe Charle and Jacques Verger, *Histoire des universités: XIIIe – XXIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 134–7.

¹² Claude Alvares and Shad Saleem Faruqi, *Decolonising the University: The Emerging Quest for Non-Eurocentric Paradigms* (Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2012); Syed Farid Alatas, 'Knowledge Hegemonies and Autonomous knowledge', *Third World Quarterly* (2022): 1–18.

¹³ Priscilla Robertson, 'Students on the Barricades: Germany and Austria, 1848', *Political Science Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (1969): 367–79.

¹⁴ For student organizations in Germany and France and their role in the 1848 events, see Antonin Dubois, 'Organiser les étudiants: Mobilisations collectives et formation d'un groupe social (Allemagne et France, 1880–1914)' (PhD Diss., École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, 2019), 61–109; see also Lieve Gevers and Louis Vos, 'Student Movements', in *A History of University in Europe: Volume III*, ed. Walter Rüegg, 269–361.

student problems, such as the accessibility of education, student housing or university curricula. Gradually, the idea was promoted that students should be unionized at the national level, leading to the inception of the first national unions of students. In 1907, the oldest union was established in France – the *Union nationale des étudiants français* (National Union of French Students, UNEF). Not long after that, the German, British, and US students followed suit – most European national unions of students were founded in the aftermath of the First World War.¹⁵

Internationalization of studentship also took place since the 1850s – it went hand in hand with nationalization. As Glenda Sluga argued, internationalism was not in opposition to nationalism; on the contrary, it was modern nationalism that made modern internationalism possible.¹⁶ The 1890s and 1900s were when international organizations started to flourish, leading to the establishment of a structure to capture the web of internationalism – the Union of International Associations, formed in 1910.¹⁷ The students also reflected this trend. As soon as students started to organize nationally, they could also establish international relations; national studentships became units that could interact internationally.

Just as was the case on the national level, the first integration of world studentship was effectuated not through a universal union but rather through political, religious or interest groups. In 1896, the American John Mott founded the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), uniting protestant students from Europe and North America, organizing international conferences, and promoting missionary work. The World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), even though not a student organization per se, was of even older date, with history going back as far as the mid-1800s. It was also an international union bringing together national branches and promoting missionary activities in the colonial world.¹⁸ After the First World War, students of other confessions unionized internationally, with the foundation of the Catholic Pax Romana in 1921 and the World Union of Jewish Students in 1924. The oldest union with a political background was the Socialist Youth International, founded in 1907 – an organization that would eventually become the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) and that works to this day. In the years before the Great War, the international agenda included advocacy against militarism and war, representing 170,000 people in fifteen member unions.¹⁹

A specific form of an early international was founded in 1898 in Turin, called the International Federation of Students (*Fédération internationale des étudiants*), or simply *Corda Fratres* (Heart Brothers). This organization was based on festive grounds, uniting carnival societies from individual universities, even though it also promoted

¹⁵ Robi Morder, 'Internationalismes et internationales étudiantes', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement. Migrations, cosmopolitisme et internationales étudiantes*, ed. Robi Morder and Caroline Rolland-Diamond (Paris: Syllepse, 2002), 17–46.

¹⁶ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 1–9.

¹⁷ W. Boyd Rayward, 'Creating the UIA', in *International Organizations and Global Civil Society: Histories of the Union of International Associations*, 17–35.

¹⁸ Altbach, *The Student Internationals*, 10–11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

general student interests, student mobility, culture and sport. Before the First World War, it was the only international student organization without a political, religious or humanitarian purpose. Most represented universities were from Europe, with the gravity centre in Italy and France, but North and South American delegations were also coming to Corda Fratres' events. The organization's heyday ended with the Great War; it struggled during fascism and dissolved after the Second World War.²⁰

The imperial globalization of the late 1800s did not mean only interconnecting markets, the spread of technology such as the telegraph and the trans-imperial transfer of patterns, but also an increase in human mobility. Cross-border travel became easier. Millions of people changed their homelands in the decades before the First World War.²¹ In the case of European students, mobility started to soar around 1860. Universities gradually opened their gates to foreign students. One of the popular destinations was Switzerland, a confederation of mainly liberal republics – the University of Zurich even welcomed female students in the mid-nineteenth century. Germany had a special position at the time, and German was the number one language of science. As per Hilary Perraton, 'the Humboldtian University made Germany a magnet, drawing students from North America as well as Europe'.²² The growth in mobility did not affect only the global core; it also induced transfers of Indian students to Britain or Chinese students to the United States.²³ But the *belle époque* was not meant to last, and with the First World War, the twentieth century began.

The horrible experience of the Great War in Europe gave rise to new forms of international practice – ones that would eliminate the future possible repetition of the bloodshed. One of the crucial components of the new international order was the rise of the importance of international organizations. It was not completely a new thing, as Jessica Reinisch and David Brydan remark: 'The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the enormous expansion of international professional networks, and witnessed the growth of many international and regional organizations, ranging from voluntary or philanthropic initiatives and NGOs, to state institutions'.²⁴ Some political international organizations, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, predated the Great War.²⁵ However, the First World War was a milestone in organizing the international order; it meant a leap in systematic efforts to build a global community and platforms that

²⁰ Aldo A. Mola, 'Alla ricerca del "diritto delle genti": federazione europea, nazioni, regioni. La federazione internazionale degli studenti "Corda Fratres" per l'amicizia italo-francese (1898–1914)', *Italies* 6 (2002): 259–76.

²¹ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 117–66.

²² Hilary Perraton, *International Students 1860–2010: Policy and Practice Round the World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 1–11.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15–43.

²⁴ David Brydan and Jessica Reinisch, 'Introduction: Internationalists in European History', in *Internationalists in European History: Rethinking the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Brydan and Jessica Reinisch (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 1–13.

²⁵ Martin Albers, 'Between the Crisis of Democracy and World Parliament: The Development of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the 1920s', *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 2 (2012): 189–209.

would administer it. At the same time, cooperation on a non-governmental level assured the rise of transnational unionism and activism.²⁶

The interwar period saw the construction of the first global student solidarity networks, as Isabella Löhr argued.²⁷ The student movement was heterogeneous and politically diverse; however, two considerable currents of student internationalism can be identified from which the International Union of Students drew after the Second World War: the liberal and the socialist internationalism. The liberal studentship was united in particular by the International Confederation of Students, and the progressive socialist tradition was represented mainly by the youth section of the Comintern and IUSY.

The latter stemmed from a long history of socialist internationalism rooted in the nineteenth century. The international socialist action, however, was crippled after the beginning of the First World War, when most socialist parties endorsed their governments in the conduct of military operations. Only minority factions remained radically opposed to war and promoting socialist internationalism, as those gathered at the Zimmerwald conference in Switzerland in 1915. After the war, the split continued and was reinforced by the establishment of the Third International – the Comintern – separating social democrats and communists. The former, as per historian Patrizia Dogliani, ‘remained tied to the West and to the classes that promoted it at the end of the nineteenth century (...) and it participated directly in the construction of national and international democratic political systems such as the League Nations’ while the latter ‘was aimed instead at a working class that was less integrated into the world of work and the democratic societies of the time and, as such, began to find support also in the peoples oppressed by Western colonialism and imperialism, thus developing a “non-Western internationalism”’.²⁸

Preceding the Zimmerwald conference, a youth socialist gathering took place in Bern in April 1915, radically opposing the war and denouncing the socialist participation in it.²⁹ The event was organized by a young German socialist named Willi Münzenberg – a person who became a crucial protagonist of interwar socialist internationalism. In 1919, the Communist International was founded, and with it came also the Young Communist International (*Kommunisticheskiy internatsional molodezhi*, KIM) – under the direction of Münzenberg. The KIM even retained some autonomy from the Comintern, settling the KIM headquarters in Berlin. But it did not

²⁶ Davies, *NGOs. A New History of Transnational Civil Society*, 77–122; Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2013), 77–122; Iriye, *Global Community*, 20–36; Adam Tooze warned of overestimating the importance of the transnational structures risen from the First World War – see Adam Tooze, *The Deluge. The Great War and the Remaking of the World Order* (London: Penguin, 2014), 23.

²⁷ Isabella Löhr, *Globale Bildungsmobilität 1850–1930: Von der Bekehrung der Welt zur globalen studentischen Gemeinschaft* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2021), 348–59.

²⁸ Patrizia Dogliani, ‘The Fate of Socialist Internationalism’, in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38–60.

²⁹ Masao Nishikawa, *Socialists and International Actions for Peace 1914–1923* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2010), 38.

take long, and the KIM was bolshevized too. Until it was dissolved in 1943, it mirrored the policies of the Comintern.³⁰

Münzenberg himself, after he had left the KIM in 1921, went on to organize the League against Imperialism (LAI). Despite the Comintern's rigid policies of ideological purity, Münzenberg managed to keep the LAI open to non-communists. The founding congress united various people from cultural, academic and political fields, including Henri Barbusse, Albert Einstein, Lamine Senghor, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Hatta. Even though the League was also Eurocentric, established in Brussels and with its headquarters in Berlin and later in Paris, it was also the first attempt to unite anti-colonial and national liberation activists from both Europe and the colonial world.³¹ In the 1930s, Münzenberg and his team worked for the Comintern to counter the spread of fascism; they created transnational networks of communists and fellow travellers.³² Following the German turn to fascism in 1933, alliances with non-communists gradually became the dominant policy. In 1935, at the seventh Congress of the Comintern, the policy of popular fronts was adopted, aligning socialist internationalism with the centre-left liberal anti-fascist activism.³³ Münzenberg's work was influential for the later founding of the IUS for pioneering the alliances with national liberation movements and with progressive forces on popular front blueprints.

Aside from the KIM, the Socialist Youth International also continued functioning – not presenting a radical alternative to the liberal order but rather a reformist force within it. The social democratic networks aligned with the communist ones in the late 1930s and – as argued by Sandrine Kott – became crucial for the later convergence of socialist and liberal internationalisms in the Cold War.³⁴ The communist and the socialist internationals, however, did not focus on uniting the world's studentship. Both organizations had a broader scope, making a platform for the worker youth, not just students. The students as a social group were not at the centre of attention, as they were mostly seen as a part of the bourgeois elite.

Liberal youth and student internationalism in the interwar period is usually associated with the International Student Confederation, known under its French acronym CIE (*Confédération internationale des étudiants*). Contemporaries and the CIE itself talked about the 'Students' League of Nations' – in the sense that it was a platform for student unions to meet but also because it promoted a specific, liberal form

³⁰ Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willy Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 97–9; Richard Cornell, *Revolutionary Vanguard: The Early Years of the Communist Youth International, 1914–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 291–314.

³¹ Fredrik Petersson, 'Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: The League against Imperialism and Berlin, 1927–1933', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16, no. 1 (2012): 49–71.

³² Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1–21. Also François Furet, *Le Passé d'une illusion: Essai sur l'idée communiste au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1995), 249–310.

³³ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London: Red Globe Press, 1996), 120–42.

³⁴ Sandrine Kott, *A World More Equal: An Internationalist Perspective on the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024), 157.

of internationalism, cooperating with the 'real' League.³⁵ And just like the League of Nations, it was also criticized from both left and right that it was serving primarily the victors of the First World War – marginalizing the defeated in Europe and cementing the colonial status quo outside. In that sense, one might say that the CIE was a product of the First World War as much as the IUS was of the Second.

The CIE was born in 1919 in Strasbourg as the Reunion of Allied Students (*Réunion des étudiants alliés*), with students from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Spain becoming founding members – it officially adopted the name of *Confédération internationale des étudiants* in 1924. The trend of unionizing after the First World War accelerated and many national students' unions were founded – and, as Daniel Laqua remarked, the CIE played a part in this, as some unions were established specifically for the possibility of connecting with the CIE.³⁶ The organization can be credited for various initiatives designed to improve student lives. In cooperation with the League of Nations, it started issuing the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) in 1926/7, which was meant to become a 'student passport'.³⁷ In 1937, the League of Nations recognized it as the representative body of the world's students. Sport was among the core activities of CIE, with the World University Games held under its auspices since 1923. Originally a French project, the Games had to bring together students as the future leaders of their nations, competing in the atmosphere of comradeship. In the 1930s, with the growth of authoritarianism in Europe, both CIE and university sports became a field of symbolic confrontation between nations.³⁸

The CIE contributed significantly to interwar student mobility. The contemporaries commented that the level of student mobility was higher than ever before since the days of medieval universities. However, internationalization during the interwar period was relatively centralized, creating cosmopolitan student communities, such as the one in Paris.³⁹ Students differed from country to country, but generally, there were few workers and few women. Mirroring the development of the economic situation, the number of students fell back in the 1930s. The exception was the Soviet Union, where the number of students rose almost five times between 1927 and 1940, 'responding to workforce and public demand, to the removal of barriers to women's education and to government policy'. Germany reconstructed the position of a popular destination for foreign students but the numbers dwindled after the Nazi rise to power.⁴⁰

³⁵ Daniel Laqua, 'Activism in the "Students' League of Nations": International Student Politics and the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants, 1919–1939', *The English Historical Review* 132, no. 556 (2017): 605–37.

³⁶ Ibid.; see also Daniel Laqua, 'Student Activists and International Cooperation in a Changing World, 1919–60', 161–81.

³⁷ Laqua, 'Activism in the "Students' League of Nations"', 605–37; Daniel Laqua, 'Student Activists and International Cooperation in a Changing World, 1919–60', 161–81.

³⁸ Lidia Lesnykh, 'Lo sport universitario internazionale in cerca di autonomia: gli attori privati all'opera per la diplomazia francese (1919–1939)', *Annali di Storia delle università italiane* 28, no. 1 (2024): 77–98.

³⁹ Matthieu Gillibert, 'Où est passé l'esprit de Genève? Usages et reformulations de l'idéal internationaliste à la Cité internationale universitaire de Paris (1921–1950)', in *Construire la paix par l'éducation: réseaux et mouvements internationaux au xxe siècle Genève au coeur d'une utopie*, ed. Rita Hofstetter, Joëlle Droux, Michel Christian (Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2020), 307–26.

⁴⁰ Perraton, *International Students*, 47–61.

The CIE, however, also had its limitations. Perhaps the most serious problem was the limited representativity (an issue that would also survive in the post-war world). There were no women in the leadership, and also, in general, the CIE showed little interest in the topic of female students. Furthermore, it was not very representative of the students of the world. Throughout its existence, the CIE remained primarily a European and North American organization, with no representation from students in the USSR, China, India, and most of Africa and Asia. Some unions from Latin America and British dominions were represented, although they did not assume any positions in the leadership.⁴¹

The lack of anti-colonial activism was determined by another feature of the CIE, which was later seen as a weakness but at the time was considered a forte. The organization was designed as strictly apolitical, adopting the approach that became known as 'students as such' – meaning that the organization should only be concerned with student matters and problems, such as access to education, student housing or aid to students in need, but it should not question the matters of colonialism, for instance. The problem, of course, was that the declared apolitical position was in fact political. Within the CIE, on the level of member organizations, the national unions of students served the interests of their nations and pursued official policies. The Czechoslovaks, for example, cooperated with the Romanians and the Yugoslavs on the 'Petite Entente of Students'.⁴²

The main defeated nation from the First World War – the Germans – was not represented. The *Deutsche Studentenschaft*, despite being rather representative, did not join even when Germany established itself as an equal partner in the international system in the mid-1920s. The problem with the German student union was that it claimed to represent all German-speaking students, that is, those living in Austria, Czechoslovakia or Poland. This went against the principle of the CIE – one country, one member organization. Despite that, the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* took part in the CIE congresses.⁴³ The Italian *Gruppi universitari fascisti* were a member of the CIE but limited their activity within the organization in the late 1930s due to political disagreement.⁴⁴

In a way, the dynamic between the CIE and the KIM could be reflected in the dynamic of their 'grown-up' organizations – the League of Nations and the Comintern / the League against Imperialism. The League of Nations employed the Wilsonian rhetoric of self-determination, but in a way, it also solidified the colonial world-system, strengthening the positions of France and Britain through the League mandates.⁴⁵ Just like that, the CIE operated within this system. The Comintern and the LAI represented

⁴¹ Laqua, 'Activism in the "Students' League of Nations"', 605–37.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jürgen Schwarz, *Studenten in der Weimarer Republik. Die deutsche Studentenschaft in der Zeit von 1918 bis 1923 und ihre Stellung zur Politik* (Berlin: Duncker&Humblot, 1971); Lieve Gevers and Louis Vos, 'Student Movements', *History of University in Europe, Volume III*, 269–361.

⁴⁴ Erminio Fonzo, *Il nuovo goliardo: I Littoriali dello sport e l'atletismo universitario nella costruzione del totalitarismo fascista* (Roma: Aracne, 2020), 17.

⁴⁵ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–13.

an alternative to such a system, including the support of national liberation – not only in the Wilsonian sense but also in the Leninist one, just as the KIM did. And just as the Comintern, the KIM was also subjected to the political interests of a specific country, the Soviet Union.

With the 1930s rise of fascism in Europe and the advent of Popular Fronts, everything, including student internationalism, became more political. The International Socialist Students Federation grew in the 1930s with the danger of rising fascism.⁴⁶ In 1934, the World Student Association (*Rassemblement mondial des étudiants*) was founded, in which the communists were very active.⁴⁷ Aside from the liberal and socialist student/youth internationalism, there were also other currents, not so influential in terms of setting up the ground for the post-war IUS, but also contributing to the transnational interconnectedness. There were Young Christian Democrats, the WSCF also kept functioning, there was the European Student Relief, later renamed to International Student Service. The International Federation of University Women was established in 1919 to promote women's access to education and social mobility.⁴⁸ And as Madeleine Herren showed, the interwar period gave birth to another kind of internationalism – the fascist one.⁴⁹

The founding of the World Student Association signified a turn in the Popular Front era – the unification of the two currents of youth and students internationalism under one aegis. It was the heyday of internationalism. The cooperation allowed a multitude of joint organizations to flourish – which Kotek called front organizations already back then.⁵⁰ The youth and students became particularly embodied in the activism related to the Japanese aggression in China and the Spanish Civil War, in which even the liberal and 'apolitical' bodies aligned with the intervention-promoting communists.⁵¹ Another joint initiative was the World Youth Congress, organized for the first time in Geneva in 1936. The event, boycotted by the German, Italian and Japanese youth, as well as by Catholic or Socialist unions, marked a significant cooperation of liberal and communist youth. The second Congress took place two years later in Poughkeepsie, New York.⁵²

The policy of the Popular Fronts, however, was not viewed favourably by all. While an alliance with social democracy, liberalism and other forces that identified as anti-fascist had the potential to some extent, it compromised the anti-colonial efforts by allying with the colonial powers. The Comintern began as a revolutionary endeavour, challenging the international system and supporting the revolution not only in Europe

⁴⁶ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 12.

⁴⁷ Laqua, 'Student Activists and International Cooperation', 168–9.

⁴⁸ Marie-Elise Hunyadi, 'Promouvoir l'accès des femmes aux études et aux titres universitaires: un défi transnational? L'engagement de la Fédération internationale des femmes diplômées des Universités (1919–1970)' (PhD Thesis, Université de Genève and Université de Paris, 2019).

⁴⁹ Madeleine Herren, 'Fascist Internationalism', in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 191–212.

⁵⁰ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 20.

⁵¹ Laqua, 'Student Activists and International Cooperation', 169.

⁵² Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 17–18.

but also in the colonies; a symbol of this effort was the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in 1920.⁵³

In August 1939, the International University Games were held in Vienna. The big sports event had been allocated in Vienna before the Anschluss happened; when Austria was annexed by the Third Reich, the CIE moved its Games to Monte Carlo. Nevertheless, the event in Vienna still took place, hosting athletes mainly from countries aligned with the Axis or with otherwise right-wing authoritarian governments, such as Spain, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Japan, Italy, South Africa, Estonia or Finland.⁵⁴

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a shock. Even though the official party line performed a U-turn, many communist students still continued in their underground work against the Nazis in occupied Europe. The CIE effectively ceased functioning in 1940, when the Germans seized its secretariat in Brussels, even though it was not formally dissolved. The KIM was ultimately dissolved along with the Comintern in 1943.

When setting up the scene for the coming of the IUS, we have to discuss the stage as well. Prague, the capital of the new country of Czechoslovakia, was already building the position on which the International Union of Students in the post-war world was established. Czechoslovakia became an active part of the interwar international system, watching out for German and Hungarian revisionism and aligning its foreign policy with France. The main architect of Czechoslovak foreign policy, Foreign Minister and later President Edvard Beneš, was a staunch advocate of the alliance with France and took the concept of collective security seriously. He was one of the authors of the Geneva Protocol and, at times, spent more time at the League of Nations headquarters than at his ministry in Prague.⁵⁵

Because of these policies, Czechoslovakia also hosted international events. Sandrine Kott considered Czechoslovakia and Poland outposts of the International Labour Organization in Central-Eastern Europe in the interwar period – Czechoslovak representatives were active and Prague hosted its events.⁵⁶ When it came to international youth and students, Czechoslovakia was also there. YMCA and WCSF leaders 'devoted particular attention to Czechoslovakia because they could rely on a national-level political elite that was very open to the West'.⁵⁷ Prague also hosted the first

⁵³ John Riddel, *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993); Brigitte Studer, *Travellers of the Revolution: A Global History of the Communist International* (London/New York: Verso, 2023), 74–101.

⁵⁴ Harald Oelrich, *Sportgeltung – Weltgeltung: Sport im Spannungsfeld der deutsch-italienischen Außenpolitik von 1918 bis 1945* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), 389–93.

⁵⁵ Antonín Klimek, *Boj o Hrad* (1.). *Hrad a Pětka* (Praha: Panevropa, 1996), 335–50.

⁵⁶ Sandrine Kott, 'International Social Policy and Labour Legislation', in *International Law and History: Eastern Europe in a Global Perspective: A Handbook*, ed. Isabell Löhr, Dietmar Müller, Ned Richardson-Little and Stefan Troebst (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

⁵⁷ Christian, Kott and Matějka, 'International Organizations in the Cold War. The Circulation of Experts beyond the East–West Divide', 35–60.

congress of the CIE in the spring of 1921, welcoming delegates from all over the world, under the auspices of the new republic's president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.⁵⁸ In 1930, the country hosted a Council meeting of the International Federation of University Women. Despite this Czechoslovak alignment with France, one of the world's biggest imperialist powers, the new country also gained not insignificant credit in the colonies, for example with Jawaharlal Nehru.⁵⁹

In the interwar times, Prague was also strengthening its position as a centre for refugees. The first waves arrived already after the First World War and in the 1920s – all kinds of Russian emigrants, consisting of waves of whites, Mensheviks and Trotskyites. The emigré circle in Prague was culturally and academically very rich.⁶⁰ After Adolf Hitler became the chancellor in 1933 and Germany turned hostile to various ethnic and political groups, many tried to flee and seek refuge in Czechoslovakia. Even though Czechoslovakia was a true sanctuary only for prominent emigrants such as the writer Thomas Mann and most of the refugees had a rather uncertain position, the country still hosted, for a longer or shorter time, over twenty thousand refugees from Germany until 1938, many of whom continued in their political activities in Czechoslovakia.⁶¹

Even German communists found refuge in Prague, such as the Jewish functionary Jakov Reich, who worked for the Comintern in Berlin.⁶² In May 1938, a group of the German *Freie Deutsche Jugend* was established in Prague under the presidency of Adolf Buchholz.⁶³ This was possible because of the strong position of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ), which was one of the strongest in the world.⁶⁴ Even during the period of Ribentrop-Molotov, some parts of the illegal KSČ refused to stay passive and worked against the occupation forces, despite instructions from the Soviets.⁶⁵

The war and the resistance

In March 1939, German troops marched into Prague. The post-Munich Second Czechoslovak Republic was not even six months old when it was dismantled. It left the first independent Slovak state and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia within the German Reich as successor entities.

⁵⁸ Jaromír Kopecký, *Paměti diplomata* (Praha: Torst, 2004), 197–200.

⁵⁹ Miloslav Krása, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and Czechoslovakia at the Time of the 1938 European Crisis', *India Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1989): 333–66.

⁶⁰ Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savický, *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian diaspora, 1918–1938* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Kateřina Čapkova and Michal Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště. Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem 1933–1938* (Praha: Paseka, 2008), 335–42.

⁶² Studer, *Travellers of the World Revolution*, 461–2.

⁶³ Stefan Heinz, 'Adolf Buchholz, (1913–1978)', in *Emigrierte Metallgewerkschafter im Kampf gegen das NS-Regime*, ed. Siegfried Mielke and Stefan Heinz (Berlin: Metropol, 2014), 471–7.

⁶⁴ Jacques Rupnik, *Histoire du Parti communiste tchécoslovaque: Des origines à la prise du pouvoir* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1981).

⁶⁵ Detlef Brandes, *Češi pod německým protektorem: Okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939 – 1945* (Praha: Prostor, 2019), 129–35.

One of the pillars of the resistance against the newly installed regime was the studentship. On 28 October 1939, that is, after the war had begun, a massive demonstration against the Nazi occupation was organized in Prague and other Czech cities. It was the day that the First Czechoslovak Republic was proclaimed twenty-one years earlier. The police suppressed the crowd; two people were killed and hundreds of others wounded.⁶⁶ One of the dead was medical student Jan Opletal, who died of his injuries a couple of days later. His funeral on 15 November became another massive manifestation against the regime and the war. Consequently, the Nazis raided student dormitories on the night of 16 to 17 November. Nine representatives of student unions were executed right away and twelve hundred more were arrested and sent to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. Charles University, operating continuously since 1348, was shut down for six long years along with all other Czech universities and higher education institutions.⁶⁷

Thus began the foundation myth of the International Union of Students – a myth of martyrdom of Czechoslovak students heroically defying the Nazi tyrannical dictatorship, a myth that became an international symbol of student resistance. In light of later Nazi war crimes, these repressions – executing nine people and sending twelve hundred to a concentration camp – might seem marginal, but at the very beginning of the Second World War, the resistance of Czech students and their subsequent persecution caused a worldwide wave of solidarity. Interestingly, not all of the nine executed students were really students – some were already members of the faculty and only held functions in student unions. And perhaps even more interestingly, some of the nine were members of right-wing nationalist or even straight-out collaborator organizations.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, they became martyrs.

With one country after another falling under the German offensive, the exiles of occupied Europe concentrated in London. The Czechoslovak exile government also established its seat in the British capital, led by President Edvard Beneš, with the Catholic priest Jan Šrámek as the prime minister and Jan Masaryk, son of the late Czechoslovak president Tomáš Masaryk, as the minister for foreign affairs. Along with the government, various other segments of society found home there, including the students. The Central Union of Czechoslovak Students (*Ústřední svaz československého studentstva*, ÚSČS) was founded in 1940 in England.⁶⁹ Communist and socialist students played an important part in the renewed union, including such heavyweights of the later Czechoslovak politics as Ota Šling and Vladimír Clementis (both later executed in show trials in late Stalinist party purges) or Jiří Hájek and Eduard Goldstücker (both members of Dubček's reformist government in the late 1960s). Goldstücker was even

⁶⁶ Ibid., 155–65.

⁶⁷ Zdeněk Pouta, 'Pražští studenti v letech 1938–1945', in *Pražský student: univerzitní studenti v dějinách Prahy*, ed. Jana Ratajová (Praha: Scriptorium, 2008), 120–32; Tomáš Pasák, *17. listopad 1939 a Univerzita Karlova* (Praha: Karolinum, 1997).

⁶⁸ Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 60.

⁶⁹ Zápis o výborové schůzi ÚSČS, 25 November 1940, Ústav dějin Univerzity Karlovy a archiv Univerzity Karlovy (UDAUK), Všešudentský archiv, ÚSČS – Londýnské ústředí, ka 204.

elected the vice-president of the ÚSČS, with a non-communist and a former vice-president of the CIE, Václav Paleček, as the president.⁷⁰

In 1941, the ÚSČS, along with the Czechoslovak exile government in London, pursued the idea of honouring the tragic memory of the persecuted students by proclaiming the 17th of November the International Students' Day. According to Eduard Goldstücker, the idea to give the commemorations a universal character was originally his, although others remembered things differently.⁷¹ Jozef Leikert, another contemporary, remembered that French and Polish students were against the establishment of this tradition.⁷² But in the end, on 17 November 1941, two years after the brutal shutdown of Czech universities, International Students' Day was celebrated for the first time, in the anti-fascist atmosphere of wartime London, a true hub of student internationalism. Twenty-six student delegations jointly declared the Day, and commemorative meetings were held at universities in the Soviet Union, the United States, China and the British Empire. The German attack on the Soviet Union earlier that year brought the USSR into the Allied camp, which could thus return to the broad anti-fascist alliances from the interwar period, which was very positively reflected, especially among the youth and students.⁷³

The British National Union of Students played a crucial part in the creation or resurgence of student internationalism during the War. In 1941, it helped establish the International Council of Students – the ICS. This body was meant to facilitate contact between students in various countries that were fighting against fascism and discuss student problems of the future post-war world. Under the circumstances of the raging war, it was rather successful in these efforts, reaching out to students even in the USSR or in China.⁷⁴

The worldwide spread of the symbolism of International Students' Day became one of the points on the agenda for the ICS. The 17th of November represented student activism face-to-face with the Nazi oppressive apparatus, the active and stimulating role of students in the resistance. The International Students' Day in 1942 became a much larger celebration than in the first year. Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the students and commemorated the events in Prague. 'Messages of mass youth manifestations arrived from the Middle East, South Africa, the Arab University of Damascus, from Mexico, Costa Rica, Haiti, the Argentine, Equador, Chile and Venezuela, even from neutral Switzerland and Sweden, where Uppsala University arranged a public manifestation in the presence of Danish and Norwegian students,' said a report on the celebration of the 17th of November 1942 from the end of the war.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 51.

⁷¹ Eduard Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1913–1945* (Praha: G plus G, 2003), 134; Bohuslav Šulc, *Ústřední svaz československého studentstva v exilu za války 1940–45* (Praha: Rozmluvy, 1990), 134.

⁷² Jozef Leikert, *Černý pátek sedmnáctého listopadu* (Praha: Karolinum, 2000), 311–16.

⁷³ For Stalin's new policy, see, for example, Silvio Pons, *Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 111–23.

⁷⁴ British Students and the International Union of Students, Supplement of the *World Student News* 7, no. 2 (1953). See also Altbach, *The Student Internationals*, 21.

⁷⁵ November 17th – International Students' Day, International Institute of Social History (IISH), collection IUS, box World Student Congress 1945.

In parallel with the developing international student movement, another, a broader one – the youth movement – emerged. The two were closely interconnected, but the youth, lacking the natural organizational structures the students had in the universities, was always more dependent on state institutions. In 1941, the Anglo-Soviet Youth Alliance was established with Kutty Hookham, a renowned British communist youth leader, as its general secretary.⁷⁶ Hookham also became the general secretary of the International Youth Conference with the Czechoslovak student leader Václav Paleček as the president and with the support of a member of the War Cabinet, Stafford Cripps, and the US first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt.⁷⁷ The meeting of the Student Commission of the International Youth Conference in November 1942 issued a statement against fascism, with which the students endorsed the policy of an anti-fascist alliance, defending the role of the Soviets. 'Students have a long tradition of internationalism (...) The presence of the Soviet delegation in this country and at this conference is historic, and lays the basis for full cooperation from now on.'⁷⁸

The US students took another step in internationalization; in September 1942, a parallel initiative by the International Student Service organized the International Student Assembly in Washington. The gathering, addressed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, adopted the proposal to establish the 17th of November as International Students' Day.⁷⁹ The assembly continued functioning also in the next years and supported the construction of a new international structure after the war was won.⁸⁰

Speaking of student internationalism in the wartime period, one must not forget that the activities of these initiatives were limited to the unoccupied Allied countries and exile student movements mainly in Europe and the Americas. In occupied Europe, the infrastructure of tertiary education was often shut down or severely limited, as seen in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Poland or France. In Germany, Italy or Japan, youth and student groups also became pillars of the system, actively helping the regimes to claim power and hold on to it. Other groups, on the other hand, joined the resistance. In all belligerent countries, many students, predominantly young men, had to join the army and were taken to the battlefield, and many also volunteered.⁸¹

As the end of the war got closer and closer, the discussions on how the international student movement should be organized became more and more specific. These talks were still concentrated mostly in London and managed by the British National Union of Students. The other European strongman of the student movement of the interwar years, the French UNEF, was effectively paralysed by the War – its network was shattered. It largely remained passive during the occupation, even though many

⁷⁶ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 47.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 56–9.

⁷⁸ Resolution adopted by student commission, International Youth Conference, 14 November 1942, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁷⁹ Šulc, *Ústřední svaz československého studentsva v exilu za války 1940–45*, 59–60.

⁸⁰ Statement on the International Student Assembly Regarding Co-operation with the World Youth Congress in London and the World Student Congress in Prague, 18 September 1945, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 33/553.

⁸¹ For example, for the case of French students, see Cécile Hochard, 'Étudiants et lycéens dans la guerre et l'occupation', in *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants*, ed. Jean-Philippe Legois, Alain Monchablon and Robi Morder (Paris: Syllepse 2007), 59–69.

students joined the Resistance. In Vichy, there was an official 'Corporation' of students. Even though the future of UNEF was uncertain, ultimately the union was revived at an extraordinary congress in November 1944 in Paris, organized by a Resistance veteran, Pierre Rostini.⁸² The visions that the French had for the future of the international student movement did not entirely overlap with the British; the UNEF's president Emmanuel Villedieu wished to renew the interwar CIE, which effectively ceased to exist after the Nazis sacked its offices in Brussels in 1940.

However, the consensus tended towards establishing a new student organization when the war was won. In 1944, the International Council of Students was dissolved to make way for a new, more representative organization that was projected for the post-war time. In January 1945, the British called a conference that was attended by unions from thirteen countries. A committee was established, composed of representatives of the United Kingdom, China, the Soviet Union, the United States, France, Canada and Yugoslavia.⁸³ This body, known as the Committee of Seven, coordinated the international student efforts for the next ten months.

In March 1945, the British National Union of Students (BNUS) sketched out what the future international federation should look like. The document explicitly stated that the new organization should not be a revival of the interwar CIE and that it should aspire to be a universal body. '(the) organization must cover the widest possible range of membership – America (North and South), the Soviet Union, China, India, colonial countries etc.' The document further suggested that the organization's basis would be formed by student unions from the United States, China, the Soviet Union and the British Commonwealth. The BNUS proposed that the organization would be politically pluralistic, based on democratic values, and strictly opposed to fascism.⁸⁴ It seemed that there was a consensus on such an approach as the war drew to a close.

The need for a new union

The Allied victory over the German and Japanese empires not only meant peace; it also signified the advent of a new international order. It became apparent that the shape of this order would be primarily dictated by the Big Three – the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union – the powers that emerged victorious over the Axis, representing liberal, imperialist and socialist visions of the world.⁸⁵

However, it was also apparent that various non-state bodies would have a say in this system. It was not only the Cold War that rose from the ashes of the Second World War but also the age of international organizations. The United Nations, which emerged

⁸² Robi Morder, 'D'une génération à l'autre. Internationales et internationalismes en témoignages', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, ed. Robi Morder and Caroline Rolland-Diamond (Paris: Syllepse, 2012), 151–8.

⁸³ Altbach, *The Student Internationals*, 21.

⁸⁴ The National Union of Students: International Student Organization in the Postwar Period, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁸⁵ Lorenz Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

from the wartime Alliance and whose Charter was drafted at the San Francisco Conference in the spring of 1945, was meant to become a platform that would enable the states to solve all their international problems. Moreover, it would aspire to be an independent actor that would deal with international crises independently.⁸⁶ Unlike the late League of Nations, it was a truly universalist organization, comprising the whole world, with only a few exceptions. The UN network, which also included other affiliated bodies such as UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization or the UN Industrial Development Organization, thus became an indispensable part of the system of international relations. Although, as Mark Mazower argued, it would be a mistake to view the UN solely as a product of the Second World War; the resemblance with its predecessor, the League of Nations, was much more than superficial, and the roots went even deeper to the debates on the world governance in the British Empire. And, Mazower remarked, different actors had different ideas on the role and form of the UN should be, but the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union backed it together was the key.⁸⁷

Various other organizations were established at the end of the Second World War. The 1944 conference in Bretton Woods and the foundation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank significantly contributed to the establishment of the post-war liberal international economic system. The US dollar became the means by which the economic relations in the world were organized.⁸⁸ International cooperation and integration grew in all fields, from trade to science to various professional unions or civil society advocacy networks, despite the opening rifts of the Cold War and crises of decolonization.⁸⁹ It was the wartime Alliance that provided the backing for this system. The Soviet Union and the emerging people's democracies co-created this system, even though they did not explicitly become members of all the international bodies; their isolationist strategies became apparent, especially after the alliance with the West turned into animosity, and were not abandoned until after Stalin's death.

The construction of a new international student federation thus must be seen not only as the establishment of the organization itself, but also as part of the construction of the new world in which both intergovernmental and INGOs played an important role. The function of the international system was not only to 'govern the world' but also to see to it that another world war would not happen again; anti-fascism and the preservation of peace were of utmost importance. The students and youth, a social group naturally prone to political activism, took this task as seriously as anyone.

In this setting, the time had come for the materialization of the plan for the new federation. Whether it was because of the lack of coordination, national prestige, or personal ambitions, two student meetings with the purpose of founding an international student organization were called at the same time. The British National

⁸⁶ Muschik, *Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization 1945–1965*, 1–25.

⁸⁷ Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1–27.

⁸⁸ Oscar Sanchez Sibony, 'Capitalism's Fellow Traveler: The Soviet Union, Bretton Woods, and the Cold War, 1944–1958'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 2 (2014): 290–319.

⁸⁹ Kott, *A World More Equal*, 11–37.

Union of Students had a big credit for its wartime initiatives; in cooperation with the Committee of Seven, it sent out invitations for a student meeting in London. Czechoslovak students decided to build on the tradition of the 17th of November and called a convention in Prague. Both events were supposed to take place at the same time – in November 1945. Neither side wanted to cancel their event but the enthusiasm of the post-war months could overcome such a problem and a compromise was reached – the events would not take place simultaneously but one after another, a joint committee would supervise both events and the organizers appealed to the invitees to take part in both. The programme was also sketched out jointly, with each event having a different agenda: ‘The London meeting would concern itself with organisational and business problems connected with the proposed International Student Organisation. The Prague Congress would concern itself with an exchange of ideas and information, together with demonstrations and social events keeping with the first free International Students Day.’⁹⁰

The first student meeting happened in London on 10–11 November 1945 with the opening ceremony in the Royal Albert Hall. The event was coordinated with the youth conference which was held only a couple of days earlier and which gathered for the same reason as the students – to establish a universal organization. This organization was indeed founded during the youth conference, following up on the wartime World Youth Conference. The new organization was named the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). The relationship of the future student organization to the WFDY was still a matter of discussion – there were voices that the new student union should be a part of the WFDY, just as the students are a part of the youth. Others argued for a separate organization. The main problem, as many saw it already back then, was the apparent strong influence of communists in the WFDY.

Joël Kotek interpreted the founding of the WFDY not as an organic youth initiative but rather as an elaborate scheme conceived by the communists. According to him, the KIM was dissolved in 1943 only to restructure the youth activities within the World Youth Conference, which then transformed into the WFDY. According to him, all this process was skilfully and firmly handled by Kutty Hookham, Eduard Goldstücker, and other open or ‘submarine’ communists.⁹¹ Karen Paget, who otherwise offers a very different interpretation of the history the youth and student organizations, agreed with Kotek on this point; the evidence of the Soviet coordination of the process can be demonstrated by the fact that at the same time when the WFDY was established, that is in October–November 1945, other organizations later dubbed as ‘communist fronts’ were also founded – including the Women’s International Democratic Federation and the World Federation of Trade Unions.⁹² Even Tom Madden, the British student activist and later the first general secretary of the IUS who Kotek accused of being a submarine communist, said that Kutty Hookham was a ‘pawn of the British communist party’ and ironically remarked that the World Federation of Democratic Youth was ‘neither

⁹⁰ Two-Day London Meeting for Students attending the World Youth Conference, November 10th/11th 1945, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁹¹ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 62–85.

⁹² Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 24.

democratic nor young', referring to the practice of sending experienced politicians as youth delegates to such congresses.⁹³

It is said that Stalin opposed the creation of an independent student organization and preferred a universal youth organization of which the students would be a part. It corresponded with the system of organization in the Soviet Union, where the students were also a part of the Komsomol, the youth union.⁹⁴ In accordance with this preference, the communist delegates at the student congress in London in November 1945 pushed for a single organization that would comprise both youth and students.⁹⁵ The non-communists largely preferred a separate organization for students, partly exactly for that reason. The French wanted a separate student body if not only for the fact that they saw the WFDY too anti-colonial and pro-Soviet, but also for the distinct traditions of the student movement.⁹⁶ That did not mean, however, that all those who did not favour the merger with the WFDY were promoting an apolitical union, even though some people who clung to the 'students as such' concept were there too.⁹⁷ Nor were they anti-communists; the Soviets were seen as important partners. It was just that the political activity should be based on a broader anti-fascist consensus. The meetings in London and Prague were far from not interfering with politics. The goal, confirmed by the Congress plenum in Prague, was very much political: to 'strive for the removal of (...) all the remnants of fascist and other anti-democratic forces, (...) be it either remnants of the national-socialist regime in Germany, militarist regime in Japan, unpunished war criminals or anti-democratic governments in Spain, Portugal, Argentina'.⁹⁸ And the politics aside, there were also arguments that it is simply more practical to have a student union separated from the union of the youth.

So the London meeting, with 150 representatives from thirty-eight countries and taking place at Bedford College still half-destroyed by the German bombing, stuck to the original plan and continued in preparations for the student federation. Building on the work of the wartime Committee of Seven, the London Meeting outlined what the organization should look like. It would be designed to act as the representative student organization, to mediate cooperation between national unions, promote friendship between students, and promote the well-being of students and their educational standards. The organization was open to all national student unions, provided that 'they are democratic both in constitution and practice' and that 'they are open to all students in the country, regardless of race, religious opinions, and

⁹³ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview.

⁹⁴ Pia Koivunen, How to Create an International Organization in Soviet Style? The Founding of the WFDY and the IUS in 1945 and 1946, paper presentation at the workshop Challenging the Cold War Divisions. Histories of Students and their Transnational Dimensions, 25–26 September 2024, Prague.

⁹⁵ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 23.

⁹⁶ Didier Fischer, 'L'UNEF et l'Union internationale des étudiants (1945–1965)', *La contemporaine* 86, no. 2 (2007): 84–105.

⁹⁷ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 23.

⁹⁸ Voice of the Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box World Student Congress 1945.

political affiliations.' The name of the organization was decided to be the 'International Federation of Students'.⁹⁹

After the London Meeting concluded, most of the participants boarded trains and embarked on a four-and-a-half-day journey through war-torn Europe to Prague, just in time to celebrate 17th of November, the International Students Day. The gathering in Prague took place in an enthusiastic internationalist atmosphere, as the participants recalled. Even though many things, such as accommodation, were still provisional after the war destruction and the rationing system was in place, it did not discourage the students from having a good time and from the hopes of building the world anew. On 17 November, 200,000 people gathered at the Wenceslas Square. As Tom Madden of the British delegation observed:

The whole week of the Congress the feeling of holiday and rejoicing continued. The whole city was hung with banners, flags, and emblems; greetings in Latin and in the world languages, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. Every shop had special window decorations for the Congress, and everyone wore the Congress badge. There were concerts, operas, dances, and parties each night, and while delegates were busily trying to attend them all, the students from the secondary schools would be waiting in their hotels to talk to them and ask questions on their return.¹⁰⁰

It was the biggest student gathering to date.

Hosted by the renewed Czechoslovak Union of University Students (Svaz vysokoškolského studentstva, SVS), the congress took place under the patronage of the highest Czechoslovak authorities. The opening ceremony on 17 November in the Prague Lucerna Hall was addressed by the nation's delight, the minister of foreign affairs, Jan Masaryk, who emphasized the sacrifices that young people had to make in their fight against fascism.¹⁰¹ On 22 November, Masaryk, along with Prime Minister Zdeněk Fierlinger, hosted a reception for over a thousand people. Not only student delegates took part – the guests included government members, diplomats dispatched to Prague, writers and scientists.¹⁰² The Congress was also saluted by Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš in a special radio broadcast.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, aside from celebrations and commemorations of the war victims, the World Student Congress made specific practical steps towards the new organization, which was supposed to be constituted the next summer, in August 1946. The task of

⁹⁹ Two-Day London Meeting for Students attending the World Youth Conference, November 10th/11th 1945, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

¹⁰⁰ The World Student Congress in Prague, in the *British Medical Students' Journal*, No 1/1946. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 32/544.

¹⁰¹ Speech given by the minister Jan Masaryk at the opening of the World Student Congress on the 17 November 1945, IISH, col. IUS, box World Student Congress 1945.

¹⁰² The Bulletin of the Ministry of Information no. 88, 22 November 1945, IISH, col. IUS, box World Student Congress 1945.

¹⁰³ Poselství presidenta Československé republiky dr. Edvarda Beneše k studentskému sjezdu v Praze, in *Mladá fronta*, 18. November 1945, p. 1.

preparing the new organization was assigned to an elected International Preparatory Committee (IPC), appointed already in London and confirmed in Prague. In principle, the IPC was supposed to be composed in a way that different types of student organizations from different regions were represented: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, a representative of British Dominions (Australia), a Scandinavian country (Denmark) all had one delegate, France and the United Kingdom had two delegates, and China, India, the United States, Soviet Union and Latin America (as a whole) all had three delegates.¹⁰⁴

The IPC used the Prague Congress for its first session, presided over by the respected French leader Pierre Rostini with a Czechoslovak Josef Grohman as the secretary. The IPC was charged with the preparation of the constitution of the new organization, with all practical matters regarding its establishment, and with the preparation of a student congress in August 1946, which would sanction the work and which would become the constituting event of the new union. The IPC already worked with the idea that the new organization would be more tightly organized, more hierarchical and more directive. This corresponded with how the Soviet Union understood the youth movement, but the Westerners also understood that the decentralized way the CIE was structured – with the secretary in Brussels, archives in Prague, travel bureau in London, and the press and sports section in Paris – was untenable.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, finding collective solutions was a general trend in the post-war world, as the Great Depression seemed to have revealed the limitations of individualistic, market-based solutions.¹⁰⁶

There was a proposal that the constituting congress of the new organization would take place in Monaco or Belgrade, but ultimately Prague was chosen.¹⁰⁷ It was a natural choice; it already hosted the World Student Congress and the IPC. By that time, it was likely already decided that the new organization would also settle in the Czechoslovak capital. But before the decision was made, the matter of where the organization should be seated was also discussed and the choice was not self-evident; and perhaps more importantly, there has been a historiographical debate trying to uncover the reasoning behind the decision. The official IUS reasoning referred to the brutal Nazi shutdown of Czech universities and the tradition of the International Students' Day on 17 November, established during the War.

The whole history of the IUS is inseparably connected with our country. The collective decision to make Prague its seat was not accidental. The Nazi "protectorate" was among the occupied countries with the relatively highest level of concentration of Hitler's repressive machinery per capita and per square kilometer. All the more respectable is heroism connected with the 17th of

¹⁰⁴ Report on the International Preparatory Committee upon Its Work (November 1945–August 1946), NAČR, f. MSS, PA 32/546; Communiqué of the 2nd session of the Preparatory Committee for a future World Students Conference held in Prague from 27 January to 4 February 1946, IISH Amsterdam, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

¹⁰⁵ Magnelia, 'The International Union of Students', 56.

¹⁰⁶ Bo Stråth and Peter Wagner, *European Modernity: A Global Perspective* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 159–67.

¹⁰⁷ Zpráva o činnosti mezinárodního přípravného výboru za r. 1945, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/564.

November 1939. The streets of Prague witnessed a demonstration of students and workers that remained the most massive and militant outcry of the anti-fascist public in the first period of war in the whole of occupied Europe,

as the IUS president Josef Skála summarized the official motivation for the headquarters in Prague many years later.¹⁰⁸ According to the Dutch author Gert van Maanen, the London Meeting decided that the seat would be in Paris in November 1945, but the IPC then overruled this decision. Van Maanen argued that Prague was suggested instead by the Soviet delegate supported by Secretary Josef Grohman and other communists across delegations.¹⁰⁹ Joël Kotek also agreed that the headquarters in Prague was imposed because Czechoslovakia, despite seemingly being the 'bridge between the East and West', was already under Soviet influence.¹¹⁰

Paris seemed to be a natural candidate to host the headquarters, as it was an international city and French students played a dominant part in the interwar CIE. At the January session of the International Preparatory Committee, there was a brief discussion about whether to revive the CIE, but the idea was discarded – apparently because of the CIE's 'equivocal stand during the Nazi years', as Tom Madden, the British representative in the committee, put it.¹¹¹ Emmanuel Villedieu, the president of the UNEF, still did not give up on the CIE and tried to whip up support for its revival, but to no avail.¹¹² Joël Kotek claimed that Villedieu, in the end, agreed to create a new organization but hoped that, in return, it would be seated in Paris. Tom Madden disagreed with the opinion that Prague's choice would be a communist plot. He recalled that he personally favoured Paris over Prague, as he knew the city and had studied there before, but as he put it, Paris was never an option: the city upon the Seine already hosted the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Therefore, he added, the UNEF never regarded Paris as a viable site. Madden claimed:

[T]he decision in favour of Prague became, in my view, virtually inevitable among students who had experienced the joyous and hospitable days of the 1945 Congress (...) there was a genuine and broadly-based enthusiasm for Golden Prague, arising from these considerations and from the country's position at a crossroads between an Eastern and Western Europe, not yet divided between self-contained blocs.¹¹³

Madden was referring to a specific position that Czechoslovakia's capital had in the post-war world, often simplifyingly referred to as the 'bridge between the East and the West'.

¹⁰⁸ Josef Skála, *Síla studentské solidarity*. Projev k XV. kongresu Mezinárodního svazu studentstva. <https://pages.pedf.cuni.cz/pedagogika/?p=4309> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹⁰⁹ Geert van Maanen, *The International Student Movement: History and Background* (Hague: International Documentation and Information Centre, 1966), 41.

¹¹⁰ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 93–4.

¹¹¹ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹¹² Didier Fischer, 'L'UNEF et l'Union internationale des étudiants (1945–1965)', 84–105.

¹¹³ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

With its tradition of interwar democracy and anti-fascist resistance, Prague was even briefly considered to become the headquarters of the UN in 1945 (President Edvard Beneš and the government thought they should pursue this option only if Vienna were a contender). Similarly, Jan Masaryk's credit was so high internationally that he was considered for the UN's first general secretary; his candidacy was apparently discarded because of the disagreement of the Czechoslovak communists.¹¹⁴ In Beneš' strategic concept, Czechoslovakia was reinforcing its traditional alliances with both Western powers and the Soviet Union, which was seen as the most reliable safety check against new possible German threats. In the general election in May 1946, the population opted for socialism; communists, social democrats, and national socialists, all offered socialist solutions, one way or another. The majority also agreed, however, that Czechoslovakia should not take the Soviet way to socialism.¹¹⁵ Even Klement Gottwald, the chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and since the 1946 election also the prime minister, agreed that Czechoslovakia, with its democratic tradition and industrialized economy, needed to adopt a different course of action.¹¹⁶ But the in-between position in the growing tensions between the East and West was not the only reason why Prague was considered a suitable candidate for hosting international organizations. It was almost unharmed by the bombardments and other war damage; only a few bombs were dropped by misguided pilots who apparently thought that the city below them was Dresden. Prague could thus offer quite a comfortable life for an international community from the first post-war days and hosted various international organizations. The International Organization of Journalists seated there since 1946. When the Iron Curtain fell, the World Peace Council relocated there for a brief time, and since 1956, the World Federation of Trade Unions moved there. In 1958, the city would see the founding of two new organizations; the Christian Peace Conference and the international Marxist journal *World Marxist Review*.¹¹⁷ In 1956, the Soviets proposed Prague as the host of the International Atomic Energy Agency to counter the US proposal to keep it in the United States or Canada (the Agency would end up in another hub for international organizations, Vienna).¹¹⁸

The policy of a country between the East and West indeed meant that Czechoslovakia was more open to the Soviets, even though it was not yet a Soviet 'satellite'. From this point of view, it might seem logical that they would pursue the IUS's headquarters in Prague to secure its easier control. But if this is what they were after, why would the Soviets allow other INGOs, traditionally interpreted as communist front organizations, to locate in Western metropolises? If the Soviets had a problem with Paris, how come

¹¹⁴ Vít Smetana, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české XVI*, forthcoming.

¹¹⁵ Christiane Brenner, 'Zwischen Ost und West', *Tschechische politische Diskurse 1945–1948* (München: Collegium Carolinum, 2009), 37–145. It should also be noted, however, that not all parties were allowed to run. In Slovakia, a non-socialist option prevailed.

¹¹⁶ Jiří Pernes, 'Specifická cesta KSČ k socialismu. Fikce, nebo realita?' *Soudobé dějiny* 23, nos. 1–2 (2016): 11–76.

¹¹⁷ For more information, see Pešta, 'A Hub of Anti-Colonialism', 492–513.

¹¹⁸ Elisabeth Roehrlich, *Inspectors for Peace: A History of the International Atomic Energy Agency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), 63.

the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Women's International Democratic Federation were all seated there?

As per Tom Madden, Pierre Rostini also claimed that the 'decision on Prague had in fact been taken by the preliminary London two-day meeting of 1945. It required only ratification by the inaugural Congress'.¹¹⁹ This seems to be confirmed by the fact that the IPC minutes show no sign of a headquarters-related debate, indicating that this matter had already been resolved by then – even though such a debate could have taken place off the record.¹²⁰ Rostini himself added that Prague was chosen not only because of the 17th November and the role of Czechoslovak students during the Second World War but also because of their prominent part in the interwar CIE and tradition of student internationalism.¹²¹

The design of the IUS, as it was being sketched by the IPC in Prague, was also fundamentally influenced by the UNEF. The French union organized its congress in April 1946 in Grenoble which turned into a significant event for student internationalism. It elected Pierre Trouvat as the new head of the UNEF but more importantly, it approved Grenoble Charter, the Congress's main output. The Charter reinvented the UNEF and laid the basis for student syndicalism, defining the rights and duties of students as a social group. This conception of student representation also influenced the ongoing talks on the design of the IUS.¹²² The French were also promoting the principle that one union per country should be established, like in the United Nations.¹²³ This was a rule that would exclude membership of student unions from individual universities, regions, ethnicities, political affiliations or religions.

Another matter that was settled was the organization's name. Even though the originally approved name was the International Federation of Students, this version was discarded during the IPC sessions. Tom Madden remembered that 'to stress its basis in national participation, "International" was preferred over "World"; and, to indicate the greater degree of cohesion desired, "Union" over either "Federation" or "Confederation"! The choice of "Union" also reflected the contemporary drive toward student *syndicalisme*'.¹²⁴ Here, again, the IPC found itself under the influence of the Grenoble Charter whose concept of student syndicalism was adopted – the IUS was meant to be the student trade union, the representation of students as a class, to be the partner not only for state structures, but also for other trade unions, teachers unions or associations of universities.

Another task the IPC had to deal with was negotiating the terms with the host country. Czechoslovak authorities did not object to the decision that the headquarters

¹¹⁹ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹²⁰ Minutes of 10th–14th sessions of IPC – 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/563.

¹²¹ Pierre Rostini, 'Paris-Londres-Prague-Paris', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, 159–62.

¹²² Robi Morder, 'Grenoble 1946. Naissance d'un syndicalisme étudiant', *Les cahiers du germe spécial* 6 (2016): 5–12.

¹²³ Rostini, 'Paris-Londres-Prague-Paris', 159–62; Paul Bouchet, 'Lyon-Paris-Prague-Genève-Lyon', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, 163–72.

¹²⁴ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

would be in Prague; on the contrary. But hosting an international organization means more than that. In the case of the International Union of Students, it was reckoned that the delegates based in Prague should be students, and because the position in the Secretariat would not allow them to commute, they would need a chance to study in Prague. In other words, there was a need for scholarships at Czech universities. Furthermore, the delegates would also need accommodation; it was necessary to accommodate about 30–50 students. Czechoslovakia agreed to that, as well as to provide basic office equipment for the headquarters.¹²⁵

Even though the first rifts of what would become the Cold War had already started to show, as will be demonstrated, the spirit of universalist student internationalism was still very strong. With high hopes, the student world was awaiting August 1946, when the International Union of Students was to be founded in Prague.

¹²⁵ Poznámky k předběžnému rozpočtu pro zřízení stálého sídla Světového svazu studentstva v Praze, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 33/560.

From universal internationalism to the Cold War

Less than a year after the student conventions in London and Prague in November 1945, representatives of student organizations gathered once again in Czechoslovakia's capital. This time, their goal was to establish the International Union of Students officially.

The founding congress in August 1946 was opened by a speech by the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Klement Gottwald in the concert hall of Rudolfinum in Prague.¹ It was still rather a big event, but compared with the gargantuan World Student Congress nine months earlier, this founding congress was significantly smaller, taking place in the Masaryk Dormitories in Prague's residential quarter of Dejvice. Representative national unions from thirty-six countries sent 232 delegates, accompanied by more than fifty delegates from universities, and from sports, religious, political and other kinds of student organizations.² Although the delegates could still enjoy special excursions and parties, the programme had significantly fewer celebrations and commemorative events than the previous year; the delegates gathered primarily to work and animate the new organization.

This chapter introduces the foundation of the IUS and the growing tensions of the emerging Cold War that broke it in two a couple of years later. It also shows the principles on which the IUS was built and outlines its envisaged activities.

Constitution and functioning

The key task that awaited the Congress was to ratify the new organization's Constitution. The International Preparatory Committee had already prepared its wording. The constitutional subcommittee studied the constitutions of various democratic states, including the United States and the Charter of the United Nations. But the subcommittee's work was also already marked by growing tensions among the victors of the World War. Tom Madden, the subcommittee's chairman, remembered

¹ Zpráva č. 27, Slavnostní zahájení Světového sjezdu studentstva v Praze, 18 August 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 35/579.

² List of participants on World Student Congress 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/567.

vigorous discussions, especially between the Soviet and the US delegates. But as he saw it, he managed to play the middleman role:

We had an issue on every clause of this constitution, every sentence ... the American side and the Russian side had a dispute over every clause of the thing. And here was Tommy Madden, very good with the languages, and I could think of precisely that sentence that they could both accept ... They could not accept it when it was sponsored by someone else. Just putting the same thing in different words.³

This was confirmed by findings in Russian archives – to appear as the constructive party, the Soviet delegation was instructed to seemingly make compromises and accept the British wording, if the meaning was the same.⁴

And the fiery discussion continued at the Congress as well. In her seminal work on the US student movement in the early Cold War, Karen Paget described that the US delegation was partly composed of militant Catholic students who saw the communist influence as a danger and came to the Congress with the agenda of stopping them. The US ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Laurence Steinhardt, allegedly pushed the delegation to be more aggressive against the Soviets, as Bernard Lown, a delegation member, remembered.⁵ Consequently, Paget says, ‘the Catholics scrutinized every word or clause in the constitution, bylaws, and resolutions.’⁶ And the Soviets also indulged in nefarious activities, trying to gain influence in the emerging organization. Joël Kotek described how the Soviets and their communist allies manipulated the Congress’s credentials committee, which was responsible for recognizing a representative organization from each country and the number of delegates each organization was to have. As per Kotek, the Soviets influenced the committee so that non-communists were under-represented in the delegations and in some cases, communist-oriented organizations were preferred to others, even though they were not representative.⁷ Russian archives confirm that the Soviets had a strategy to assert influence in the IUS and WFDY. First, the key was in the formulation of the agenda and essential documents for the Congress; secondly, to ensure a sufficient number of supporters in the IPC and the Congress; thirdly, to place the right people in essential bodies; and fourthly, to keep a low profile.⁸ We can indeed see that the Soviets did not aspire to run for the highest functions in the IUS.

³ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview.

⁴ CK VLKSM to CK VKPb, 30 January 1946, Rossiyskiy gosudartvenniy arkhiv sotsialno-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), Moscow. Otdel mezhdunarodnoi informatsii, f. 17, op. 128, d. 71. I thank Lidia Lesnykh for providing me with this document.

⁵ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 26–37. This behaviour, however, does not correspond with the image of Steinhardt portrayed by Igor Lukes, who described him as negligent of Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia and leaving the country repeatedly to tend to his businesses in the United States. Igor Lukes, *On the Edge of the Cold War: American Diplomats and Spies in Postwar Prague* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 35.

⁷ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 98–103.

⁸ Pia Koivunen, How to Create an International Organization in Soviet Style? The Founding of the WFDY and the IUS in 1945 and 1946, paper presentation at the workshop Challenging the Cold War Divisions. Histories of Students and Their Transnational Dimensions, 25–26 September 2024, Prague.

Another issue that sparked discussion was whether the decisions of the central organs should be binding for the members and whether the IUS should support student organizations whose activities do not align with the statutes of the IUS. The second point, which was proposed by the US delegation, was refused. On the first point, the Constitution said that a 'member organisation of the IUS shall abide by its Constitution, carry into practice the decisions of its Congress and other governing bodies'.⁹ Soviet delegate Shevtsov said that the national organization should implement the decisions of the IUS, otherwise the whole student movement would be weakened.¹⁰ This would mean, however, a more directive 'top-down' approach than a simple federation of student unions. It was later clarified, however, that if a member organization was unable or unwilling to implement the IUS decision, it should inform the relevant bodies, so that they would not speak on its behalf in that particular case.¹¹

After attempts at London and Prague meetings in 1945, the subordination of the IUS to the WFDY was once again refused. As per Karen Paget, this infuriated Stalin who then berated the Soviet student delegation in Kremlin upon its return.¹² However, a formal tie to the WFDY was approved. At the Prague Congress in November 1945, an Indian delegate proposed that the IUS could be an autonomous affiliated member organization of the WFDY, which indeed the IPC included in the draft Constitution and the 1946 Congress sanctioned.¹³ The two organizations then always sent delegates to each other's events.

Not everybody was willing to come on board in this atmosphere – a foreshadowing of a much graver split that would come in a couple of years. The Dutch decided not to affiliate already at the 1946 founding congress. In their speech, they argued that they could not accept the Constitution, as the obligations it implies – that is, the implementation of the decisions of the IUS Secretariat by member organizations – would compromise the autonomy of the Dutch Union of Students.¹⁴ However, as Tom Madden reminded, the student leaders in the Netherlands 'reported to a body of clerics who had the final say on policy statements and expenditures', suggesting the union was not autonomous.¹⁵ The Dutch also had a problem with the political determination of the Constitution – and some voices said that it was in fact the sharp anti-colonial rhetoric of the IUS that forced the Dutch to withdraw, as the students from the Netherlands did not want to go against their government which was in the middle of the struggle against the Indonesian liberation movement. Among other notable unions that decided not to affiliate were the Swiss. The Union of Swiss Students

⁹ Draft constitution of future student organization proposed by IPC 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/570.

¹⁰ Zpráva č. 37. Komuniké z plenárního zasedání ze dne 25/8 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/566.

¹¹ IUS Council Meeting, Prague 1947. Clarification of the Constitution. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/21.

¹² Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 36.

¹³ W.F.D.Y. and the I.S.F., report by A.H. Sader, leader of the Indian delegation, to the International Student Conference, Prague, November 1945, IISH, col. IUS, box World Student Congress; Materials on first contact and relationship of IPC with WFDY, 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 33/552.

¹⁴ Statement by the Netherlands Delegation, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 100/1719; USNSA and the IUS relations 1945–1955, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia II.

¹⁵ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

(*Verein der Schweizerischen Studenten*, VSS) supposedly did not join the IUS because of its neutrality. According to Mazen Husseini, they also 'objected to the presence of delegates from the Republic of Spain (... and ...) tried to prevent the representation of students from colonial and dependent countries'.¹⁶ Years later, the IUS President Jiří Pelikán also expressed the same conviction; in a letter to a Swiss student leader, he said the VSS had not joined the IUS in 1946 because of the IUS's strong stance on Spain.¹⁷ The Italians also walked out of the meeting – unsatisfied with the work of the Credentials Committee, which appointed them only ten seats, four of which belonged to the communists.¹⁸

Nevertheless, despite all the problems and schemes, the Constitution was in the end approved and the International Union of Students could start functioning. The highest authority of the IUS lay with the Congress, which was called at least once every three years, at which all member organizations were represented by the number of delegates corresponding to the number of students they represented. In honour of the November 1945 event, the Congresses were called World Student Congresses at times. The Congress could change the constitution and elect the leadership until the next Congress takes place. Another body was the IUS Council, called once a year – a smaller event representing all member unions, each sending one delegate. The Council elected the Executive Committee of twenty-three members, assembled at least twice a year, and the Financial Committee with five members. The day-to-day business was run by the Secretariat, composed initially of the president, six vice-presidents, the general secretary and four secretaries. The Secretariat supervised the work of several departments: Central Travel and Exchange Department, Financial Department, Intellectual Cooperation Department, Administration, Student Needs and Welfare Department, Bureau of Students Fighting against Colonialism, Physical Education and Sport Department, Editorial Board of the Magazine World Student News and Press and Information Department.¹⁹ In these departments, there were not only delegates elected at the Congress or the Council but also employees contracted by the Secretariat. There was more staff in non-elected positions: interpreters, translators, editors, but also accountants and secretaries. The staff were mostly Czechoslovak, but in the first years, many British and French people worked in it since 1945 in London.

As was the case with many emerging organizations at the time, leadership was dual, with no clear hierarchy between the president and the general secretary. At the first Congress, the Czechoslovak Josef Grohman and the British Tom Madden, both veterans of the IPC, ran for the Presidency; in the end, Grohman was elected, beating his friend Madden, as the Congress believed the host organization should hold the Presidency. Tom Madden then became the general secretary. Among other members of the first Secretariat were Pierre Trouvat from France, Louis Meerts from Belgium,

¹⁶ Mazen Husseini, *Cold War in Universities*, unpublished manuscript, 11.

¹⁷ Jiří Pelikán to John D. Fleutti, 11 October 1961, Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (SBA), IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#257.

¹⁸ International student conference in London 1949. Statement of Italian delegation, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 100/1728.

¹⁹ The structure of the International Union of Students and its international relations, 3rd World Student Congress Bulletin, 27 April 1953, IISH, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

William Ellis from the United States, Alexander Shelepin from the Soviet Union and Au Sik Ling from China.²⁰ A principle was adopted that the member unions were elected for specific positions (not people) and nominated someone to fill them, even though this principle was questioned throughout the IUS's history.

The idea was to design the IUS as the 'student UN'. According to this vision, each nation was supposed to be represented by one organization. The primary candidates eligible for membership were the national unions of students or national coordinating committees uniting different sectional organizations. Only if there was no single representative organization in a country and more organizations met the other criteria for membership (democratic, anti-fascist, progressive), according to the IUS Constitution, the exception could be made and more than one organization could become a member. This rule obliged several member delegations to establish national unions of students, in cases where there was no umbrella organization. This was an incentive, for example for the students of the United States, where no single student union had existed until then – since the dissolution of the pro-socialist American Student Union in 1941. The delegation that represented the United States at the World Student Congress in 1946 was composed of representatives of various unions and groups. It was decided after the Congress that a new national organization would be established. Political and religious groups of students then started negotiations until finally the National Student Association (NSA) was founded at the constitutional convention in September 1947 in Madison. By then, however, the Cold War started to show openly, and the anti-communist forces, particularly Catholics, ensured that the decision to affiliate the NSA with the IUS was postponed.²¹ Bill Ellis remained the vice-president, as having a US representative in the Secretariat was important, but he did not represent a member organization.

There were also specific cases of student unions that were known to be unrepresentative but were allowed to join for political reasons. One such was Spain, which was represented by the 'Republic of Spain', that is, the exiled anti-Francoist forces. China was represented by the 'liberated territories', that is, those that were controlled by Mao Zedong's forces, since 1947.²² Colonies and dependent territories were urged to join as well but there was a lot of work to be done in organizing of the students. In the meantime, the colonies (that were seen as crucial from the very beginning) were represented by non-national student organizations – regional organizations or unions of students studying in Europe, such as the West Indian Students Union (since 1946), West African Student Union (since 1950) or Black African Students Federation in France (*Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France*, since 1956).²³

Prague was confirmed as the headquarters of the organization, with the first seat in the Student House on Jan Opletal Street in the city centre. Tom Madden recalled that the premises were very modest; the offices were only in three rooms, the delegates ate in the student refectory down in the same building and slept in dormitories in rather

²⁰ World Student News, Congressus 1946, 1.

²¹ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 43–56.

²² Letter to the Chinese Government (Kuomintang), August 1947, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/22.

²³ Nawrocki and Kamiński, *Za lepszy świat, za lepszy uniwersytet*, 143–5.

Spartan conditions.²⁴ Two years later, the IUS moved to a bigger venue in an apartment block in Vojtěšská Street, which was able to house most of the Secretariat. According to Tom Madden, Czechoslovak institutions and especially Charles University helped very much with the arrangements for the delegates: 'They would get a place at Charles University, and the fees, food, and lodging are all taken care of. And they could also work in the secretariat.'²⁵ But still, many delegates had to put their studies on hold because the work for the Secretariat was very demanding. Madden was accommodated in the Roosevelt dormitory in modest conditions – only when he got married did they get a second room.

Since the very first Congress, the IUS pursued international activity and established relations with international organizations. The most important of all international organizations was the UNESCO – the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization. With education being the primary point of interest of the IUS, its activity fell into the field of UNESCO. From the beginning, it was important for legitimization – being recognized by UNESCO as *the* international student organization would be very beneficial. The representative of the IUS, Arturo Acebez from Spain, took part in the first General Conference in November and December 1946. He had some reservations – the fact that the Soviets did not take part in UNESCO in the first years seemed to limit its operability and universality, and Acebez saw the organization as too idealistic. However, he concluded, it was still a huge organization that represented 'esteemed moral value in the world' and that had direct connections to the governments of the world, for which it would be very useful to be affiliated.²⁶ Presenting the IUS at the founding conference, the IUS delegate gave total confidence to the organization and emphasized that it must not fail and betray its commitment to peace.²⁷

UNESCO did not, however, recognize the IUS as the only global representative of students. In this arena, the IUS competed with other organizations, particularly religious ones.²⁸ André de Blonay, a UNESCO official responsible for student affairs, proposed the creation of an umbrella committee that would include representatives of international student organizations and communicate with UNESCO. For the IUS, this was not acceptable, as it would diminish its universalist claim, but de Blonay did not give in.²⁹ In 1948, the IUS was granted the status of consultative arrangements, but in 1952, UNESCO's Executive Council suggested withdrawal of the status. Officially, the reason was that the IUS had not 'shown sufficient interest for the aims and activities of UNESCO and has not remained in relation with it.'³⁰ The IUS officials protested but

²⁴ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview. Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

²⁵ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview.

²⁶ Rapport sur le Congrès de l'Unesco, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 6/124.

²⁷ Report on IUS presented to delegates at the first conference of UNESCO, 1946, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 175/3383.

²⁸ Acebez and Trouvat report on UNESCO conference, 6 February 1947. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 6/141.

²⁹ Circular from Kuo UNESCO's Education Section, 26 February 1948. UNESCO Archive, 378.18 A 01 ACISO. See also Gillibert, Lesnykh and Pešta, 'Student Internationalism in the Global Cold War', 131–44.

³⁰ The IUS and UNESCO, IISH, col. IUS, box Circulars I.

with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries inactive on this platform in the early 1950s, the IUS did not have enough backing and the motion was approved; the IUS was even removed from the mailing list.³¹ Similarly, the IUS was denied consultative status at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).³²

The IUS also started relations with other international organizations that were concerned with students or universities – International Student Service and later World University Service (WUS), World Student Relief, Pax Romana, World Student Christian Federation and World Union of Jewish Students, although some of these contacts – in particular with the Catholic Pax Romana – were put on ice in the emerging Cold War and were not re-established until the careful attempts in 1952. The closest partners were the sector organizations later perceived as ‘communist fronts’, including the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the Women’s International Democratic Federation and others. Already during the work of the IPC, a delegation composed of Tom Madden, Au Sik Ling from China and Ahmed Sader from India, went to Paris and was received by the WIDF and the WFTU, as well as by the emerging structures of UNESCO.³³

The IUS immediately started its media production. In particular, this meant the publication of a new monthly journal entitled the *World Student News*. This magazine was supposed to inform of the student problems in the world, announce various opportunities (such as scholarships and internships) and bring people together (promoting student tourism or facilitating international pen friendship). The newly appointed Secretariat also started publishing one-time leaflets and booklets, such as the information bulletin about the founding congress.

As already mentioned, the IUS was not based on the principle of ‘students as such’ – something that had been very clear already during the Second World War when the first ideas of a new student federation were conceived. Even though there were voices that the course should return to the apolitical activity of the interwar CIE, the proponents of the other direction prevailed single-handedly. The genetic information of the IUS was political. Aside from student-related problems such as student housing or accessibility of education, the IUS Secretariat and media addressed issues that concerned students only very loosely or not at all. It was argued that student problems cannot be isolated from the problems of society: ‘Students are part and parcel of their people and must actively parcel in the struggle for freedom and genuine national independence, economic and social progress, democracy, national sovereignty and self-determination, for the peace and security of people all over the world and against imperialism, colonialism, reaction, fascism, and all forms of discrimination, in particular racial discrimination.’³⁴

This quote shows quite precisely the political orientation of the new organization. In the IUS’s early years, the consensual direction could be framed by three

³¹ Irving Katz to Laszlo Hamori, 20 January 1953, UN Archive, reference code S-0441-0054-05.

³² G.E. Yates to the IUS Secretariat, 10 June 1950, UN Archive, reference code S-0441-0054-05.

³³ Report on relations with other international organizations (WFTU, WFDW, UNESCO), NAČR, f. MSS, PA 33/555.

³⁴ Mazen Hussein, Cold War in Universities, unpublished manuscript, p. 13.

tropes: anti-fascism, peace and democracy. Another widely used trope was anti-colonialism but it became crucial later, along with anti-capitalism. This body of values was shared within the emerging cluster of international NGOs that were or would become socialist-oriented, such as the WFDY, WIDF or WFTU.

The value that everybody could agree on was peace. Its importance stemmed from the Second World War and signified the necessity of the will to find consensual solutions. However, it became even more important after the beginning of the Cold War, when it turned into a political tool – the accusation of ‘warmongering’ became a standard element of the Stalinist trash talk. Peace was universal in the socialist ideology, and the attributes of peace were given even to explicitly military features – even in oxymoronic collocations such as Generalissimo Peace (i.e. Stalin).³⁵ The trope of peace lay in the centre of the Soviet global Defenders of Peace campaign after the Congress of the Intellectuals held in Wrocław in 1948 which also included setting up the World Peace Council and led to the Stockholm Appeal for nuclear disarmament in 1950.³⁶ The IUS and other socialist INGOs were a part of this campaign. However, as Günther Wernicke remarked, the fact that the peace rhetoric was used for political goals does not mean that it could not be genuine.³⁷

The value of democracy was inherent. Many of the socialist-oriented international NGOs felt the need to specify the distinction (that they unite democratic member organizations as opposed to non-democratic organizations) – such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Women’s International Democratic Federation or the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Democracy was a broad value at first, uniting different versions of democracies, from the liberal to the people’s democracy – everything that was anti-fascist. But gradually, the democratic was more associated or even identified with progressive and socialist. In the IUS, being progressive was a condition for a national student organization to become a member. The US delegation to the 1946 Congress suggested this definition of progressive: ‘By progressive we mean that they support democratic principles sincerely and consistently and promote the realisation of these principles in everyday life’, which was, in the end, accepted in the Constitution.³⁸ However, such a definition was still rather vague and could be bent to one’s needs.

Another trope that was widely used but was less clear on meaning was anti-fascism. Some delegations complained already at the founding Congress in 1946 that there is no clear definition – among them the Dutch, for whom it was one of the reasons for not attaching themselves to the IUS. A resolution passed at the Congress claimed that despite the victory in the Second World War, ‘fascist ideology has by no means been completely eradicated’. The resolution makes a connection between fascism and

³⁵ Vladimír Macura, *Šťastný věk a jiné studie o socialistické kultuře* (Praha: Academia, 2008), 36–47.

³⁶ For the inception and evolution of Soviet strategical peace campaign in the early Cold War, see Vladimir Dobrenko, ‘Conspiracy of Peace: The Cold War, the International Peace Movement, and the Soviet Peace Campaign, 1946–1956’ (PhD Diss., London School of Economics and Political Science), 63–152; Petra Goedde, *The Politics of Peace. A Global Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 14–19.

³⁷ Wernicke, ‘The Communist-Led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements’.

³⁸ USA Amendments to Constitution, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 35/578.

imperialism, both of which were based on exploitation, discrimination and 'pseudo-scientific theories of racial superiority'. So that 'young people may be safeguarded from contamination by fascist ideology', it called for 'expulsion from Universities of fascist and pro-fascist lecturers and the removal of nazi textbooks and syllabuses', and urged the students to 'take action against pro-fascist and reactionary student organisations'.³⁹ With militant phrasing like this, the lack of a clear definition made the Western delegates wary.

Via the link with fascism, colonialism and imperialism were equally slandered. The struggle against colonialism became a central part of the IUS's agenda. Although the membership from the Global South did not expand significantly until the mid-1950s, there were some African, Asian and Latin American delegates present from the very first days and even represented in the International Preparatory Committee. At the Secretariat, there was a department specifically specialized in this agenda – the Bureau of Students Fighting against Colonialism, headed by the British activist Carmel Brickman, an ardent opponent of the colonial system. And as Tom Madden recalled, her agenda even became more anti-colonial than that of the Secretariat as a whole: 'this Bureau was, as I recollect, constantly at loggerheads with the hierarchy of the Secretariat for wanting to adopt militant anti-imperial policies'. As she supposedly disclosed to Madden years later, her memories of the time were 'coloured by dissatisfaction among this anti-colonial group', whose 'main purpose was to push a strong anti-colonial line which, as I recollect, didn't go very well with the people on top'. Being on top as the general secretary himself, he explained that the IUS Secretariat policy had to be more consensual. The statements had to represent the student membership, including those from the West who did not desire to be called imperialists. In the case of the war in French Indochina that broke out just after the Second World War, the IUS as a whole denounced it but the UNEF pronounced it a tragedy for both peoples and their students – and that was as far as they could go.⁴⁰ At the 1948 Executive Committee meeting, Pierre Trouvat advocated for a more moderate stance towards the colonial countries, as he thought that 'many students who disagree with the IUS on questions like Vietnam or Indonesia still wish to work for peace'. The Indian delegate Vimla Bakaya disagreed and argued that it was impossible to be indifferent to these questions, stressing that 'if the IUS is to stand by its Constitution, it must take a firm stand'.⁴¹

But even the consensual position of the IUS Secretariat was quite radical for the time being. Decades before the advent of postcolonial critique, the IUS was pointing out that language is one of the tools of oppression and that the imposition of a colonial language as the communication means for education is a way of control.⁴² IUS also collaborated on organizing local and regional events intended to help with

³⁹ The task of student youth in the post-war world, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/573.

⁴⁰ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁴¹ Minutes of the EC meeting, Praha, January 18–21 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 8/173. See also Gillibert, Lesnykh and Pešta, 'Student Internationalism in the Global Cold War', 131–44.

⁴² IIIrd World Student Congress Bulletin. IISH Amsterdam, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

the emancipation of the empires. In 1947, it co-organized the South-East Asia Youth Conference for Peace and Independence in Calcutta. Joël Kotek speculated that the delegates were possibly instructed to start insurrections, which actually broke out soon after that in Burma, Malaya and Indonesia – or at least to make the Asians choose between the two emerging camps.⁴³ Even if the IUS were already under the control of the communists in 1947, this seems like an overestimation of the international student movement's influence over the South East Asian national liberation fighters.

One of the flagships of post-war (socialist) internationalism was the Festival movement. The World Festivals of Youth and Students were huge events that brought together young people from the whole world.⁴⁴ The Festivals were primarily organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the IUS was present only as a junior partner, but IUS representatives always sat at the Festival's International Preparatory Committee and a big portion of the programme was specifically designed for or provided by students – such as performances of student theatre troupes, student sports activities or student intellectual debates. Aside from the international organizations, there was a strong Soviet influence from the beginning. The Finnish historian Pia Koivunen interprets the Festivals as an expression of socialist internationalism, a product of Soviet cultural diplomacy that had no counterpart in the West, once the Cold War broke out.⁴⁵ The first Festival was held in Prague in July and August 1947. That summer, the Cold War was already underway. However, Czechoslovakia was still a democratic country and the Festival was still organized in a universalist spirit, even though it was promoting socialist values and the host organization – the Union of Czech Youth – was openly pro-communist (other sections of Czechoslovak youth largely boycotted the Festival).⁴⁶

After Prague, further Festivals took place biennially in the capitals of the Sovietized Eastern Europe and already under the control of the Soviets – in 1949 in Budapest, in 1951 in Berlin, in 1953 in Bucharest, in 1955 in Warsaw and, finally, the most spectacular and symptomatic, the grand Festival in Moscow in 1957. However, despite the tight arrangements and careful organization, the Soviets could not control everything. The Festivals were platforms boosting internationalism; they were contact zones entangling the participants, establishing friendships or romantic relationships, and creating a possibility to peek behind the Iron Curtain, what socialist reality looked like.⁴⁷ This was true also for other events, such as the IUS Congresses and other events organized by the socialist INGOs, but the scale of the Festivals was unprecedented.

⁴³ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 130.

⁴⁴ The name of the organization initially varied and was finally settled in 1951 as the World Festival of Youth and Students. Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–17.

⁴⁶ Martin Pácha, 'Youth Unite, Forward for Lasting Peace!' The First World Festival of Youth and Students in Prague 1947, in *Student Activism in Transnational Perspective, 1919–1989*, ed. Daniel laqua (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, forthcoming).

⁴⁷ GILLABERT Matthieu, 'Varsovie 1955 et la Guerre froide globale. L'internationalisation de l'Europe centrale au prisme du 5e Festival mondial de la Jeunesse et des Étudiants', *Monde(s)* 18, no. 2 (2020): 51–72.

Describing the phenomenon, Pia Koivunen used the term 'mega-event', applicable also to World Fairs or Olympic Games.⁴⁸

Student sports was another important field in which the IUS was active – a specialized department addressed the related agenda. The International Union of Students was an official organizer or co-organizer of numerous sports events, from ski camps, canoeing and mountaineering activities to international chess championships. The biggest sports event, however, was the World University Games – a tradition directly adopted from the interwar CIE. After the Second World War, the tradition was revived in particular by the French who had a special relationship with the interwar student project. The IXth and first post-war World University Games took place in the summer of 1947 in Paris. Two years later, the idea prevailed to organize the Games within the World Festival of Youth and Students – twice the Games were organized under such conditions, first in Budapest in 1949 and then in Berlin in 1951.⁴⁹ The problem with the merge was that the World University Games were designed as a student competition and were open only to students, while the Festivals were attended by many young people who were not students. For better inclusiveness, the World University Games were replaced as the main sports event at the Festival by the newly conceived International Friendly Youth Games, open to all young people – the goal was to democratize sports. The University Games were 'the second largest multisport event after the Olympics', with which it shared much, from the scale to elite performances to similar ceremonies.⁵⁰ Following the pattern of the Olympic Games, the World University Games also organized its winter edition separately.

From the outset, the IUS emphasized its agenda, which aimed to support students and make their lives easier. It issued the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) – another tradition adopted from the interwar CIE. The card served as an international proof of student status and entitled its holders to various discounts, especially for transport and admissions. Negotiating the discounts was the job for the IUS and its member organizations. The organization also cared for the students' health. To fight tuberculosis in particular, the IUS started building a sanatorium for students in Třebotov in Czechoslovakia, which would be open in 1948 and supported the work of already existing sanatoria in France and Switzerland. Later, another sanatorium with 300 beds was opened in Beijing, offering treatment specifically for Asian students, and medical assistance was also provided in the Students' Health Home in Calcutta.⁵¹ Furthermore, the IUS was gathering information on student conditions, housing, quality and accessibility of education from all over the world. In case there were students in need, it could organize fundraising or relief activities – such as in the case of Spanish students. In the cultural field, it was organizing international events, such as

⁴⁸ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 1–17.

⁴⁹ Lesnykh, 'Sport at the World Festival of Youth and Students'.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1–15.

⁵¹ On opening first regional sanatorium at Treboov 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 102/1769; Report on the activities of the IUS international student TB sanatorium, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia I; Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 44.

writing competitions, or conferences of students from specific fields, such as students of medicine or architecture.⁵²

As with all organizations, the crucial point was the money. The IUS was meant to be funded primarily by member organizations, the national unions of students which would pay the membership fees according to their size – the fee depended on how many students each union represented. This worked at the beginning but the gradual withdrawal of Western student unions and the inability of the unions from the Global South to pay meant that the financial burden lay mostly on the member organizations from the emerging Eastern Bloc. And since the youth and student organizations in the Sovietized systems became *de facto* parts of the state structure, the IUS became financially dependent on socialist states. The biggest burden fell on the host country, which, aside from contributing to the budget, also provided the building, paid staff, including interpreters, editors, accountants and others, as well as cars and drivers, apartments for delegates and recreational facilities.⁵³ All these were officially channelled through the Czechoslovak member organization but in fact secured by the state.

Apart from contributions from member organizations and the host country, another source of income was the sale of publications, particularly the *World Student News*. The sales of the International Student Identity Cards secured some funds. The IUS also collected money from participants in sports events or tourist trips. Occasionally, the IUS could receive extra money from special occasions, such as when the popular African American singer Paul Robeson performed a concert in Prague in 1949. Robeson generously dedicated the income from the ticket sales to the IUS to aid students in travelling to Budapest to take part in the second World Festival of Youth and Students.⁵⁴

But in general, the IUS, like other socialist-oriented INGOs, would not be allowed to fall. In the event of a tight budget or unexpected expenditure, the socialist countries, primarily the USSR, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, would find funds to fill the gaps. Even though the IUS Secretariat members lived in modest conditions in the first years in Prague, more money started pouring into the organization after the Cold War broke out, and the operation grew in size steadily.

Founding fathers

To paint a more vivid picture and support the argument that the IUS was a rather heterogeneous body in the early days, this subchapter introduces the key actors who

⁵² Documents of the Commission of Intellectual Cooperation (Cultural Games, Architectural students ...), NAČR, f. MSS, PA 2/13.

⁵³ Finance Report. IUS Budget 1948/49, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 14/274.

⁵⁴ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview; Kathleen Geaney, 'English-Speaking Communists, Communist Sympathizers and Fellow-Travellers and Czechoslovakia in the Early Cold War' (PhD Diss., Univerzita Karlova, Praha, 2017). For the context of Paul Robeson's visits to Czechoslovakia, see Františka Zetuláková Schormová, 'African American Poets Abroad: Black and Red Allegiances in Early Cold War Czechoslovakia' (PhD Diss., Univerzita Karlova, Praha, 2020).

formed the organization – the founding fathers. We can indeed speak about fathers, because the people involved were almost all men, with only a few exceptions, as we will see. It was a remarkable generation of students that constructed the IUS; a generation formed by their wartime experience was characterized by a strong internationalist sensibility and a relentless effort to help make the new world. Many of the students participated in the resistance or otherwise assisted the war and liberation efforts, or spent time in prisons and concentration camps. As Sandrine Kott pointed out, the experience from a Nazi prison or a concentration camp was something that brought people together and upon which they could build mutual understanding.⁵⁵ Due to the activist nature of the student generation, many got into trouble again and some were sentenced to jail at some point in their lives.

Let us start with those who arguably contributed the most to the unionizing of the studentship during the war and the first post-war months – the British and the French. It is worth mentioning that both delegations were pluralistic, representing a wide political spectrum.⁵⁶ The students of the UK coordinated the efforts during the Second World War and hosted the meeting in London in November 1945. They dispatched a big delegation for the World Student Congress in Prague and took part in the International Preparatory Committee – several student organizations were represented, coordinated by the National Student Coordinating Committee which also nominated the delegation to the 1946 congress and in the IPC. After the foundation of the IUS, the most representative organization, the National Union of Students of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, became a member organization, while the Scots were represented by their own union. The head of the British delegation at the 1946 Congress was Tom Madden, who had already taken part in the student gathering the year before – even though he almost did not go as he was a last-minute replacement for another student leader who was refused a leave of absence because of the upcoming final exams.⁵⁷ He then served in the International Preparatory Committee, and at the founding Congress he was elected the IUS's first general secretary. In that position, he stayed until 1949, when the IUS was already breaking apart. The Belgian historian Joël Kotek saw Madden as a communist submarine who helped, either out of naïveté or complicity, establish Soviet dominance in the IUS. Madden himself ruled out that he was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Years later, he claimed that he wanted the IUS to be a bridge between the East and the West – just as Czechoslovakia was supposed to be. He admitted that his efforts ultimately failed, but not because the IUS was doomed from the start, as Kotek had concluded; instead, he claimed that to be the doing of 'few doctrinaire and manipulative individuals'. And he continued: '[Student] Leaders of the two sides, by insistence on having their way, by domination and by subversion, destroy what the founders [of the IUS] of 1945–1946 have together

⁵⁵ This was especially the case of the concentration camp of Mauthausen, in which mostly political prisoners were interned. Kott, *A World More Equal*, 24.

⁵⁶ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁵⁷ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview, online interview.

invented.⁵⁸ Whether Madden was a communist or not, however, his actions as the IUS general secretary certainly eased the way for the communist dominance in the Secretariat. After the British withdrew him from the position, Madden stayed for one more year in Prague as the permanent secretary, a non-elected position. After that, he focused on medicine and was not involved in politics.

Another outstanding figure among the British was Carmel Brickman – one of the few female faces of the IUS in the early period. She was not an official delegate in the Secretariat but assumed the position in the Bureau of Students Fighting against Colonialism. A fervent anti-colonial activist that she was, she pushed the agenda of national liberation and self-determination in the IUS. And by far did she not only preach from the comfort of an office; she attended the Southeast Asia Conference in 1948, from where she went to China upon invitation. Going from campus to campus which operated in the reality of the civil war, she mediated contact with the IUS. While working for the IUS, she met her future husband, Suwondo Budiardjo, with whom she settled down in Indonesia in the early 1950s. After the fall of the Sukarno regime and the advent of the dictatorship in 1966, both she and her husband were imprisoned. Upon her release three years later, she continued helping political prisoners in Indonesia and exposing human rights violations of the Suharto regime.⁵⁹

The French played a crucial part. Even though discredited by its passivity during the occupation, the UNEF was still a big union with long traditions of student activism. After the congress of the UNEF in Grenoble in April 1946, a new generation of leaders rebuilt the union; *'la génération de Grenoble'* was active in the Resistance and had a high moral credit. Among the leaders was Pierre Rostini – Tom Madden thought that he would have been elected the IUS president had he been a candidate, and that he would have done a great job.⁶⁰ It was especially Rostini's accomplishment that the World University Games received the IUS's institutional support after the war. Another colleague of his was Pierre Trouvat – the French member of the IPC, the IUS vice-president and the new president of UNEF. According to Paul Bouchet, another strong personality of the Grenoble Generation, the Soviets tried to push the French to replace Trouvat, as he clashed with them, but the UNEF refused.⁶¹

The story of the heroism and martyrdom of Czechoslovak students became the formative legend of the IUS. Czechoslovak students influenced the birth of the IUS through the organization of the 1945 World Student Congress as well as through the hosting of the International Preparatory Committee. As soon as it was clear that the founding Congress would be in Prague, the local student union became the key component in preparations. At first, it seemed that it would be Eduard Goldstücker who would play the most important part – he had been active in student activism since his exile in London during the wartime which left him with rich international

⁵⁸ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁵⁹ Carmel Budiardjo, *Surviving Indonesia's Gulag: A Western Woman Tells Her Story* (London: Cassell, 1996).

⁶⁰ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁶¹ Paul Bouchet, 'Lyon-Paris-Prague-Genève-Lyon', 163–72.

connections. He was a rising star among Czechoslovak communists; Kotek said that at the 1945 World Student Congress, he 'led the communists, who now commanded a majority of delegates', which is, however, dubious at best. Goldstücker also sat at the IPC. Perhaps he was groomed for the assumption of the highest position in the IUS. Still, it never happened – he silently disappeared from the preparatory works, and in 1948, he became the first Czechoslovak ambassador to Israel. Later, he spent time in a Stalinist prison and in the 1960s was one of the faces of the reform process. A similar fate awaited another Czechoslovak who took part in the IPC – Jiří Hájek, a young Social Democrat who spent the whole war in a German prison. At the sessions, Hájek was a representative of the WFDY where he sat at the Executive Committee.⁶² He too later spent time in prison, was rehabilitated and grew into the position of the minister of foreign affairs during the Prague Spring and a dissident after the Soviet invasion.

The Presidency of the IUS was ultimately won by Josef Grohman – a young student who was also imprisoned during the Nazi occupation for treacherous activities in the illegal Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during 1940. He was in prison in Bayreuth between 1942 and 1943 and again in Pankrác in 1944.⁶³ Grohman was sacked as the president in 1952 and only narrowly avoided jail. He ended up in prison but for entirely different reasons – as we will see. From the Czechoslovak staff, one more name deserves to be mentioned – Jarmila Maršálková, a member of the Secretariat as its permanent secretary, who would eventually become Grohman's wife, who seemed to have been an important organizational spirit behind the IUS operation.⁶⁴

Of the Soviets who were involved in the early IUS history, one particularly stands out. We speak of Alexander Shelepin, who later became one of the most powerful men in the Soviet Union – as a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the chairman of the KGB between 1958 and 1961. Shelepin was a senior official in Komsomol and was elected the general secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth while serving as the IUS's vice-president at the same time. In 1952, he was appointed the head of the Komsomol. In the 1950s, he supervised the organization of the World Festivals of Youth and Students. He left the youth politics in 1958, already forty years old, going straight to the KGB's chairmanship. Naturally, the fact that he was picked as the head of the KGB immediately after he left the youth and students movement suggests that he was not a novice in the secret services anymore. His successor as the head of the Komsomol, Vladimir Semichastny, was his protégé and would also succeed him as the head of the KGB. Shelepin was one of the main conspirators who plotted the toppling of Nikita Khrushchev but did not survive the late general secretary politically

⁶² Communiqué of the third session of the I.P.C. of the future International Students Organization, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 34/565.

⁶³ *Aufnahmeersuchen an das Zuchthaus St. Georgen – Bayreuth*, 11 May 1942, Archiv bezpečnostních složek (ABS), sb. Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), arch. č. V-40857 MV.

⁶⁴ Meetings of the Executive Committee – Second Meeting, 3 September 1946, UDAUK, Všestudentský archiv, ka 35.

for long.⁶⁵ Another figure was Mikhail Pesliak, a Ukrainian who would later become a vice president of the Soviet Olympic Committee and a functionary in several bodies shaping Soviet cultural diplomacy.⁶⁶

Then there were the US students. As mentioned before, the US students did not have a single organization and the delegation was an amalgam of representatives of various backgrounds and convictions. The delegation that embarked on the journey to the 1946 World Student Congress, known as the 'Prague 25', was very pluralistic; the Christian student groups had a strong influence. Since the Congress, the US students were represented by Bill Ellis in the Secretariat who assumed the position of a vice president even though a member organization did not delegate him. But the United States was seen as too important not to have a place in the leadership and it seemed that establishing the US national union of students was only a matter of time. Bill Ellis, an African American, was the delegate of the National Intercollegiate Christian Council. He found it very difficult to work with the Catholics in his delegation who were driven, according to him, by 'uncompromising hostility to communism'.⁶⁷ Ellis tried to work honestly in the IUS Secretariat, despite health problems, until the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, when the union's political bias became too strong for him. During Ellis' treatment, his seat in the Secretariat was occupied by his interim replacement Jim Smith. During the growing hysteria among US students at the inception of the Cold War, he was accused of being a communist. He, too, however, resigned after the Prague coup.⁶⁸ Another interesting member of the US delegation was Bernard Lown from the Association of Interns and Medical Students who would become a lifelong promoter of peace and a 1985 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The Association of Interns and Medical Students remained active in the IUS even after the split between East and West, which caused them problems back at home; Lown's successor Halsted Holman, the IUS vice-president, was even investigated by the Un-American Activities Committee during the height of McCarthyism.⁶⁹

The students of China, just like the whole Chinese society, were very much divided and affected by the civil war that broke out (or rather was reignited) just after the end of the Japanese occupation. The first Chinese representatives in the IUS were supporters of Kuomintang – the IUS Vice-President Au Sik Ling was a Kuomintang Embassy official in wartime London. His successor was Peter Chen, a Catholic who came to the IUS through the World Christian Student Federation. He became the head of the Colonial Bureau. After him, the Chinese were represented by the communist

⁶⁵ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 2003), 3–17; Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 193–207.

⁶⁶ Jennifer Parks, *The Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War: Red Sport, Red Tape* (Lanham: Lexington, 2016), 36.

⁶⁷ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 35.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 58–60.

⁶⁹ Kotek provided a transcript of his interrogation. Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 187–8.

territories. Back in China, Chen was imprisoned and sent to a labour camp during the Cultural Revolution; later, he became a bishop.⁷⁰

The Eastern Europeans also often struggled; it was not only the Czechoslovakians who had problems. The Romanian delegate Gheorghe Brătescu, a doctor, historian of medicine and fruitful author, was also later persecuted. His wife was the daughter of Ana Pauker, Romanian minister of foreign affairs and one of the architects of the new Romanian communist regime, who was purged within the wave of late Stalinist show trials – and her son-in-law went down with her.⁷¹ Peter Heilmann from East Germany, who was in an underground resistance during the war, became a high FDJ official, but in 1951 he was sentenced for espionage within the Stalinist purges in the GDR; he spent five years in prison.⁷²

The most visible member of the Yugoslav delegation was Rajko Tomović. The Yugoslavs did not stay long in the IUS; the organization followed the meanders of the Cold War and during the heat of the Stalin-Tito split, they were ousted unscrupulously. After his years of student politics were over, Tomović became a pioneer in engineering and robotic science and invented a robotic arm.⁷³

The Italians were hesitant to join the IUS from the very start. The student organizations were divided more along political lines and the problems at the first IUS Congress in 1946 convinced many Italians that the IUS was not an organization to be associated with. There was no single national union of students in Italy and the promoters of the adhesion to the IUS used the fact to establish a coordinating committee that would affiliate. The IUS Constitution allowed this but, as pointed out by the growing number of critics of the IUS, the coordinating committee was not very representative. The chairman of the committee was then elected in the IUS Secretariat at its first Council meeting.⁷⁴ His name was Giovanni Berlinguer, a young medical student from a prominent Sardinian family who would later become a prominent Italian communist politician. His brother Enrico became the party leader and the key proponent of Eurocommunism. Both brothers were involved in international politics as young students; Enrico Berlinguer was at the time also the president of the WFDY and Giovanni became the IUS general secretary in 1949.⁷⁵

One of the most renowned people associated with the first years of the IUS was Olof Palme, the later Swedish prime minister. He was not a member of the Secretariat but as a student leader became involved with the IUS. After the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia, he proposed to marry a young Czech girl who helped him in Prague

⁷⁰ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁷¹ Gheorghe Brătescu, *Ce-a fost să fie. Notății autobiografice* (București: Humanitas, 2003).

⁷² Peter Heilmann, 'Ein neues Leben', in *So begann meine Nachkriegszeit. Männer und Frauen erzählen vom Mai 1945*, ed. Peter Heilmann (Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 1985), 52–8; Hermann Weber and Gerda Weber, *Leben nach dem "Prinzip Links." Erinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006), 220.

⁷³ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁷⁴ La Unione Internazionale Studenti e gli studenti italiani, Archivio dell'Istituzione Gramsci, f. Giovanni Berlinguer, box 8, fasc. 81.

⁷⁵ Francesco Barbagallo, *Enrico Berlinguer* (Carocci: Roma, 2006), 23.

as a guide and an interpreter – the marriage was only formal to allow her to get out and emigrate.⁷⁶ Disillusioned from the pro-Soviet alignment of the IUS, he became involved in the establishment of the competing International Student Conference, although he refused to serve as its general secretary.⁷⁷ This was already the time when the founding period was over and a new era began – one that became known as the Cold War.

When reading these short biographic notes, one cannot overlook that many of the founding generation were later imprisoned, purged or otherwise persecuted. The people from socialist countries were often internationalists, a characteristic that was viewed with suspicion during late Stalinism. In the West and the South, student activists often engaged in anti-colonial politics, which could cause them problems too. Perhaps, the formative experience of the World War played its part. Maybe a certain type of people was drawn to student politics. Perhaps also the service in an international organization could have factored in and prevented dogmatic views. But not all were dissidents or independent spirits; many were also faithful servants to their countries' interests and rose in the ranks of civil service.

Growing tensions of the Cold War

The moment of post-war unity did not last long. The political rupture between the East and the West was already beyond any doubt in 1947. In Belgium, France and Italy, the communists were ousted from the governments based on the post-war 'national front' consensus in May. In Hungary soon after that, the democratically elected prime minister Ferenc Nagy was forced to resign by the communists who thus gained control. Sovietization of the state continued also in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland. In the summer of 1947, the US government came up with the so-called Marshall Plan – a scheme to finance the reconstruction of the war-torn European countries but also to attach the recipients of the aid to the US economy. The money came with strings attached and the strings were clearly designed to push the Soviet Union and its allies from the market.⁷⁸ In September 1947, the Informburo of Communist Parties, usually known as the Kominform, was founded in Sklarzaska Poręba in Poland. A directive Soviet-led organization it was, it served for the consolidation of Soviet power in Eastern Europe and marked the definitive end of the support of 'national front' governments on the Soviet side. The Cold War was on.

The student world was very much affected by this development. With some delay, the student movement copied the trend; in the West, communist students were marginalized. In the emerging Eastern Bloc, on the contrary, non-communists found themselves under pressure. But at the same time, the international student movement

⁷⁶ His wife was Jelena Rennerová from a politically active family, her father was a member of the right-wing National Democracy (*Národní Demokracie*). Henrik Berggren, *Olof Palme. Vor uns liegen wunderbare Tage* (München: btb Verlag, 2011), 156–7.

⁷⁷ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 106–7.

⁷⁸ Kott, *A World More Equal*, 49–54.

showed resilience to the growing animosities – many student officials were still devoted internationalists and fought for unity.

By the end of 1947, Czechoslovakia was the last country still governed by a national front alliance. The Czechoslovak Union of University Students (SVS) was born right after the Second World War and united students of all political denominations (allowed parties anyway). Since 1946, however, it was under the strong influence of the Czechoslovak national socialists – a centre-left party, historically close to Beneš – who observed the pro-communist tendencies in the IUS with growing concern. The Czechoslovak youth movement as a whole, however, was much more pro-communist. The student leadership decided to go into confrontation with the communists; the national socialists pushed through that foreign students would not have a vote in the leadership elections, after which the communists and socialists, affected by this move, left the union. The SVS voted to separate from the youth organization to stabilize the non-communist position. Among other things, it also meant that students tried to gain control over the membership (and the Presidency) in the IUS, where the Czechoslovaks had so far been represented by the umbrella youth organization.⁷⁹ Josef Grohman was the president, but the SVS formally held the Presidency, not him personally. The union tried to replace Grohman as the president already in 1947. His substitute was supposed to be Jaroslav Zich, already active in international student politics.⁸⁰ The SVS revoked Grohman's nomination but the Federation of University Students of Guatemala, a newly affiliated member organization as of 1947, 'delegated Mr. Grohman to represent their interests'.⁸¹ Grohman remained the president as a representative of both Czechoslovakia and Guatemala, showing that the Secretariat was already willing to bend the rules for political purposes.⁸² The rift between the IUS and the SVS continued. As Jim Smith, the US representative acting as a proxy to Vice-President Bill Ellis, reported, the SVS sabotaged the IUS's initiatives, so it was unofficially discussed that they would be expelled. The Czechoslovaks also refused to hand over the money raised explicitly for the tuberculosis sanatorium, for the SVS feared it would be misused.⁸³

Even with the air growing tense, the IUS was not paralysed and managed to operate. With the Western delegates still in, the efforts had to be consensual. There were many forces present in the IUS networks – some were quite radical, such as those that pushed for decolonization. But even though the resultant of these forces was pro-socialist, the organization as a whole was still actively working on bridge-building and against the division of the world. Even with the growing animosity, the

⁷⁹ Blanka Zilynská, 'Poválečná obnov a zápas o charakter univerzity', in *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy 1918–1990 IV*, ed. Jan Havránek – Zdeněk Pousta (Praha: Karolinum, 1998), 235–61.

⁸⁰ He was the co-founder of the Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques, known as AIESEC. The organization would later transform into *Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales*, AIESEC. Zich later emigrated and became involved in the main Czechoslovak exile organization, the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (Rada svobodného Československa).

⁸¹ Report on membership and development of the IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/20.

⁸² List of delegates present at the 1947 Council of the IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/19.

⁸³ Czechoslovak students, 12 March 1948, IISH, f. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

IUS kept working on its daily business and organized events. In the summer of 1947, it co-organized the first World Youth Festival in Prague. The huge event that gathered 17,000 people from seventy-one countries, as well as 62,000 locals, still took place in an atmosphere of friendship, solidarity and post-war hope.⁸⁴ The same summer, the IXth World University Games were held in Paris, and six months earlier, in January 1947, the VIIth Winter Games took place in the ski resort of Davos, Switzerland, even though the Swiss VSS refused to affiliate with the IUS.⁸⁵ Both events materialized with a big organizational support of the French students. And the sports department was in preparation for many more events.⁸⁶ The organization started the issuance of the ISIC, distributing them all over the world.⁸⁷ The IUS worked on the construction of the tuberculosis sanatoria.⁸⁸ Outside of Europe, the IUS kept supporting emancipation efforts of students that materialized, for example, at the Asian Student Conference in New Delhi in 1946 or the big South East Asia Conference, co-organized with the WFDY, in February 1948 in Calcutta. Furthermore, it continued in the anti-colonial campaigns against the French interventions in Madagascar and Indochina and supported the emancipation of Indonesia, India and Malaya.

Yet the political turmoil in Europe outshone all else. A heavy blow to the IUS's unity came in February 1948 with the Prague coup, known by the communists as the 'Victorious February'. The crisis in the Czechoslovak government, which was still formed by a wide National Front alliance, led the ministers from three non-communist parties to resign from their posts in the hope that it would lead to the fall of the whole cabinet and the formation of a new government. But because the social democratic ministers and non-partisan ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk, did not join the resignation, the government as a whole did not fall and allowed the communists to reorganize it to their liking. On 25 February, from a balcony at Wenceslas Square, prime minister and the chairman of the KSČ, Klement Gottwald, announced *urbi et orbi* that President Edvard Beneš accepted his proposal for the government reconstruction. After that, Czechoslovakia quickly fell in line with the Soviet model of state organization.⁸⁹

The communist takeover in Czechoslovakia was welcomed by many who placed their hopes in the reconstruction of the socio-economic system after the Soviet model – but not by all. One of the few who were against Sovietization and were not afraid to say it was the students. On 23 February, a big student demonstration walked to Prague Castle, the seat of the president, to give him moral support not to submit to the communist pressure and not to give up on the republic he and Masaryk senior

⁸⁴ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 21–31; Pácha, 'Youth Unite, Forward for Lasting Peace!'.
⁸⁵ Report about the Winter Games in Davos 1947, 20 July 1947, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/27.

⁸⁶ Rapport du departement des sports, 3 August 1947. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 3/29.
⁸⁷ CTED 1947 – Materials on ISIC, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 112/1916.

⁸⁸ On opening first regional sanatorium at Trebov 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 102/1769; Report on the activities of the IUS international student TB sanatorium, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia I; Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 44.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Jiří Kocian and Markéta Devátá (eds.), *Únor 1948 v Československu: Nástup komunistické totality a proměny společnosti* (Praha: ÚSD AV ČR, 2011).

had built. Beneš did not receive them. Two days later, another parade ensued – this time, it was broken up by the police, with 118 students arrested and one wounded by an accidental gunshot.⁹⁰ Czechoslovak SVS was taken over by the pro-Communist students who founded a central Action Committee.

This development threw the IUS into crisis. Were it somewhere else, maybe the Secretariat could have avoided addressing it, but such a thing happening right under its nose in Prague was impossible to ignore. The non-communists in the Secretariat were alarmed; Pierre Trouvat, the president of UNEF and vice-president of the IUS, tried to make the Secretariat condemn the development in Czechoslovakia, but unsuccessfully.⁹¹ Another outraged person was Jim Smith, a US delegate filling in for Bill Ellis, the vice-president, at the time under treatment in a sanatorium in Switzerland. Smith took part in the demonstration of 25 February himself and witnessed the students being taken into custody. Despite being a left-winger himself and later in the atmosphere of McCarthyism in the United States, he was suspected of being a communist, he vigorously proposed that the IUS formally protest against the arrests and the forcible dissolution of its member organization, the Czechoslovak SVS.⁹²

In response to the demand to react to the events, the Secretariat formed a delegation consisting of Grohman, Madden and Smith, who went to the Ministry of the Interior and inquired about the arrested students on 1 March. The delegation was well received and assured that the arrested students were almost all released or sentenced to only short administrative punishments ranging from two to seven days in custody. According to its report, the delegation was convinced that the Ministry regretted the incident and concluded that the parallels between the arrests and 17 November 1939 were completely unsubstantiated.⁹³ However, Smith remained unconvinced and announced his resignation, as he felt that he could 'no longer be associated with the International Union of Students'.⁹⁴ The coup also pushed Bill Ellis, the vice-president in absentia. Only a month before the 'Victorious February', he sent an optimistic letter to the Executive Committee from his treatment in Switzerland, thanking them for postcards and expressing hopes for the future.⁹⁵ After the communist takeover in Prague and after having conferred with Smith, he changed his mind completely. In his letter of resignation from the position of the vice-president, he reproached Madden and Grohman for what he saw as their failure: 'By your non-action, you have betrayed the trust and principles of all freedom students. You have betrayed the very tradition of November 17th which was yours to cherish and defend. You are no longer worthy of that tradition.' He finished with an appeal to the member organizations to disaffiliate from the IUS.⁹⁶ Technically speaking, he was not in a position to disaffiliate, as the NSA

⁹⁰ Zdeněk Poustka, 'Univerzita Karlova a únor 1948', in *Únor 1948 v Československu*, ed. Jiří Kocian and Markéta Devátá, 317–21.

⁹¹ Fischer, 'L'UNEF et l'Union internationale des étudiants (1945–1965)', 84–105.

⁹² Czechoslovak students, 12 March 1948, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁹³ More News from Prague. International Student Deputation to Czech Minister of Interior, 10 March 1948, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁹⁴ Czechoslovak students, 12 March 1948, IISH col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

⁹⁵ Letter from Bill Ellis, 12 January 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 7/162.

⁹⁶ Bill Ellis' letter of resignation from IUS, 24 March 1948, NAČR, PA 11/225.

was not officially a member. The constituting convention in Madison did not approve it, even though the general intention was supported; the decision was postponed. The US students were henceforth represented by a small union of medical students; one of them was Bernard Lown.

After the communist takeover, the question arose whether the organization should reside in a country that was backsliding on democratic principles. It was demonstrated that the IUS was under strong communist influence. The general secretary, Tom Madden, claimed to be a friend of Jan Masaryk, the non-partisan minister of foreign affairs. As per Madden, Masaryk was very popular within the IUS and frequently met with its representatives, as did his secretary Antonín Sum, allegedly a friend of Grohman's. In an interview, Madden said he had met with Masaryk after the communist takeover and asked him to tell him frankly if they should move the headquarters to another country. Masaryk said no, insisting 'that he would see to it that Gottwald would keep the arrangements made for the IUS'.⁹⁷

However, Masaryk did not judge the situation well. Only a couple of days later, he was found dead in the courtyard of his ministry under the window of his apartment. To this day, it is not clear whether he jumped or was thrown, but it made little difference for the later development.⁹⁸ For the relocation of the headquarters, the political will was lacking anyway. Had the seat of the IUS been in another city, like Paris, perhaps the events of the next months could have played out differently. But with Czechoslovakia becoming a Stalinist dictatorship and a part of the Eastern Bloc, it was increasingly difficult for the IUS to build bridges any longer. The communist takeover in Czechoslovakia made the IUS, along with many others, pick sides. With the location of the headquarters and the overall affinity to socialism in the Secretariat, it was not even a real choice.

The affiliation of the IUS Secretariat with the East was apparent from the position it took on the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and subsequent events. It set up an investigation team that was to inspect the persecution and arrests of students. The Ellis and Smith resignations were seen as hasty, as much time and effort had to be dedicated to the investigation before coming to conclusions. In the IUS report published in March 1948, the Secretariat pointed out that the demonstration on 25 February was both illegal (without permission from authorities) and illegitimate (not having been approved by student organs), and that the arrested students were treated well and mostly already released. About the situation at Czechoslovak universities, where communist Action Committees were firing 'reactionary' students and professors, the report was moderate and pointed out that the work of the Action Committees corresponded with the societal development and was organized democratically – that is, from below.⁹⁹ Moreover, for the IUS, the central Action Committee was much easier to work with than the SVS. Immediately after the communist takeover, the Central

⁹⁷ Interview with Tom Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview; Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

⁹⁸ For the overview of Masaryk's death, see, for example, Ladislava Kremličková (ed.), Jan Masaryk: Úvahy o jeho smrti (Praha: ÚDV, 2005).

⁹⁹ IUS report on recent events in Czechoslovakia, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 83/1359.

Students Action Committee committed itself to repairing the relations with the IUS, acknowledging the rights of foreign students, handing over the money raised for the sanatorium, and in general rectifying all conflict points.¹⁰⁰ Not long after that, the Czechoslovak membership in the IUS was taken over by the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (*Československý svaz mládeže*, ČSM). The organization was hardly independent; it was a member of the National Front and under the control of the communists. Within this youth union, the students only formed a subsection. Without any objections or even confirmation by the Council, the IUS Secretariat transferred the Presidency to the new member organization; Grohman could thus stay.

In the meantime, the Secretariat also remained silent to the purges at Czechoslovak universities and the persecution of Czechoslovak students after 1948. A check-up of students was conducted in January and February 1949, allegedly to eliminate dormant students and make room for those eager to study (as per the IUS report). In reality, the goal was to suspend students' critical stances on building people's democracy.¹⁰¹ Thousands of students were expelled before the end of 1948, amounting to about 25 per cent of Czechoslovak studentship.¹⁰²

The Western member organizations watched the development at the headquarters with increasing displeasure. Aside from the students from the United States, the communist takeover also pushed the Swedes and the Danes behind the fence, while the Norwegians halted the process of affiliation. However, not all Western member unions automatically disaffiliated, as the US officials expected. For many European students, the communists still did not lack legitimacy, especially given their involvement in the resistance. And the report on the investigation of the events seemed credible; even the British Bill Rust, a non-communist, urged Ellis and Smith to reconsider the resignation after familiarizing himself with the report from Prague.¹⁰³ The British National Union of Students accepted the report and endorsed the IUS Secretariat – no doubt, at least partially, thanks to Tom Madden's eloquence.¹⁰⁴

But despite attempts to preserve unity, the damage was done. At the IUS Council meeting in Paris in September 1948, the situation in Czechoslovakia was discussed again. The resolution that resulted from the discussion tried to save face and be as vague as possible.¹⁰⁵ Quite obviously, the aim was to avoid condemnation and not to alienate the remaining Westerners at the same time – without the Western unions present, the legitimacy of the IUS as the universal student federation could be questioned. But at

¹⁰⁰ Special press communiqué, 29 February 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 83/1354.

¹⁰¹ The report of the IUS Secretariat of the Czechoslovak student situation, 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 18/331.

¹⁰² This number, however, does not count with the successful appeals against the expelling – the final number is likely lower. Zdeněk Pouta, 'Studijní prověrky na českých vysokých školách', in *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 34–8 (Praha: Univerzita Karlova 2004), fasc. 1–2, 87–93.

¹⁰³ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 66–7.

¹⁰⁴ Resolution of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Students of Great Britain, Wales and Northern Ireland, 31 March 1948, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 83/1357; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 135–8.

¹⁰⁵ Resolution adopted by council meeting Paris 1948, concerning IUS and its position to February events in CSSR, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 14/270.

the same time, the pressure from the East also intensified. As Tom Madden recalled, a week before the Paris Council meeting, the Soviets came up with a new point on the agenda – to condemn the Marshall Plan, which was about to be realized in Western Europe. According to Madden, their request led to a three-day stalemate in discussion, and in the end, a neutral stance was taken, which meant that the IUS did not succumb to the Soviet influence.¹⁰⁶ But even if this case can be seen, along with Madden, as proof of autonomy, it would not last long.

The split of the student movement

The IUS was designed as a universal and representative student organization, but this plan began to fall apart as soon as the organization was founded. As we have seen, diverse student unions were hesitant to affiliate with the IUS from the very beginning. And the rift grew deeper as the Cold War intensified.

The consensual basis of post-war anti-fascist internationalism crumbled. As the two camps adopted gradually more and more hostile positions towards one another, so did the socialist and liberal internationalisms grow apart. Both were establishing large transnational networks, and both were supported and organized by the respective superpowers. Although the Soviet Union and the United States funded many initiatives and used them for their propaganda and cultural diplomacy, viewing them solely as executioners of the will of the puppetmasters in Moscow and Washington would be short-sighted. The World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, held in Wrocław in the summer of 1948, indubitably served the political aims of the Soviet Union. The Congress for Cultural Freedom was founded in West Berlin in 1950 and united anti-communist intellectuals from all over the world; only later was it discovered that it was sponsored by the CIA. However, individuals who were a part of these networks were not necessarily paid, nor did they have to have other ulterior motives; many supported these initiatives out of genuine concern.

The inception of the Korean War sealed the division of the intellectual and cultural world; after that, it was impossible to cooperate. The UN and UNESCO sided with the West, recognizing South Korea and endorsing the UN operation led by the United States. Even though some socialist countries remained members of UNESCO, Stalin lost his belief and withdrew.¹⁰⁷ The Soviets were not very active in the UN either. They even opted for the ‘empty chair’ policy at the UN Security Council, which allowed the United States to launch the intervention in the Korean War under the UN banners. The socialist INGOs, or the ‘democratic international organizations’, as they styled themselves, on the other hand, adopted an unequivocal stance on the topic. The newly established World Peace Council (WPC), which emerged from the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, spearheaded the struggle for peace, setting the tone for the others. Its first president, a renowned French physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie, launched

¹⁰⁶ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹⁰⁷ Porter, *Reds in Blue*, 17–47.

a so-called Stockholm Appeal in close cooperation with Soviet authorities. The Appeal was published just a week after the breakout of the Korean War, demanding the 'outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples'.¹⁰⁸ The Appeal was in total signed by a quarter billion people, including, however, the population of the Eastern Bloc, where adding the signature to the list was compulsory. But even though the Stockholm Appeal was a product of the Stalinist USSR, many of the signatories were far from being communists, and the networks it formed brought together actors of various backgrounds.¹⁰⁹

The division of internationalisms at that time can be tellingly demonstrated in the history of the socialist INGOs. In 1950, they also joined in and spread the Soviet propagandistic interpretation of the Korean War – including the IUS. The main accusation the INGOs were disseminating was the information on 'bacteriological warfare' waged by the United States in Korea.¹¹⁰ The Women's International Democratic Federation even sent a delegation to North Korea to examine alleged war crimes perpetrated by the UN forces.¹¹¹ The slogan 'Hands off Korea!' became the most significant motto of the IUS Congress in 1950.¹¹² At the beginning of the 1950s, France, which hosted several of the socialist INGOs, decided to get rid of them. The WFDY, the WIDE, the World Peace Council, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and the World Federation of Trade Unions were all based in Paris until then. After they were ousted from France, the WFDY relocated to Budapest and the WIDF to Berlin, while the WPC found its new home in Prague and the WFTU in Vienna. Only a couple of years later, in 1956, the WPC and WFTU switched places, the WFTU settling in Prague and the WPC in Vienna, before relocating to Helsinki in 1968.

As a result of this juggling, almost all these socialist-oriented INGOs found themselves residing in the East; only the International Association of Democratic Lawyers found a home in Brussels, and the World Federation of Scientific Workers remained seated in London, where it was founded.¹¹³ In opposition to the socialist INGOs in the East, the West set up their mirror organizations soon enough. Just like the IUS, other socialist INGOs also lost their Western members and observed with dismay the creation of their counterparts in the 'Free World'. The WFDY found its mirror in the World Assembly of Youth, set up in London in 1949. The WFTU had the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the IOJ had the International

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Jean-Claude Amiard, *Military Nuclear Accidents. Volume 1: Environmental, Ecological, Health and Socio-Economic Consequences* (London: ISTE, 2018), 195.

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Dobrenko, 'Conspiracy of Peace: The Cold War, the International Peace Movement, and the Soviet Peace Campaign, 1946–1956' (PhD Diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, London), 63–116.

¹¹⁰ On reports of the use of bacteriological warfare in Korea, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 98/1651.

¹¹¹ Celia Donert, 'Internationalism to Human Rights. Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951', *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 313–33.

¹¹² 2nd IUS Congress. Solidarity demonstration with the people of Korea. Resolution of solidarity with Korea. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 45/705.

¹¹³ Even though the WFSW had an important regional center in Prague, too. Doubravka Olšáková and Gordon Barrett, 'World Federation of Scientific Workers', in *Palgrave Handbook of Non-State Actors in East–West Relations*, 1–14.

Federation of Journalists, and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers had the International Commission of Jurists. The WIDF had to even compete with two: the International Council of Women and the International Alliance of Women. The setup of all these organizations was not an accident – even though it was an expression of the Western civil society which promoted their independent NGOs and a solid effort to have apolitical organizations stand for the matters they should represent, there were also political goals – partly it was a government-initiated strategy to fight for these fields with the communists. British foreign minister Ernest Bevin helped set up the World Assembly of Youth six months after the 1948 Prague events, and the CIA was also involved; it showed open political interests.¹¹⁴

In this regard, the students were even rather slow – they did not want to break the anti-fascist alliance so easily. Even though I argue that the IUS was not a straight-out communist organization from the very beginning, the communists certainly had fundamental influence there and the overall political consensus was quite left-wing, which became a thorn in the side especially for many US students. For this reason, plans for a rival organization were conceived immediately after the IUS foundation in 1946.¹¹⁵ The National Federation of Canadian University Students organized a meeting in Brussels to form a strategy to get the upper hand in the IUS – or, if the plan did not succeed, to revive the CIE.¹¹⁶ The strive for unity among students, however, was far too strong back then. But as we have seen, the cracks in the unity of world studentship grew wider: the Dutch, the Italians and the Swiss did not affiliate, thereafter being represented in the IUS only by marginal partisan groups or not at all. The US students had their vice president, but the membership was never approved. Another exodus followed the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, after which the host country became undisputedly a part of the Eastern Bloc.

What caused further rifts between the communist-controlled member organizations and their allies on one side and the remaining liberals on the other was the continuing Stalinization of the IUS Secretariat. This process can be observed in the uncritical adoption of Soviet foreign policies on all points of the agenda. The IUS Council could defy the wishes of Stalin and not denounce the Marshall Plan in the summer of 1948 but fell in line soon after that. The next victims of this policy were the Yugoslav students. The split between Stalin and Josip Broz Tito was underway in 1948 and sometime later, the IUS took action too.

At first, the Yugoslavs were only ignored – the World Student News did not inform on Yugoslav students and no initiatives took place there. In 1949, this ostracism turned into harassment. The Yugoslav representative in the International Preparatory Committee was arrested in Budapest at a meeting planning the next Festival. A month later, the Yugoslav delegation was arrested and evicted from Bulgaria where it was travelling to take part in the IUS Council in Sofia. The pretence was that they had the

¹¹⁴ Richard Aldrich, 'Putting Culture into the Cold War: the Cultural Relations Department (CRD) and British Covert Information Warfare', *Intelligence and National Security* 18, no. 2 (2003): 109–33; Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 131.

¹¹⁵ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 67.

¹¹⁶ Mazen Husseini, *Cold War in Universities*, 18.

wrong visa.¹¹⁷ The open hostility was then sealed at the Executive Committee meeting in London in 1950. At that meeting, the Yugoslav Union of Students was subjugated to vicious questioning about the situation in their country. In the end, President Grohman denounced it as a fascist movement and the union was expelled.¹¹⁸ Tom Madden, who was present at the meeting, although not as the general secretary any longer, added an interesting detail in his recollections. During the meeting, he remembered, Grohman was summoned to the Czechoslovak embassy in London and instructed to expel the Yugoslavs – and was directly threatened that his family in Czechoslovakia would be in danger if he refused to obey. Grohman, as per Madden's opinion, was rather autonomous until that moment and delayed the irreparable rift with the Yugoslavs as long as possible – it is symptomatic, after all, that the ousting took place only two years after the beginning of the split.¹¹⁹ The expulsion itself was unconstitutional, as the Executive Committee had no authority to expel member organizations. Still, it was a done deed, only *a posteriori* ratified by the Council.

The Westerners were witnessing these developments mostly as observers only (by the way, another of Grohman's achievements, as he fought to keep the Executive Committee meetings open to non-members as well). The Danish and the Swedish disaffiliated straight after the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 while the Australians, Belgians, Canadians and US students aborted the affiliation process.¹²⁰ The UNEF, which fought hard for the unity of the student movement, ran out of patience, and the French also left. By 1949, the only West Europeans left in the IUS were the British National Union of Students and the Scottish Union of Students. The British considered whether to stay or not – they chose to stay for the time being, to try to influence things from within. They revoked Tom Madden as their representative in the Secretariat, however. In his stead, they nominated Bill Rust, who served as the vice president, and Stanley Jenkins as a member of the Financial Committee – both non-communists and sharp opponents of Stalinization in the Secretariat. Without the nomination of his organization, Tom Madden was no longer the general secretary, but he was not sent home; at the IUS Council in Sofia, he was given the special function of a permanent secretary with no voting rights. The Italian Giovanni Berlinguer assumed the position of the general secretary.¹²¹ After a heated discussion at the Executive Committee meeting in London in 1950, however, the British decided to temporarily suspend their membership in the IUS (even then, they were not ready to fully withdraw).¹²²

For the IUS, the secessions were starting to be a serious problem. In order to maintain the image of being the only representative student organization in the world,

¹¹⁷ International Union of Students and the Cominform, May 1952. IISH, col. IUS, box Varia II.

¹¹⁸ Joël Kotek provided a transcript of a part of the interrogation. Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 155–6.

¹¹⁹ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹²⁰ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 135.

¹²¹ Report of the delegation to the IUS Council, IISH, col. IUS, box Council I. See also Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹²² BNUŠ: Suspension of IUS membership, 1950 NAČR, f. MSS, PA 127/2136.

the IUS needed to have member organizations from as many countries as possible. No organizations from Western Europe and North America meant a serious challenge to such a claim. To cover this deficiency, the IUS started conjuring up fake and unrepresentative member unions to maintain the appearance of a global organization. The Italians who now held the position of the general secretary were represented by a hollow structure of a Coordinating Committee. The US students were represented by the Association of Interns and Medical Students after the decision of the NSA not to affiliate, holding the position of vice-president in the person of Halsted Holman. And when the Association of Interns and Medical Students chose to disaffiliate from the IUS, too, a new organization was created ad hoc – the Committee for International Student Cooperation.¹²³ The large Indian subcontinent was represented by a minority partisan All-India Student Federation, the Netherlands, by the small Federation of Progressive Student Unions.¹²⁴ This practice, however, undermined the credibility of the IUS perhaps even more.

In the meantime, the Western students started to think about an alternative student organization. In 1949, they organized an 'International Student Conference' in London. It was attended only by students from core capitalist countries – Western Europe plus the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. The IUS Secretariat was not happy and refused the invitation to co-organize the meeting. General Secretary Giovanni Berlinguer saw the holding of the conference as a token of hostility, as there were unions that had been 'consistent enemies of the IUS', specifically naming the Dutch and the West Germans.¹²⁵ The Western student unions met nonetheless. At the meeting, they agreed that the cooperation should be apolitical. Towards colonial students, the conference adopted a promise to assist them, even though there were also voices suggesting that national liberation was not a student matter and thus should not be addressed.¹²⁶

After that, the relations were beyond repair. The hostility reached its peak at the second IUS Congress, held in Prague in August 1950. The event took place in a heated atmosphere affected by the Korean War that had broken out just two months earlier. Unlike the first Congress in 1946 where passionate discussions also took place but in general were held in the spirit of internationalist enthusiasm, the follow-up Congress four years later was characterized by demonstrative expressions of support to the Soviet Union and aggressive attacks on the opponents in the Stalinist line. Like the previous event, this one was also given the appropriate attention by the host country. The opening ceremony was attended by the general and war hero Ludvík Svoboda, and ministers or former ministers Zdeněk Fierlinger, Zdeněk Nejedlý and Václav Kopecký. It was greeted by the delegation of the Czech nationalist gymnastic organization of

¹²³ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 150.

¹²⁴ CM Sofia 1949. Report of the Credentials Committee, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 26/434.

¹²⁵ Statement of the Secretariat of the International Union of Students concerning a Student Meeting to be held in London 20–22 December 1949; Stanley Jenkins to the Executive Secretariat of the IUS, 25 November 1949, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

¹²⁶ Commission on Attitude towards political discussion and colonial student problem, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 100/1726.

Sokol, led by the legendary athlete Emil Zátopek. From the international audience, there were Jorge Amado and other celebrities.¹²⁷

The tone of the Congress was apparent; the Executive Committee presented a report in which it clearly stated its position in the Cold War:

In the post-war period two forces have emerged: forces of peace and progress led by the Soviet Union and supported by every honest and peace-loving person in the world, and the forces of war and reaction directed by a small group of imperialists from Wall Street in their frantic drive for profits and world domination are trying to drag the world into a new and more horrible bloodshed.¹²⁸

The Congress approved the resolution in support of the North Korean forces. Olof Palme, the Swedish delegate to the Congress (as an observer, since the Swedish union had disaffiliated) said ironically in his report: 'The first speaker was the delegate from North Korea. He entered wearing a camouflage uniform and a bazooka on his back, and began a rant against the fascist West. This set the tone of the entire congress.'¹²⁹

Even though the delegates from socialist countries were all carefully selected and playing according to the script, even at the peak of Stalinist dogmatism, we can speak of some heterogeneity. And the critique of Western colonialism was far from being just a hysterical rant. Delegates to the Congress from the colonial world presented their reports, speaking about the sorry state of education facilities and the low level of alphabetization in Africa and Asia. The Algerian delegate talked about the need for independence and the racialized educational politics of the French colonial administration – as per his words, less than 10 per cent of the students at the University of Algiers were of Muslim origin.¹³⁰ The Malagasy delegate reported on an even worse situation in Madagascar and condemned the French violence used to suppress the national liberation uprising.¹³¹ In its official language, the IUS criticized the Western unions for speaking about apoliticism but insisted their actual problem with the IUS was its anti-colonialism. 'The Dutch union of students was fully backing its government's policy in Indonesia ... the Federation of Belgian students was still under the apolitical influence of CIE concepts and could not reconcile itself to the idea of anti-colonial struggle – considering Belgium's vast African holdings', as Mazen Husseini wrote in his unfinished IUS history publication.¹³² The same argument was

¹²⁷ 2nd IUS Congress. Ceremonial opening of the Congress, NAČR, f. MSS, box 45, file 704; 2nd IUS Congress. Austrian, Albanian and Malayan delegates speak, distinguished guests greet the Congress, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 45/707.

¹²⁸ Report of the Executive Committee on the activities of the IUS since the 1st Congress and future tasks in fight for peace, national independence, a democratic education and a better future. PA 46/721.

¹²⁹ Julie Ness, 'Geo-Politics and Student Unionism. A History of International Student Organization', in *No Student Left Out. The Do's & Don'ts of Student Participation in Higher Education Decision-Making*, ed. Karina Ufert (Brussels: ESU, 2011), 19–31.

¹³⁰ 2nd IUS Congress. Speech of Algerian delegate, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 43/681.

¹³¹ 2nd IUS Congress. Speech of Madagascar delegation, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 44/698.

¹³² Mazen Husseini, *Cold War in Universities*, unpublished manuscript, 19–20.

used with the French – they disaffiliated because the IUS's policy had become too supportive of national liberation.

And the critique was not aimed only at traditional European empires but also at racial inequalities. One of the guests of the Congress was the US intellectual and one of the most influential theorists of Black emancipation in the United States, W. E. B. Du Bois. Regarding his participation in the Congress and objections to alignment with the communist cause, Du Bois said that America had 'far more to fear from Mississippi than from the Soviet Union'.¹³³ He spoke of the 'calculated poverty' of the colonies, including the 'fifteen million Negroes' who 'form a quasi-colony within the nation.' The present delegates of the US students did not protest. Robert L. West, an observer from the NSA, praised the IUS for its efforts to stand for peace and spoke of the fight for equality from the standpoint of Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies and the Atlantic Charter.¹³⁴ Another delegate was Halsted Holman, the IUS vice-president, who complained about the intimidation by the United States for taking part in the Congress.¹³⁵ And indeed, Holman was later called before the Un-American Activities Committee.¹³⁶

There were also voices from the West, however, that were far more confrontational. The British delegate Stanley Jenkins, who was still a vice-president, even though his organization had suspended its membership, delivered a very critical speech. He received applause on a couple of his points, such as when he spoke for peace or said that 'full and free education for the colonial peoples will only be achieved when they are undisputed rulers of their own country'.¹³⁷ His other points were received in a much colder manner by the audience. In particular, he criticized the Soviet Union and the way it was using, in his view, the IUS for its purposes. He attacked the way the Yugoslavs were ousted at the Executive Committee meeting in London just earlier that year. 'Either the leaders of the IUS are entirely unconcerned about truth and justice, or they are unwilling instruments of their governments'.¹³⁸ Because of his speech, Jenkins became a lightning rod for all the anger of the passionate revolutionaries who held the majority among the delegates. The tone of the reaction was set by the Soviet delegate Alexander Shelepin, who accused Jenkins of warmongering and ironically asked Jenkins if he knew, since he criticized the Soviet Union so harshly, that it saved his country during the Second World War, too. When he ended, he received a thirty-minute ovation.¹³⁹ More delegates continued condemning Jenkins' position. Jacques Vergès, the French-Siamese delegate representing Réunion at the Congress said that Jenkins' support of the Yugoslavs meant 'complicity to provocative agents'.¹⁴⁰ The British

¹³³ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹³⁴ Statement to World Student Congress by observer of U.S. National Student Association Robert L. West, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 42/656.

¹³⁵ 2nd IUS Congress. Intervention of IUS Vice-President Holman (USA), NAČR, f. MSS, PA 42/658.

¹³⁶ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 187–8.

¹³⁷ British NUS speech repudiated by progressive British and colonial students, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 45/706.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Address of the Soviet delegation, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 45/708.

¹⁴⁰ Materials of African delegations, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 44/683.

delegate was slandered even by delegates from colonial or semi-colonial countries, such as Nigeria, India, Iran and Iraq. He was mainly criticized for defending the British imperial interests and for hypocrisy, as he pretended that his position was apolitical. British 'progressive' students condemned Jenkins' speech too – even proposed a vote of censure, which was later indeed adopted.¹⁴¹ However, despite the aggressive attacks on Jenkins' account, he was later nominated to and elected as the vice-president of the IUS during the Congress.

After the Congress, the BNUS confirmed the strange and unprecedented move of temporary withholding of membership. However, the IUS accepted it at the Warsaw Council in 1951 since the organization did not want to lose one of the last remaining Western members. A compromise was thus found but only a year later, the BNUS severed the membership altogether.¹⁴²

One of the results of the 1950 IUS Congress in Prague was that the Western student unions decided to move ahead with their initiative of an alternative student union. In December 1950, Scandinavian student unions with the *spiritus agens* Olof Palme in the forefront set up a student conference in Stockholm to follow up on their previous meeting in London. Even before the conference started, there was a majority consensus that the new framework for cooperation would not be a mirror organization to the IUS. There was not supposed to be a permanent secretariat; instead, the idea was to create a platform for cooperation, a student conference that would gather annually and would provide space to meet, interact, and discuss. Also, as it was agreed, the organization was to be apolitical, with the example of the interwar CIE. In other words, it was not supposed to be programmatically anti-communist.¹⁴³

However, not all shared this view. In Stockholm, the US NSA President Allard Lowenstein surprised everybody by saying that the new organization should be established on a political anti-communist basis, even though it was agreed beforehand that these two things would not be discussed. This happened to the dismay of Olof Palme and many other delegates, including a part of the US delegation. The Conference then voted to meet again, effectively postponing the decision about organizational arrangement of the new body. In the meantime, the CIA elaborated a scheme to covertly fund this initiative to counter the IUS.¹⁴⁴

In 1951, the French tried to come up with another organization – the European Student Conference which would be limited to Western Europe – a scheme that would be realized twenty years later. The initiative was supported by Italians (under the leadership of later Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi) and Belgians. The conference met in Nancy but was ignored or even obstructed by the British and the Scandinavians, so the initiative was effectively dead in its crib.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ British NUS speech repudiated by progressive British and colonial students, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 45/706.

¹⁴² British Students and the International Union of Students, Supplement to World Student News 7, No. 2 (1953), 8–11.

¹⁴³ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 35.

¹⁴⁴ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 82.

¹⁴⁵ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 182.

In January 1952, there was a follow-up meeting to the Stockholm conference. The event, held in Edinburgh at this time, became known as the International Student Conference; there the structure of the new organization was established. Contrary to the previously envisaged nature of the organization as only a platform for meeting at an annual conference, a permanent secretariat was established in the small Dutch university town of Leiden. It was called the Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC) and even though the annual conference had the supreme authority, the COSEC still took care of the day-to-day activities, thus largely setting the agenda. So despite the original idea, the ISC in fact became a mirror organization to the IUS – just as the other ‘democratic international organizations’ had theirs.

Even though the ISC adopted the principle ‘students as such’, in reality, the ISC Constitution was not completely apolitical. Because it strived for universality, it was not desirable to become openly anti-communist. On the contrary, it seemed like the ISC leaders decided to compete with the IUS on its own field. The Constitution stated that the member organizations would work for disarmament and world peace and that they would combat imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, totalitarianism, racism, dictatorship, social injustice and militarism.¹⁴⁶ Many did not subscribe to such a struggle – including the CIA which funded the organization. But as Nigel Moses pointed out:

[T]he socially critical ISC was by far the lesser of two evils from the American point of view. A direct, overt attack, sponsored by the American government, on the IUS, an organization that for many students embodied the ideals of global unity, peace, national liberation, and racial equality, would have looked ideologically repressive and undemocratic to the world’s student leaders, many of whom were already critical of American society and geopolitical intentions.¹⁴⁷

The CIA tried to convince Olof Palme to run the organization but he refused; instead, his Swedish compatriot Jarl Tranaeus was chosen to lead the Coordinating Secretariat.¹⁴⁸

By August 1952, the ISC was an established organization and the split was done. The founding had an immediate effect on the IUS; both organizations started competing for member unions. The IUS was trying to maintain its image by accepting small and unrepresentative organizations. But overall, some dropouts damaged the IUS and it seemed that the ISC could be winning. A 1953 British analysis claimed that only seventeen of the IUS organizations were representative of their national studentship.¹⁴⁹ One of the remaining cards the IUS held was the Festivals – the Western youth and student movement did not have anything like it. But even there, the participation

¹⁴⁶ La Charte de la CIE, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258.

¹⁴⁷ Nigel Roy Moses, ‘Canadian Student Movements on the Cold War Battlefield, 1944–1954’, in *Histoire sociale / Social History* 39, no. 78 (2006): 363–403.

¹⁴⁸ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 106–8.

¹⁴⁹ Analysis of membership in the International Union of Students, 1953, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

fluctuated. There was a significant drop at the 1949 Budapest Festival before the numbers grew again – that is, if they are to be believed.¹⁵⁰

The criticism of the colonial system and promotion of national liberation at the IUS events could not hide that the organization stayed silent about the development in Eastern Europe. The Sovietization of the region also imported the practice of purges and show trials to the new people's democracies. The wave of political processes following the Yugoslav dropout from the pack hit Czechoslovakia particularly hard, taking down even the KSČ's number two Rudolf Slánský. And it marked the IUS, too – it caused the sacking of Josef Grohman. The president of the IUS was a friend of two people convicted in the Slánský process – Artur London, a true internationalist and the Spanish civil war veteran, and Bedřich Geminder, head of the KSČ's international department, Grohman's patron who was even the best man at his wedding with Jarmila Maršálková. As per Tom Madden, Grohman decided to attend Geminder's birthday party even though he knew that it was politically risky – Geminder was already under investigation. His fate was sealed soon afterwards. At the Executive Committee meeting in Budapest in 1952, he was attacked for being a spy, as he recalled. His friend from the IUS Secretariat, Alexander Shelepin, allegedly came to Budapest from Moscow specifically to warn him – he had been informed that Grohman was going to be revoked and advised him to resign first.¹⁵¹ If this is true, Shelepin may have saved him from prison. In his own testimony, Grohman said that he was invited by a secretary at the Central Committee Bedřich Voda-Pexa who asked him to resign.¹⁵²

The Executive Committee accepted his resignation, no questions asked. The South Africans suggested a motion to express gratitude to Grohman for his years of dedicated work. It was disapproved with a rather cold explanation that the IUS is not 'a thanksgiving body'.¹⁵³ One member of the Czechoslovak staff in the IUS claimed that Grohman gave jobs in the IUS to many friends and family members, including his wife Jarmila Maršálková; many of them left with him.¹⁵⁴ After he left, Grohman got a low-profile job in a publishing house and in the 1960s, his former buddy from youth politics, Jiří Hájek, got him working at the Ministry of Education. Later still, he was in the Executive Council of the UNESCO. During the normalization period in Czechoslovakia, he was imprisoned again and spent nine years in jail; Kotek speculated that his imprisonment coincided with the political fall of his friend Shelepin.¹⁵⁵ He was accused of gathering information for West German intelligence; according to Grohman himself, he was approached by two people at a UNESCO conference and

¹⁵⁰ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 38–9.

¹⁵¹ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

¹⁵² Protokol o výslechu obviněného sepsaný 30. srpna 1977 v úřadovně Generální prokuratury ČSSR v Praze 4, ABS, sb. Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), arch. č. V-40857 MV.

¹⁵³ Geert van Maanen, *The International Student Movement*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ Záznam poznatků o působnosti Josefa Grohmana na MSS, 21 January 1977, ABS, sb. Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), arch. č. V-40857 MV.

¹⁵⁵ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 259–60.

agreed to give them information in exchange for money clandestinely.¹⁵⁶ His old friends from France, including Pierre Rostini, Paul Bouchet and Pierre Trouvat, sent a letter to Czechoslovak authorities expressing their opinion that Grohman was a man of honor.¹⁵⁷

As the president, Grohman was replaced by Giovanni Berlinguer who until then served as general secretary. Berlinguer's place was assumed by a Romanian veteran in international youth politics, the head of the Cominform youth, the mathematician Bernard Bereanu. But both Berlinguer and Bereanu were gone before a year had passed; the former was stuck in Italy after his passport was confiscated and the latter was back in Romania, also politically purged.¹⁵⁸ In 1953, the IUS was in a deep financial and legitimacy crisis and in dire need of a fresh direction; Stalin was dead and a new era was dawning. The name of the man who would consolidate the IUS was Jiří Pelikán.

¹⁵⁶ Ing. Josef Grohman CSc. – předání finančních hodnot, 5 May 1977, ABS, sb. Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), arch. č. V-40857 MV.

¹⁵⁷ Signatories of the letter to Czechoslovak Ambassador in France, 11 January 1977, ABS, sb. Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy (V), arch. č. V-40857 MV.

¹⁵⁸ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 114.

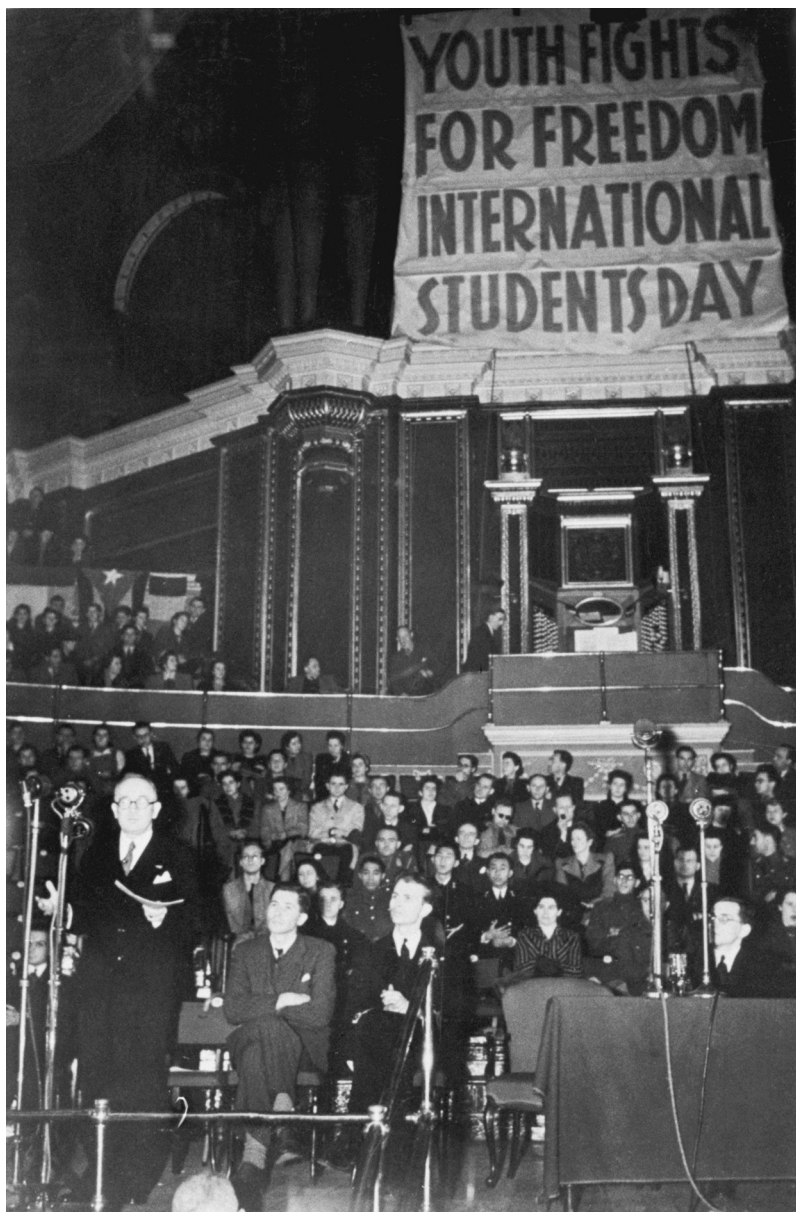


Figure 1 President Edvard Beneš speaks at the first celebration of the International Students Day in 1941 in London. *Source:* ČTK.



Figure 2 President Edvard Beneš welcomes the IUS delegation led by Josef Grohman at the Prague Castle, February 1947. *Source: ČTK.*



Figure 3 Participants of the 1946 World Student Congress in front of the venue in Prague.
Source: NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 4 Giovanni Berlinguer at the laying of the cornerstone of the student sanatorium in Třebotov. Source: NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 5 Delegates from Korea, India, Italy and Poland at the IUS Congress.
Source: NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 6 Alexander Shelepin, c. 1950. *Source:* NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 7 Giovanni Berlinguer, Josef Grohman and Tom Madden, 1950. *Source:* NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 8 Scottish delegation at the 1951 World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin. *Source:* NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 9 Jiří Pelikán receives a pin from a student delegation. *Source: NAČR, col. MSS.*



Figure 10 Jiří Pelikán and Yuri Gagarin at the IUS Congress in Leningrad in 1962. *Source: NAČR, col. MSS.*

The Golden Age

In his description of the three decades of post-war history in Western Europe, the great British historian Eric Hobsbawm used the term *Golden Age*, in reference to the unprecedented economic growth ('economic miracle') as well as improvement of the overall quality of life in Europe.¹ Speaking of student internationalism, here too, we can call the 1950s and 1960s a Golden Age. Not because all students would live, study and work in a harmonious unity. On the contrary, politically, the student world was more divided than ever before, adapting to the polarity of the Cold War.

But it was a time when the students' numbers grew unprecedentedly and their mobility increased. The number of foreign students grew manifold between 1950 and 1970. The busiest host countries were France, West Germany, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.² At the same time, the students were still politically active and unionized, giving them larger power and representativity. The rivalry between the East and West did harm the unity of the student movement but also supported student activity and political outreach. The Cold War was also a golden age of scholarships – moved by the increase in mobility in general as well as developmental policies and courting of the decolonized world. Only at the end of the 1960s with the emergence of the student protest movement did this setup find itself in a crisis. This chapter covers the period from the end of Stalinism until the multifold crisis of student internationalism, with the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the dissolution of the ISC and the emergence of the global student protest movement at the end of the 1960s (about 1953–69).

The International Union of Students, after the split at the beginning of the 1950s, happened to stand firmly on the side of the East. For most of the duration of the Golden Age, the most formative person in the IUS was Jiří Pelikán. Born in Olomouc in Czechoslovakia, the promising and smart young communist with knowledge of languages and history in the Resistance seemed to have a bright future in the Party and the state.³ After the Second World War, he became involved in youth politics, serving in the high functions in the Czechoslovak Union of Youth and the SVS.⁴

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 223–400.

² Perraton, *International Students*, 76–82.

³ Pelikán was also imprisoned during the Second World War for his activity in the resistance in the illegal KSČ. He was even arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo. Vlastní životopis, ABS, f. Správa vyšetřování StB – Stíhání nacistických vá. zločinců, sign. 325_41_1.

⁴ Vlastní životopis, ABS, f. Správa vyšetřování StB – Stíhání nacistických vá. zločinců, sign. 325_41_1.

Even though in Czechoslovakia Pelikán is more remembered for his brave actions during the 1968 Soviet invasion and for his subsequent role as a proponent of the left-wing exile opposition, as a student leader in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he was fiercely devoted to the Stalinist revolution. During the 'Victorious February', he was a member of the Action Committees, taking part in the purges at universities.⁵ His position in the new regime was even reinforced when he was elected a member of the National Assembly (*Národní shromáždění*, the parliament) in May 1948 at just the age of twenty-five and held the post until 1954.⁶

As a student leader, he was involved in the IUS events since its inception. He was officially elected to the position of general secretary at the Warsaw Congress in 1953 when he was already thirty years old. The IUS was at the time in a deep crisis – presumably, Pelikán, as rather a heavyweight, was chosen to lead it precisely to fix it. Even though Joël Kotek claimed that in 1952 the IUS and WFDY 'were at their strongest', which was why the CIA had to finance the Leiden-based International Student Conference,⁷ in reality, the IUS struggled with the lack of finances. When Pelikán became the general secretary, the IUS was, financially, in a catastrophic state. The budgets were 'completely false', as per Pelikán's own words, and the ČSM refused to cover the deficits any longer and demanded that the expenses be distributed among members.⁸ And it took some time before the balance was restored; still in 1958, there was a deficit of 520,000 USD. As Pelikán complained, many member unions did not pay their dues; his proposed solution was that the IUS might turn to member unions, especially the ČSM, for an extraordinary contribution, or it might cancel some planned events.⁹

At the same time, the IUS also had legitimacy problems, with many student unions disaffiliating due to the Cold War division. And also a personal crisis. After Grohman was sacked, Giovanni Berlinguer, one of the founding fathers, moved from the general secretary to the president, but he lasted only a year in the position. When he returned to Italy for the 1953 Christmas, the police confiscated his passport, so he could no longer return to Prague, and his work for the IUS was thus effectively over.¹⁰ Bernard Bereanu assumed his position as the general secretary but found himself in problems back in Romania as well, which resulted in his political end; Pelikán later speculated that Bereanu was eliminated at home because of his Jewish origin.¹¹ In 1955, Pelikán moved to Presidency and the position of general secretary remained vacant until 1960

⁵ Akční výbor Národní fronty pražských vysokých škol to Karel Engliš, 27 February 1948, Archivio della camera dei deputati, fondo Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 2.

⁶ Francesco Caccamo, *Jiří Pelikán a jeho cesta socialismem 20. století* (Brno: Doplněk, 2008), 14.

⁷ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 200.

⁸ A discussion with Jiří Pelikán, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

⁹ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹⁰ Giovanni Berlinguer, *Students and the Cold War. The International Students Confederation and the Regimes of the XX Century*, at 70th Anniversary of the International Students Day, 16–18 November 2009, Bruxelles, Archivio dell'Istituto Gramsci, f. Giovanni Berlinguer, box 7, fasc. 79.

¹¹ Jiří Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent* (Paris: Club français du livre, 1975), 99.

when the dual leadership was renewed – the Iraqi Noori Abdel Razzak Hussein was elected as general secretary.

In 1955, the IUS also underwent an organizational reform. The institute of the Council was abandoned altogether. From that year on, there would be only Congresses once every two years and Executive Committees once a year – these turned into bigger events, a sort of what the Councils used to be. The principle of proportional voting (according to the size of represented studentship) was also abandoned. A day-to-day operation was still maintained by the Secretariat. There was also a new approach to the member organizations – small and marginal student organizations were not accepted as representatives of the whole national studentship, which added to IUS's credibility. This loss was compensated by increasing orientation on the decolonizing world which was recognized as the source of legitimacy. The period after Stalin's death also meant a careful reopening of contacts with the West; even though the IUS's international events were quite tightly organized, they still were platforms at which people could meet and interact. The fact that not only member unions took part but also observers created spaces of contact between students from the East, West and South. With Nikita Khrushchev's ascension to power and the implementation of his new policy of the Thaw, the students were again at the forefront of bridge-building.

Jiří Pelikán stood at the centre of these consolidation efforts. In retrospect, many people remembered that it was Pelikán who made the IUS what it was – who was the true founding father. Alexander Lebedev, his Soviet colleague, even said that the IUS was 'unthinkable' without Pelikán.¹² After the twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, he spoke about elements detrimental to the work of the IUS, including the unequivocal support of the foreign policy of the USSR, and the principle of democratic centralism. This was, in his view, particularly problematic for the Global South unions, carefully guarding their autonomy. He thought that this practice would have to change and the IUS would have to become a non-partisan platform – or even a new organization could be built. His expectations of the changes induced by Khrushchev's secret speech, however, were disproportional. In the 1950s, Pelikán was not a great risk-taker and soon moderated his rhetoric again.¹³

Even though Pelikán became the moving spirit of the IUS, it was not a one-man enterprise. Many fascinating people helped construct the organization through their work in the Secretariat in this period. Ion Iliescu, who became the Romanian president after the fall of communism, was in the Secretariat since 1955. Stefan Olszowski, a delegate in the Secretariat in the same period, became the Polish minister of foreign affairs in the 1970s. László Kovács, who became the Hungarian minister of foreign affairs and a European commissioner in the 1990s and 2000s, served at the IUS headquarters in the late 1960s. Jacques Vergès, serving in the early 1950s, was originally in the French delegation but later worked in the Secretariat; since the UNEF was no

¹² Alexander Lebedev, 'S Jiřím Pelikánem v časech dobrých i zlých', in *Jiří Pelikán: 1923–1999* (Praha: OPS, 2003), 25–35.

¹³ Caccamo, *Jiří Pelikán a jeho cesta socialismem 20. století*, 19.

longer a member, he was a delegate for Réunion.¹⁴ As Pelikán recalled, he was a member of the French Communist Party (PCF) but did not follow its instructions, as he was critical of the compromising PCF policies in the colonies.¹⁵ After his career in the IUS, he became a famous lawyer specializing in the defence of revolutionaries in trouble, such as Djamilia Bouhired; later, he became more controversial, defending such clients as Klaus Barbie or Carlos the Jackal.¹⁶ Luis de Azcárate from Spain was a republican veteran of the Spanish Civil War who fled to Czechoslovakia and lived there in exile; he served in the IUS during the six years he spent in Prague.¹⁷ Aside from the official representatives of national student unions, people were working at the headquarters as editors or translators from countries not represented in the IUS. In the 1950s, the staff were still very international; there were the British, such as Peter Waterman and Denis Hill, or Norwegians, such as Tore-Jarl Bielenberg.¹⁸ From Italy, there was Carlo Ripa Di Meana, a young Italian communist working in the *World Student News*, a future member of the European Parliament and a minister of environment, and also the president of the Venice Film Festival.¹⁹

In October 1958, the IUS Secretariat was hit by a horrible accident – an Aeroflot plane carrying delegates from the Congress in Beijing to Moscow crashed with no survivors. According to Pelikán, twenty-five Congress delegates died, including the vice-president from Cameroon, Gabriel Abolo, a treasurer from the GDR, Horst Schröder, a secretary from Iraq, Abdul Ridha Haj Huwaish, four more members of the Executive, two female technical secretaries, and several heads of delegations. Aside from a personal tragedy, the crash also created a difficult personnel situation for some time.²⁰

Conflict and coexistence with the West

One of the defining aspects of the IUS history in the 1950s and 1960s was its never-ending rivalry with its Western counterpart, the International Student Conference or the ISC, often referred to as the Coordinating Secretariat or the COSEC – for it was the permanent body that stood in the strong opposition to the IUS and not the annual assembly itself. It must be noted though, that the governments in the West were more hostile than the students – the United States saw it as a communist front and the

¹⁴ Bouchet, 'Lyon-Paris-Prague-Genève-Lyon', 163–72; EC Meeting of the IUS. Peking 1951. Intervention of J. Vergès (Réunion), NACR, f. MSS, box 53, file 858.

¹⁵ Jiří Pelikán, 'De la guerre froide au dégel? Levers de rideau', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, 173–84.

¹⁶ 'Vergès, Jacques', in *Encyclopedia of War Crimes and Genocide*, ed. Leslie Alan Horvitz and Christopher Catherwood (New York: Facts On File, 2011), 551.

¹⁷ Luis de Azcárate, *Memorias de Un Republicano* (Madrid: Taurus, 2008).

¹⁸ Denis Hill, *Seeing Red, Being Green: The Life and Times of a Southern Rebel* (Brighton: Iconoclast Press, 1989); Peter Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist* (Helsinki: Into, 2014).

¹⁹ Carlo Ripa Di Meana, *Cane sciolto* (Milano: Kaos, 2000).

²⁰ Statement of the IUS Secretariat, in *World Student News* 12, nos. 11–12 (1958), 9; Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

West German government even decided to ban the IUS on its territory, against which the IUS Secretariat vigorously protested.²¹

The students were more open. Even though the student representatives from the West criticized the IUS sharply and the ones from the East did not stay behind, they stayed in regular contact. The relationship between the IUS and the ISC was a complicated one. On the formal level, the secretariats treated each other always very politely – they called each other ‘dear friends’ and expressed gratitude for received letters and invitations. And what is more important, they recognized each other as important student organizations. That is not self-evident. Since both organizations aspired to be the universal federation to represent the students of the world, they could have ignored the existence of each other. Instead, they invited each other to their congresses and conferences as observers who could address the plenary meetings. On the other hand, both organizations never missed a chance to criticize the other, pointing out deficiencies, unclear funding, lack of representativity, hypocrisy and political dependence. The hostility was apparent after the second ISC in Edinburgh in 1952, where the Coordinating Secretariat was established and which introduced the ISC as a permanent organization. Only slowly did the animosity wear off, enabling peaceful coexistence and possibly even cooperation.

After its establishment, the ISC quickly turned from a small gathering of Western unions into a worldwide organization – in general, mostly at the IUS’s expense. With the organizational help from the CIA, the ISC tried to approach students, particularly in Asia and Latin America.²² In 1954, the ISC already had forty member organizations and considered itself a stronger and more representative student union. At the third IUS Congress in Warsaw in 1953, which was held in a significantly calmer and less aggressive atmosphere than the previous one in Prague, a British delegate noted that the IUS bragged about its wide membership (sixty-eight countries) while only twenty-one attending organizations truly represented their countries’ students. He further observed that in several cases, unions that were no longer members were listed or that the list of attendees included ‘progressive minority organizations in countries where a national union exists and is not a member of the IUS’.²³

To mitigate the consequences of such development, the IUS introduced the institution of associate membership – to offer the opportunity to stay within a wider IUS circle without the commitment to a full membership. In the West, this was seen as a desperate move trying to conceal losing membership. The associate membership was a friendly gesture but also an attempt to salvage the image of a global organization. With the ISC becoming the second massive organization with worldwide membership, the IUS needed to open up as well. As a part of this slow thaw, the IUS tried to attract some of the Western unions back, not as full members, which would not fly, but rather as associate members. To support the image of openness, the IUS terminated the

²¹ Jozef Grohman and Paolo Pescetti to the Federal Government in Bonn, 19 February 1952, IISH, col. IUS, box Circulars I.

²² Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 115–29.

²³ IIIrd World Student Congress of the International Union of Students. Report of the Official Observers of the National Union of Students, IISH, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

membership of small, unrepresentative unions from Western countries, thus removing an obstacle to possible associate affiliation. It was not a huge success, although some unions used the opportunity to reconnect while keeping their distance. The British negotiated an associate membership in 1953.²⁴ Student unions from Israel, South Africa, Iceland and Algeria, also became associate members.

The balance in membership between the IUS and the ISC was renewed only in the mid-1950s. The reason was the accelerated decolonization – hand in hand with the national liberation went also the emancipation of universities and students. And even though many student unions did not understand the feud between the two international organizations and even became members of both of them, clearly the IUS had the upper hand, with its emphasis on anti-colonialism. But more on that later.

The main contact zone between both organizations was the events organized by each of them. The IUS had the Congresses, about once every three years, Councils (until 1955) and Executive Committee meetings, the ISC had its annual conference. The IUS and ISC were always invited to each other's events as observers, among other international organizations dealing with youth, students and universities. At first, the invitations were picked up only by the ISC that sent its delegates to the IUS events and not the other way around.²⁵ At the 1956 congress, the British observer criticized the apparent insincerity of Pelikán and the IUS leadership; they spoke about unity but refused to participate in the ISC. He thought that the ISC could serve as an apolitical body while the IUS could continue its partisan policies.²⁶ Only after that, in 1956, did the IUS delegation start to visit the International Student Conference. But still, it was not without problems and the Cold War was affecting this limited contact. At the 1956 ISC in Ceylon, the IUS delegation was almost denied the right to speak, as several unions were against it.²⁷ In 1957, two IUS delegates to the ISC in Lagos were denied the visa and could not enter Nigeria.²⁸ In 1964, an IUS delegation invited to the ISC in Christchurch was denied the visa by the New Zealand authorities.²⁹ The IUS took it as a proof of the ISC's insincerity and exclusiveness; the ISC Secretariat, on the other hand, knowing how harmful such an accusation could be, regretted that and blamed New Zealand authorities for it.³⁰ But even if the direct contact via official delegation was limited, many national organizations did take part in both events, either as members (the networks partly overlapped – some national organizations were members of both

²⁴ Report by Representative to the IUS Executive Meeting, March 1953, IISH, col. IUS, box Executive Committee I.

²⁵ 'The International Student Conference: Six Years of the Free Student Movement Author' in *The World Today* 12, no. 9 (1956), 371–8.

²⁶ Report of the NUS Observers to the IVth World Student Congress of the International Union of Students, Prague 1959, IISH, col. IUS, box 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

²⁷ Zpráva o VI. Mezinárodní studentské konferenci (COSEC) na Ceylonu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, fondo Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 1.

²⁸ Hans Dall to Jiří Pelikán, 5 November 1957, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

²⁹ IUS Press Release on 'IUS delegation refused New Zealand entry visas to attend 11th ISC', IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress, Sofia 1964 I.

³⁰ Eleventh ISC. A Milestone in Cooperation and Achievement, August 1964, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

international unions) or as observers. These organizations – in particular, those from non-European countries – thus often served as mediators between the two networks.

In their interventions at IUS events, the delegates of the ISC or its member organizations were ready to point out the weaknesses of the IUS, to the dislike of its representatives. One of the repeating tropes was the asymmetry of the disarmament demands – while both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed nuclear and hydrogen weapons by 1953, the appeals for disarmament were always addressed to the West only – as pointed out by Fred Jarvis, the British delegate at the 1953 Congress in Warsaw, where he got into a heated dispute with Giovanni Berlinguer.³¹ Double standards were also pointed out in other cases. Three years later, the British criticized Pelikán for condemning the Czech exile students as traitors to their country while many delegates at the Congress were also exiles from colonial territories.³² British, Canadian and Brazilian observers also found Eastern European education discriminatory and compared it to colonial systems. Another controversial point on which the IUS was silent was Tibet, only recently seized by China.³³ But the ice was visibly melting; the Yugoslav union was invited to the IUS events as soon as 1953 again.³⁴

The Achilles heel of the IUS was the crises in the Eastern Bloc, in particular the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. By the member organizations outside of Europe, it was expected that the brutal invasion that resulted in thousands of deaths would be condemned. The Western unions were also waiting, ready to bash the IUS Secretariat if it stayed silent. Still, even under the risk of losing face, the Secretariat could not afford to antagonize the Soviet Union and chose to play it safe and careful. In the first days after the invasion, the Secretariat issued a communiqué that offered condolences to those who suffered. The rather toothless statement spoke about 'great difficulties' and about university life being 'disturbed by events that took place in the country and in which many students were involved' and promised to gather more information.³⁵

To do that, the Secretariat decided to send a delegation to Hungary to examine the situation. Headed by Pelikán, it also included Secretariat members from India, Japan and Iran. Pelikán later remembered that there was pressure from member organizations, in particular from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Ecuador and Indonesia, to take an objective position rapidly. The Gordian knot was tied by Pelikán's attempt to comply 'without attacking the Soviet Union'.³⁶ The delegation 'collected a lot of documents in a very objective way' but the task was impossible to finish. As he recalled, 'this document wasn't submitted to the EC due to the pressure of the Soviet representatives, because

³¹ The NUS Statement, 'points of information' by the All-China Student Federation, the Gold Coast NUS, and Mr. Giovanni Berlingue, and the NUS replies, IISH Amsterdam, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

³² Report of the NUS Observers to the IVth World Student Congress of the International Union of Students, Prague 1959, IISH, col. IUS, box 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

³³ Report of the NUS Observers to the IVth World Student Congress of the International Union of Students, Prague 1959, IISH, col. IUS, box 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

³⁴ Mica Nikolic to the IUS, 18 August 1953, IISH, col. IUS, box 1st–3rd Congress, 1946–1953.

³⁵ Communiqué issued by the IUS Secretariat, EC Meeting Prague 1957, Materials on events in Hungary, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

³⁶ Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 103.

they said it is too critical and IUS had to support fully the Kádár government and so on. So it had again postponed a little this debate.³⁷

In the following days and weeks, the Secretariat received various critical responses from both member and non-member organizations. To varying degrees supporting the struggle of Hungarian students and their right to choose their fate, letters dissatisfied with the IUS Secretariat response came from Denmark, Cyprus, France, Poland and the United States. They were also criticizing the silence and double standards, sceptical about the official reasoning that the IUS did not have enough information about the situation in Budapest to take an informed position, while it had so much and so detailed information about the parallelly unfolding events in Egypt.³⁸ The reaction to the Hungarian events indeed contrasted with the swift and outraged reaction to the event that took place at the same time in the Middle East, that is, the Suez Crisis. The intervention of France and the UK was seen as a neocolonial venture and condemned. Indonesian student union even conflated the two military interventions and condemned both of them.³⁹ Likewise, the Algerians also criticized both Soviet and Anglo-French interventions.

In a very careful response to Pierre-Yves Cossé, the president of UNEF, Jiří Pelikán stressed that the position of the Secretariat might have been wrong and it is up to the Executive Committee and the Congress to decide. He defended the 'silence' of the Secretariat in a way that there were fundamental differences in the interpretation of the Hungarian events among the member organizations and admitted that a critical position was legitimate. But on the other hand, he continued, there were student organizations 'which consider the events an internal Hungarian affair. As they saw it, Horthyites and other counter-revolutionaries took advantage of the Hungarian people's justified dissatisfaction over mistakes made in building a new social system, to try and achieve their own ends, thus making Hungary the scene of a civil war and later even a world war.' In this regard, the IUS Secretariat could not speak for all, and all it could do was raise material assistance to Hungarian students, which it did.⁴⁰ In retrospect, however, Pelikán regretted not having done more and respected UNEF for having the courage to condemn the French policy in Algeria, while he and the rest of the Secretariat were unable to condemn the Soviets.⁴¹

But Pelikán was right that the opinions on Hungary varied among the member organizations. This showed fully at the Executive Committee meeting in Prague in 1957 which discussed the stance the IUS should take towards Hungary. While there was a motion by the Icelandic delegation that the Executive Committee should express 'its unreserved sympathy with the Hungarian fight for freedom and the admiration for the tremendous courage and endurance shown by the Hungarian nation in its

³⁷ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

³⁸ For example – Union of Cypriot students – Statement. Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

³⁹ PPMI Statement on East Europe and Middle East. EC Meeting Prague, Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

⁴⁰ Letter of IUS President Jiří Pelikán to UNEF, France, EC Meeting Prague, Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

⁴¹ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

uneven struggle,⁴² there were also those who saw things differently. Unsurprisingly, the Soviets were among them, as were Romanians and Bulgarians. The Japanese were also supportive of the Secretariat reaction and spoke of a 'riot in Hungary' which showed that 'the forces of war constantly threaten peaceful co-existence'.⁴³ The Hungarian students themselves were in a peculiar position. They played a key part in sparking the uprising in October 1956 and founded a new organization called MEFESZ, separating from the youth movement; in December 1956, the organization drew its provisional status and its further involvement in international organizations, including the IUS, was yet to be decided.⁴⁴ However, the organization was normalized. The Hungarian delegate in the IUS Secretariat also distanced himself from the 'revolt against socialism', declared that the armed rebels were coming from West Germany, and thanked for the words of support.⁴⁵

The resolution that was ultimately approved by the Executive Committee was careful not to anger anyone. Based on the report of the expedition and information from MEFESZ, as it claimed, the resolution decided to 'refrain from taking any stand and to refer this matter to the next Congress'. It was further stated that 'different opinions on the Hungarian events should be respected and should not stand in the way of the unity of the student movement'.⁴⁶ However, even the critical voices were put in a brochure and discussed at the EC meeting. At the same time, the official IUS resolution did not denounce the uprising as fascist and did not congratulate the Soviet Union for crushing it, as the most pro-Soviet delegations requested.⁴⁷ The Hungarian students, who had a very active role in the uprising, were reorganized; since the 1958 Congress, they were represented in the IUS by the newly established National Committee of Hungarian Student Organizations.⁴⁸

For the ISC, the approach to the Hungarian matter was ammunition that could be and indeed was used against the IUS. The relations remained cold; the ISC refused to take part in the 1958 Congress, even though individual members did.⁴⁹ A year later, at the eighth ISC in Lima, the Conference even mandated the COSEC not to participate in any joint projects with the IUS.⁵⁰

However, despite the setback caused by the Hungarian events, the times were changing at the end of the 1950s. The ISC observed a change in the IUS functioning – it admitted that it was not the only student organization and it got rid of the most unrepresentative unions. In a 1961 report on the development of the IUS, an

⁴² EC Meeting Prague 1957, Resolution on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2777.

⁴³ Extract from the report of the Central Committee of Zengakuren, EC Meeting Prague, Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

⁴⁴ Provisional statutes of MEFESZ. EC Meeting Prague, Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, box 150, file 2800.

⁴⁵ Letter of József Hajdú to the IUS Secretariat and the Executive Committee, EC Meeting Prague, Materials on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2800.

⁴⁶ EC Meeting Prague 1957, Motion on Hungary. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 150/2790.

⁴⁷ The IUS. Hungary and beyond. IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

⁴⁸ Nawrocki and Kamiński, *Za lepszy świat, za lepszy uniwersytet*, 187.

⁴⁹ Bettino Craxi, V^o Congresso dell' Unione internazionale studenti, IISH, col. IUS, box 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

⁵⁰ Report of the IUS delegation on the VIIIth ISC, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

unidentified author described the renewed confidence of the IUS after the Hungarian events and admitted its rising power in the postcolonial world. 'It is clear, nonetheless, that the IUS in 1961 is a distinctly more formidable entity than in 1956,' the report concluded.⁵¹ This development opened the doors for talks with the ISC. After years of animosities, both student unions were ready again to discuss the remedy of mutual relations – and even possible unity.

The unity talks were not new – in fact, they took place since the very beginning of the split. The first 'unity meeting' took place already in 1952. The event that brought together the IUS members with the seceded Western unions to a discussion table took place in the summer of 1952 in Bucharest. The session was marked by the high Cold War atmosphere. There were many disagreements and Western participants complained that the meeting was only a propaganda effort by the IUS. Especially the fact that the Yugoslav student union was not invited was a big problem to some.⁵² Even though many Western countries were represented by small left-wing organizations and not all voted for the final communique, clear progress can be observed compared to the 1950 Congress that took place in an atmosphere of aggressive hysteria. In contrast, the Bucharest communique stressed that the 'exhaustive and frank exchange of opinion (...) proved once again that students of different countries with different social and political systems, having different religious, philosophical and political convictions have many common interests and needs', most of all free and accessible education in national languages, better infrastructure and scholarship systems.⁵³ The Canadian student union, even though it called the Bucharest meeting an 'absolute failure through the distorted and biased procedure employed by the IUS and by the communist "splinter" elements brought into the meeting', observed progress in mutual relations: 'The 1953 Warsaw Congress continued the relaxation policy towards the West by reducing demonstrations to a minimum; granting Western [national unions of students'] the right of speech and moving a change in the Constitution which would provide for a new type of qualified and limited membership called "Associate Membership".'⁵⁴

But in the second half of the 1950s, the talks on the unity of the student movement were renewed and seemed to be taken seriously. Both the IUS and ISC approached them reluctantly, for neither wanted to be blamed for the failure, and neither wanted to concede too much in favour of the opponent. The biggest problem in the unity talks was that neither party was willing to accept to take part in a peace meeting that would be organized and hosted by the rival. Neither organization would agree to the merger on the enemy's terms. And of course, neither wished to dissolve and be incorporated by the other. It meant that the only remaining way forward was to create a new forum,

⁵¹ The IUS. Hungary and beyond. IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

⁵² Report of the Unity Meeting and the IUS Council, IISH, col. IUS, box Council II.

⁵³ Statement of the participants of the meeting between representatives of the IUS and of the student organizations non members of the IUS, IISH, col. IUS, box Council II.

⁵⁴ The National Federation of Canadian Students, Report of the IUS IXth Annual Council Meeting, IISH, col. IUS, box Council III.

but both international unions approached each other's initiatives with extreme caution and accused each other of hindering the unification process.

In 1956, the IUS Executive Committee welcomed the initiatives for unity that were coming both from within and from the outside of the IUS, namely from Italy, India, France, Brazil, Belgium and Uganda, and suggested that a Conference of Cooperation be organized jointly.⁵⁵ In the same year, at the IUS Congress in Prague, it was decided that the IUS would organize joint projects with the ISC. At the 1958 Beijing Congress, the IUS supported the idea that the unity meeting would be organized in Uruguay. However, it never followed up on that.

The IUS Secretariat then chose a strategy to circumvent the ISC as a partner and address its member organizations directly. In 1959, it sent out an open letter to all ISC members to achieve unity.⁵⁶ A year later it followed up on the initiative. In another open letter, the IUS Secretariat proposed several joint projects: (1) joint support for a Day of solidarity with the Algerian students fighting for national independence; (2) joint support for a Day of solidarity with students of Cuba fighting in defence of national sovereignty; (3) joint sponsorship of an international seminar on racial segregation; (4) the convocation of a united world student travel conference and the issuance of one international student identity card; (5) joint sponsorship of a world conference of students on the reform and democratization of education; (6) joint sponsorship of a seminar of students on disarmament and peace.⁵⁷ The COSEC only responded that it is up to each member to react since the letter was addressed to them.⁵⁸

In the meantime, the ISC launched its own unification project – one that became known as the Roundtable Meeting. This initiative was more practical and specific; the Union of Swiss Students (VSS) agreed to host a unity meeting to which both international organizations and their member organizations would be invited. The VSS based the invitation to the meeting on the ISC resolution from the Lima Conference, calling for a unity meeting to which also non-ISC members would be invited. To ensure neutrality, the IUS open letter was also considered a basis for the meeting. The event was to take place in August 1960 in Basel.⁵⁹

Pelikán was now in a difficult position – he had to either accept the invitation to Basel and take part in the ISC's Roundtable as a guest, or boycott it and risk that he would look as the obstacle to unity. For the IUS Secretariat, the problem was that the Roundtable was organized by the Swiss – Jiří Pelikán expressed his opinion that the ISC was the true organizer of the conference.⁶⁰ He was not wrong on this point – the Roundtable Meeting in Switzerland was indeed coordinated with the ISC. The VSS was

⁵⁵ What is new in the student movement? How can unity be achieved? IISH, col. IUS, box Executive Committee I.

⁵⁶ The IUS Secretariat to all National Unions of Students associated with the ISC/COSEC, May 1959, IISH, col. IUS, box Circulars I.

⁵⁷ Open letter of the IUS Secretariat, 29 March 1960, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 214/4640.

⁵⁸ Hans Dall to Abu Gidary, 28 April 1960, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

⁵⁹ Round Table Conference on the World Student Unity, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

⁶⁰ Statement of the IUS Secretariat on the Roundtable Conference, 10 June 1960, in IUS position on the Round Table Conference (collection of documents) (Prague: IUS, 1960).

to take care of organizational matters such as the venue, food and accommodation, but COSEC would take care of the programme.⁶¹ The IUS, on the other hand, insisted that there must be a truly neutral committee and that neither ISC nor the IUS should have any say in where the roundtable meeting would be convened, who would be invited and who would compose the programme. For that reason, the IUS and most of its member organizations decided not to take part in the Basel meeting.⁶²

In the meantime, since the two international student organizations were in a stalemate and nobody wanted to back down, it was national student unions who took the initiative. It proved possible that if a neutral national student organization launched a project, both the IUS and the ISC could participate. For example, a common workcamp was organized in Tunisia to help rebuild the village of Sakiet Sidi Youssef, destroyed by French bombardment in 1958 in the belief that it had sheltered Algerian independence fighters. The workcamp had to be organized by the *Union générale des étudiants tunisiens*, otherwise, it would not have happened, as Jiří Pelikán recalled – and still, both sides approached it with reluctance and suspicion.⁶³

The North African students played an active bridge-building role in another unification initiative – perhaps the most realistic reunification project of time and closest to achieving tangible results. After hearing about the desire for unity from both sides, various student organizations assembled at the Congress of the Polish Students' Association (ZSP) in Warsaw in March 1960. This gathering was not entirely representative but brought together twenty-one unions, including the US NSA or the Italian UNURI from the West and Soviet Komsomol or the East German FDJ from the East, as well as several unions from postcolonial countries. This gathering then created the Committee of Three, as it was thought that only an independent body could oversee the talks, as neither of the two international organizations was willing to talk on the other side's terms. The Committee of Three consisted of the Polish ZSP, the Italian UNURI and the North African Student Confederation, itself composed of Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian unions. The Committee thus represented all three worlds of the Cold War and with both international federations absent from the talks, it looked promising that some specific goals could be achieved. The Committee first met in Leiden to define its scope and aims. It formulated a questionnaire, given out to both COSEC and the IUS Secretariat, asking whether they agree with the convocation of a unification conference on a neutral ground, with the member organizations of both federations attending. At the same time, the Committee enquired how the IUS and ISC felt about the Basel Roundtable Meeting, which was being organized parallelly. However, the Committee did not hide its conviction that the hosting part should not lie with one organization only but rather an international preparatory committee. From Leiden, the Committee of Three continued to Prague to talk to the IUS Secretariat,

⁶¹ VSS to Hans Dall, 20 April 1960, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

⁶² Jiří Pelikán to VSS, 11 August 1960, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

⁶³ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS; IUS and COSEC: reconstruction of school in Sakied Tunisia. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 226/5200.

then reconvened in Rome and finally in Tunis, inviting also Pelikán and the COSEC Administrative Secretary Norman Kingsbury for the meeting.⁶⁴

Both organizations replied very positively, appreciating the initiative and willing to settle for an observing position only. After the failed Basel Meeting, a new International Preparatory Committee was established which was supposed to be truly representative. It included representatives of student unions from China, the United States, Iraq, Uruguay, Chile, Maghreb, Nigeria, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom.⁶⁵ India, Malaysia and France were also suggested but not confirmed. The discussion continued at the congress of the UNEF held in February 1961 in Paris and Caen, where representatives of forty-seven national unions gathered; at this meeting, the IUS and the ISC were allowed to make initial interventions but after that, they stayed only as observers.⁶⁶

At the same time, the two international unions met at other venues. One meeting was held by the World Student Christian Federation and by Pax Romana, which welcomed the unity meetings and observed that on paper both student organizations were generally the same.⁶⁷ Another meeting, even before the Roundtable, was organized by the WUS together with UNESCO.⁶⁸ Another project that signified a shift towards the national unions of students was the so-called European Meetings – a Pan-European forum where national unions regularly met. It was first organized in 1959 in Paris, with annual meetings in Poland and France – two student unions very invested in bridge-building. This was later contested across the Iron Curtain because it gave too much organizational power to those two unions. After discussions, it was decided that the place of the meetings would change every year, in Warsaw Pact countries, NATO countries and in neutral countries – starting with Helsinki in 1966 and followed by Zurich and Budapest.⁶⁹ The North Africans also stayed active. In 1963, the Tunisian students convened an international seminar on the structures of the international student movement. Both IUS and ISC were present but only as observers – they could only deliver one speech each and otherwise just respond when asked. However, a problem occurred how to approach the delegates who represent national unions of students and also have obligations at international organizations. The IUS alone had

⁶⁴ Report of the Committee of Three on the Roundtable Conference, 8th May 1960, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia IV; Round Table Conference on the World Student Unity, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

⁶⁵ Le problème de l'unité mondiale des étudiants en 1961, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

⁶⁶ Interventions during informal meetings at the UNEF congress on the subject of world student unity, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

⁶⁷ Statement to the Conference on World Student Unity by Pax Romana, SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

⁶⁸ Hans Dall to Ichiro Ono, 16 May 1958, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

⁶⁹ Lidia Lesnykh and Timothy Schürmann, Engaging for Europe before Erasmus: European Student Meetings in the 1970–1980s, a conference presentation, Europeanisations from the Bottom and from the Margins. Actors, Representations, and Experiences, University of Lausanne, 27–9 November 2024.

nine people there but eight of them accredited as representatives of their national organizations.⁷⁰

The meeting in Tunisia is a good example of how the international student organizations were using these unity meetings to strengthen their own position. In a 1963 internal document given to the IUS Secretariat, Pelikán warned that the COSEC was going to 'try to send there as many as possible supporters in order to get the main influence inside the Seminar', which is why the IUS must do the same, and he requested that the IUS covered the expenses of as many representatives of IUS member organizations as possible. He also felt that it was time to renegotiate the composition of the International Preparatory Committee, suggesting the replacement of Uruguay or Chile with Brazil, Cuba or Venezuela, Nigeria with Ghana, and the UK with Denmark.⁷¹

Many national unions became weary of these battles and voices from within created discords in both international organizations, as we will see. On the initiatives of the national unions, we can observe genuine attempts at cooperation and convergence – be it the Roundtable Meetings or the European Meetings. In 1961, the British National Union of Students instructed its Executive 'to continue to negotiate and work for the uniting of the world's national student organisations in one assembly, based on principles of equality, freedom of action and mutual respect'.⁷² One year earlier, at the 1960 IUS Congress, the British delegate criticized the one-sidedness of the anti-nuclear efforts of the IUS and pointed out how both sides put stress on combatting colonialism. He asked for true unity, complaining that 'prestige is a terrible obstacle'. He concluded his speech with a joke:

We have heard much about joint projects. And I wonder that if Pelikán and Norman Kingsbury, the new Administrative Secretary of the Coordinating Secretariat, were put in one of Khrushchev's sputniks and sent to Mars, and report back on how extensive the threat (...) really is. I hope they will return. I hope your Congress is successful. But I hope even more that the students of the world will not be divided much longer.⁷³

And increasingly, it was difficult for the delegates of national unions of students to understand why the studentship of the world should be divided. As Karen Paget noted, when the general secretary of the IUS, Noori Abdel Razzak Hussein, spoke as a guest

⁷⁰ *Compte-rendu du seminaire de l'UGET sur la cooperation universelle des étudiants*, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*; Report on the International Seminar on the Structures of the International Student Movement and the Means of Realising Universal Cooperation, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III; UGET organising int. seminar in Tunis on structures of int. student movement 1963, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 235/5934.

⁷¹ Some ideas on the work of the IUS for international student Cooperation and Unity and for the realisation of the Round Table Conference, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 228/5347.

⁷² Jodi Burkett, 'The National Union of Students and Transnational Solidarity, 1958–1968', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21, no. 4 (2014): 539–55.

⁷³ Speech by R.J. Watson at the IUS Congress, IISH, IUS 15–19 6th IUS Congress II.

at the International Student Conference in Nairobi, most delegates found his speech reasonable – he received a standing ovation and the conference voted for cooperation.⁷⁴

But the leadership of both organizations was adamantly stuck, circling in loops, proclaiming the need for unity, accusing the other side of insincerity and of torpedoing the talks. Both leaderships were too dependent on the policies of the superpowers and could not transcend the Cold War binary. Through its president Pelikán, the IUS voiced a critique that the ISC relied heavily on money from the United States and FRG and thus ‘cannot contribute to unity’ already in 1962.⁷⁵ Another problem that the IUS Secretariat had was that the twelfth ISC conferred a membership status on delegations from Rhodesia or Spain for the duration of the conference and Portugal was already a full member of the organization.⁷⁶ From the West, not all were ready to subscribe to the idea of student reunification; the US NSA leader and later renowned political scientist James C. Scott said in his co-authored report that the division of the student world is a fact. ‘A spurious, illusory unity would be easy to achieve but it would serve no useful purpose,’ he continued regarding the unity meetings.⁷⁷

A bizarre attempt to undermine the IUS took place in 1961 when a booklet was published on the occasion of the IUS’s fifteenth birthday. At first glance, something is off with this brochure: it mentions the ‘Pact of Amity’ between Hitler and Stalin, often quotes various ‘slandorous invectives’ against the IUS, includes several factual mistakes and it not so subtly points out the apparent weaknesses of the IUS. It is difficult not to see the ironic tone in it:

Nearly all National Unions of Students which had left the IUS after the expulsion of the revisionist Yugoslavia again conspired in concentrated attacks on the IUS at the end of 1956, accusing it of ‘blind subservience’ to Moscow as shown by its ‘self-condemning silence’ at a time when ‘the whole world’ protested against the ‘bloody oppression by Soviet tanks and bombs of the Hungarian people’s freedom fight’, in which students and youth played a prominent role.⁷⁸

The IUS Secretariat denied its authenticity, saying that ‘this brochure was never published by the IUS. The aim of this crude piece of work is to falsify the history, as well as the policies and activities of the IUS with the object of creating confusion and undermining international student cooperation.’⁷⁹ Enraged, the Secretariat started an investigation, which ruled out Chinese origin of the brochure. A US Independent Research Service Bulletin assessed that the ‘unfavourable reaction to some parts of the pamphlet caused the IUS later to disclaim its authenticity.’⁸⁰ Given

⁷⁴ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 339.

⁷⁵ Summary Minutes of the 7th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress II.

⁷⁶ Resolutions provisoires de la douzième conférence SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

⁷⁷ Position of USNSA on world student unity, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

⁷⁸ 15 Years of the IUS, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia IV.

⁷⁹ Communiqué of the Secretariat of the IUS, 30 January 1963, IISH, col. IUS, box Circulars II.

⁸⁰ The International Union of Students – A Chronological History, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia V.

the tone and the content, however, such a scenario seems unlikely. Joël Kotek, although otherwise critical to the IUS whenever possible, judged that the brochure was 'almost certainly of CIA provenance'.⁸¹

In the mid-1960s, the idea of student unity was still lingering. The IUS Secretariat continued sending open letters to the ISC members calling for unity.⁸² In 1965, the IUS and the ISC co-organized a cultural seminar (in Gand and Florence) – the organizational committee was to be composed of the Belgians, Italians, French, Polish, and the representatives of the IUS and ISC.⁸³ In 1966, they co-organized a seminar on democratic education on Ostend.⁸⁴ The delegations kept visiting each other's events, never missing an opportunity of snarky remark at each other's expense.⁸⁵ After the Nairobi Conference, the ISC sent a proposal to the IUS for a joint meeting and offered that the IUS could itself choose time and place. Even though the IUS Secretariat's response was cautious which in turn had the COSEC accuse it of sabotaging the proposal, the exchange meant a promising beginning of the next round of talks.⁸⁶ This time, however, there was an external factor that ruined the discussions – a journal that revealed the ISC's long-term involvement with the CIA, including accepting money from it. This was the end of the ISC and a moment of victory for the IUS – but more on that later. The reunification never materialized – the Cold War reality would not allow these two organizations that sided with the East and West, respectively, to overcome the division.

Cooperation despite the Cold War

Even though the rivalry between the East and the West split the student movement, it does not mean that the two halves were completely separated from each other. As we have seen, the contact was never aborted; even in the hardest Cold War times, the national student unions visited events of the 'other side' at least as observers. And after the death of Stalin and the coming of the Thaw, new possibilities for cooperation opened up. In this regard, the students could do what the states could not afford – the student diplomacy could serve as an experimental field for the 'grown-up' diplomacy.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to reduce the IUS's international activity in the 1950s only to the relation to the ISC, oscillating from hostility to reluctant coexistence. The student politics were undertaken by a wide variety of INGOs that cooperated with both the IUS and the ISC, serving to some extent as mediators – such as Pax Romana, the World Student Christian Federation, the World University Service, International Union of Socialist Youth and others. The world of student internationalism was

⁸¹ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 211.

⁸² Open letter to participants of 11th ISC adopted by IUS EC meeting in Budapest 1964, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 253/7004.

⁸³ UNEF / France – on cultural seminar of IUS and ISC 1965, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 275/7757.

⁸⁴ VVS – on IUS-ISC seminar on DemEdu, preparation, budget 1966, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 284/8311.

⁸⁵ Intervention by COSEC delegate, 7th Congress of the International Union of Students, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress II; Report on the 10th ISC, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress II.

⁸⁶ Report on universal student cooperation, April 1967, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

much richer than just the combat between the East and West. On political matters, cooperation was difficult, as the previous section showed. But it was not impossible to find a common ground in less exposed areas such as sports, culture, tourism and student problems – all of which were on the IUS agenda since its inception.

The World Student Christian Federation – the WSCF – was a partner of the IUS from the start. Even though it criticized the IUS for staying silent on the persecution of Christian students in socialist countries in Stalinist times, it also remained open for discussions.⁸⁷ In June 1952, general secretaries of the two organizations, Giovanni Berlinguer and Philippe Maury, met in Vienna and had ‘a most fruitful discussion on questions of peace, student relief and the role of the university in society.’⁸⁸ The meetings were held on a regular basis, not only between the highest representatives but the invitations were also extended to member organizations – in 1955, more than twenty student organizations attended a meeting held in Vienna again, coming from the West, the East and the South.⁸⁹ Regular consultations were organized well into the 1960s when the topics of national liberation and decolonization enriched the meetings.⁹⁰

The International Student Service (ISS) was established in 1920 as an offshoot of the WSCF, aimed at student relief and campaigning for student rights.⁹¹ After the Second World War, the IUS was invited to be a member of the ISS Assembly as well as to be fully represented at the World Student Relief (WSR), a special emergency relief committee founded in 1940 and administered by the ISS. In 1950, the WSR ceased to exist and the ISS was transformed into the World University Service. The IUS Secretariat wished the WSR to continue and its dissolution led to a temporary setback in the relations with the WUS. The lowest point in these relations was reached in 1951 when the IUS Secretariat accused the WUS of misappropriating funds designated to Chinese students. After that, the relations got better, and the cooperation got specific contours. The WUS helped finance the IUS sanatorium in Beijing and allocated funds to form an expert group to battle tuberculosis. The IUS representatives also returned to sit on the WUS Assembly, although there was a certain amount of mistrust on both sides.⁹² And the cooperation continued in the next years too; the IUS representatives took part in the WUS-organized annual Meeting of International University and Student Organisations. In the Secretariat, however, there were still discussions about what the IUS-WUS relations should look like.⁹³

⁸⁷ Third World student congress Warsaw 1953. Speech of WSCF observer, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 109/1886.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Press announcement: seminar ‘positive meaning of peace ...’ Vienna, By WSCF, IUS. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 164/3101.

⁹⁰ WSCF – on IUS/WSCF consultation, 1963. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 229/ 5447.

⁹¹ Towards Collaboration. International Student Service – International Union of Students. UDAUK, Archiv MSS 1945–1946. The first name of the organization was European Student Relief. The name was changed to ISS in 1925 and the organization became independent on WSCF in 1931.

⁹² Memorandum on relations between the World University Service and the International Union of Students, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia I.

⁹³ Report on meeting of WUS 1957, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 206/4485.

An organization that united Catholic students was Pax Romana. Just like the WSCE, Pax Romana was also far more open to collaboration with the IUS than the ISC. In 1951–1952, when the Cold War was the most intense, the highest representatives of both organizations corresponded on the question of peace and agreed on future cooperation.⁹⁴ The organization, seated in Fribourg, Switzerland, was officially recognized by the Holy See. Representing millions of Catholic students from all over the world, it had observer status at both the IUS and the ISC. The neutrality in the political divide of the student movement went as far as a declaration, sanctioned by the 1964 General Assembly, that in case Pax Romana would have to withdraw its observer status from one of the two student federations for disagreement with its policies, it would automatically withdraw from the second one as well.⁹⁵

Another organization with which the IUS established relations and started cooperation was the International Union of Socialist Youth – the IUSY. It was a respectable organization whose history went back to the time before the First World War. Attempting to present a third way, the IUSY promoted both socialism and anti-communism – which made it an acceptable partner for both colonial and anti-colonial structures.⁹⁶ For the IUS, it was a partner especially for its rich anti-colonial agenda.

One of the fields where everybody agreed that cooperation between the IUS and ISC would be useful was the issuance of the International Student Identity Card. The IUS issued the card, meant as a universal student identification to replace national cards, since the Founding Congress in 1946. It provided a discount for rail services in several countries as well as other benefits.⁹⁷ But since the split of the movement, there were two of them – one issued by the IUS and the other by the International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC), linked to the ISC. The card issued by the IUS was generally only accepted by socialist countries – in 1964, the IUS card entitled the holder to a 25 per cent discount on rail fares in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania, USSR, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, Mongolia and North Vietnam.⁹⁸ Likewise, the one issued by the ISTC was valid in the West, offering similar services. Holding the card was not bound to membership; any student from any country could apply, and it was possible to buy both cards, but it was not very economical and user-friendly. The IUS and ISC knew well that this was a problem and passed resolutions declaring the need for a single card; the COSEC and the IUS Secretariat did not act on it, only blaming the other party for blocking the efforts.⁹⁹ Despite all declarations, it took almost until the end of the Cold War before the ISIC was unified.

⁹⁴ IUS – Pax Romana discussion on peace, May 1952, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia I.

⁹⁵ Pax Romana will seek IUS observer status, 1 September 1964, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 246/6665.

⁹⁶ Ismay Milford, 'More Than a Cold War scholarship: East-Central African Anticolonial Activists, the International Union of Socialist Youth, and the Evasion of the Colonial State (1955–65)', *Stichproben: Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien / Vienna Journal of African Studies* 18, no. 34 (2018): 19–43.

⁹⁷ Proposals on new ISIC, 1953. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 195/4081.

⁹⁸ Information on ISIC 1964. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 253/7012.

⁹⁹ For example ISC – on International Student Identity Card 1964, NAČR, box 246, file 6671; Reply to COSEC on IUS International Student Identity Card 1964, NAČR, PA 246/6707.

Even if limited in scope, the tools of the IUS were still capable of increasing student mobility. The organization offered places for students in its sanatoria in Czechoslovakia and China, creating opportunities to be treated and travel. Another way to help the students move around was implementing the 'scholarship scheme'. In coordination with its member organizations, the IUS negotiated places at universities, gathered the candidates and distributed the scholarships. The scheme grew in scope continuously – in 1953, a total of forty-seven scholarships were offered, but a decade later, it was already 185 per year. The reach was also far more enormous; while in 1953 the recipients were only from twelve countries, mainly from the Middle East and Latin America, in 1964, the scheme involved students from sixty-four countries from all over the world.¹⁰⁰ Again, the downside was that the hosting universities were all from the Eastern Bloc – and the Eastern Bloc was also funding the scheme via its member organizations in the IUS. It would take longer for universities from non-socialist countries to join the programme.

Yet another way to increase mobility was the support of student tourism. The late 1950s were when tourism, at least in Europe, became more accessible to 'groups such as the working-class, pensioners and women.'¹⁰¹ As Richard Ivan Jobs showed in the example of the backpacking youth, the crossings of the Iron Curtain were 'highly regulated but not fully controlled.'¹⁰² The rise of tourism contributed to the emergence of the youth as a transnational social body in the post-war world. The tourism promoted by the IUS, however, was different from Jobs' spontaneous 'backpack ambassadors' – it was very much organized. Support of tourism meant cooperation with travel agencies and accommodation facilities of member organizations, either in the form of classic excursions or work camps. Still, it was very cheap (30 dollars per person for a two-week trip in 1958) and contributed to the growing interconnectedness of the youth.¹⁰³ However, as Philip Altbach pointed out, the tourism and sports activities of both IUS and ISC mainly were limited to Eastern and Western Europe, respectively. They provided opportunities for European and North American students to travel cheaply, but the Global South did not greatly profit from it.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, the IUS contributed to student mobility also by organizing its official events. Hundreds of delegates took part in the IUS Congresses which took place mostly in the East at this time – in Warsaw (1953), Prague (1946, 1950, 1956), Leningrad (1962) and Sofia (1964), but also outside of Europe – in Beijing (1958), Baghdad (1960) and Ulaanbaatar (1966), providing opportunities for Europeans to visit other parts of the world. The biggest opportunities of this kind, by far, were the World Festivals of Youth and Students, taking place biennially and hosting tens of thousands of young guests. After the death of Stalin, the Festivals changed significantly, becoming gradually

¹⁰⁰ Plan on distribution of IUS scholarship, 1953, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 147/2685; Distribution of Scholarship 1964/65, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 43/6363.

¹⁰¹ Nikos Papadogiannis and Detlef Siegfried, 'Introduction', *Comparativ* 24, no. 2 (2014): 1–17.

¹⁰² Ivan Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors. How Youth Travel Integrated Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 200.

¹⁰³ Information about international student holiday and work camps in ČSR, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania 1958. NAČR, PA 174/3352.

¹⁰⁴ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 44.

more open and trying to showcase socialism to the world. Following this rationale, the Soviets jumped at the chance and hosted the 1957 Festival in Moscow. For the first time, large masses from all over the world could travel to the Soviet capital and witness the socialist miracle in their own eyes. Even though the event was still tightly organized, it was still a milestone; thousands of foreigners flooded the city, interacting with local youth and students. The Festival presented opportunities to meet, exchange experiences and establish friendships. The openness was exemplified in the high number of romantic or sexual relationships that were forged at the festival.¹⁰⁵ As Pia Koivunen put it, along with 'the Secret Speech, the Picasso exhibition in 1956, the launch of Sputnik in 1957, the publication of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* in 1957, and the American National Exhibition in 1959', Festival became a symbol of the cultural Thaw that shaped a whole generation of the post-Stalinist youth in the Soviet Union – the *shestidesiatniki*.¹⁰⁶

One of the experimental grounds on which the East–West cooperation was tested was the field of student sport. The IUS continued organizing ski camps, canoeing camps, chess championships and other sports events – these, however, had only limited international participation. Usually, the contenders only came from socialist countries, with the occasional presence of French or Italian sportsmen and sportswomen. Most importantly, the IUS held the World University Games. In 1949 and 1951, the Games were synchronized with the Budapest and Berlin World Festivals of Youth and Students. This was a significant change from the interwar and the first post-war University Games. 'The integration of the World University Games to the Festival meant the event could no longer be reserved for elite student athletes and would have to embrace a more inclusive logic centered around youth cooperation,' says historian Lidia Lesnykh.¹⁰⁷ The Games were huge and due to their tradition, prestige and combination with the popular festival, they were able to attract even participants from the West and from the South – in the Games held at the 1951 Berlin Festival, 2,000 athletes from forty countries took part. Since the 1953 Bucharest Festival, however, the World University Games which were by definition only meant for university students, were replaced by the International Friendly Youth Games so that the sports at the Festivals is open to all youth.¹⁰⁸ After that, the IUS organized the World University Games separately again during the 1950s.¹⁰⁹

Even though the University Games retained some universal prestige, the Cold War split affected university sports as well. With the secession of Western member unions from the IUS, not only was the ISC established, but also a specialized and independent sports organization. In 1949, the International University Sports Federation, known under its French acronym FISU (*Fédération internationale du sport universitaire*), was

¹⁰⁵ Kristin Roth-Ey, 'Loose Girls' on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival', in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilić, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Attwood (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 75–95.

¹⁰⁶ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 256.

¹⁰⁷ Lesnykh, 'Sport at the World Festival of Youth and Students', 1–15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1–15.

¹⁰⁹ EC Meeting Vienna 1954. Resolution on the 12th World university summer games. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 113/1942.

founded. FISU was operated by its member organizations, mainly from the West, and organized its own university games.¹¹⁰ In the early 1950s, both organizations were in a careful contact; the IUS was appealing to the FISU to join the organization of the World University Games and to harmonize the qualification procedure (while at the same time trying to undermine it in its publications circulated to national student unions, both member and non-member).¹¹¹ In 1956, there was already declared goodwill on both sides 'for the establishment of unity in student sport'.¹¹² In 1957, the World University Games were organized by Jean Petitjean, the man who stood behind the foundation of the interwar International University Games, organized within the framework of the CIE. Petitjean offered a neutral ground and organized the sports championship in Paris outside of both FISU and IUS, and both organizations took part in it.¹¹³

Consequently, student sports became one of the fields in which reintegration did take place. In 1959, the IUS gave up on its own sports project – the World University Games – and turned the organization over to the FISU, celebrating it as the 'victory of the conception of cooperation and unity' and appealing to all member organizations to 'remove all remnants of past discord'.¹¹⁴ The new event, the first of which took place in Turin in 1959, was entitled Universiade and was organized by the FISU. From that moment on, the games were held both in Eastern and Western Europe, in North America, and occasionally also in the rest of the world (such as in Japan, Brazil and Mexico). Both Summer and Winter games were organized, taking place in odd and even years, respectively. The Universiade became the largest and most prestigious sports event after the Olympics, attended by top sportspeople and opened by the host countries' heads of state.

How come the IUS and the FISU agreed on the merger of student sports when the negotiations failed in other areas? One of the reasons could be that sports were always a field more open for cooperation than other areas – the Olympics were universally recognized and attended too, despite the Cold War. Another reason is that the FISU was not the ISC, the archenemy with which the negotiations were much more delicate. Furthermore, the willingness of the IUS to give way and hand over the organization of the University Games to the FISU lay in the Soviet approval. Soviet sport was on the rise at the time – the Soviets won the most gold medals at the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956, as well as in 1960 in Rome. It was a field in which they started to excel and wanted to use it as a propaganda tool – a practical proof that socialism was better than capitalism. Without the Soviet opposition, it was also possible for the IUS

¹¹⁰ Lidia Lesnykh, *Sport as a Bridge in a Divided Europe? The Student Cold War and the FISU (1946–1949)*, *European Studies in Sport History* 16 (2024).

¹¹¹ Resolution on the XXIIth World University Summer Games, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 113/1942; Lidia Lesnykh, *Le sport universitaire international au défi de l'autonomie (1919–1961)* (PhD Diss., Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, 2021), 282–5.

¹¹² FISU letter to IUS before congress. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 139/2384.

¹¹³ Remarks as far as summer games are concerned: winter games, IUS FISU relations, sport calendar/1958, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 175/3380.

¹¹⁴ Statement of the Sport Council of the IUS, 15 December 1959, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 226/5247.

Secretariat to integrate the student sport. For the FISU, it was a no-brainer – through the merger, it became the only organization to helm student sports worldwide.¹¹⁵

Another form of joint activity in which the Cold War differences receded was theatre. Born in Zagreb in 1962, the International Student Theatre Union united amateur university-related theatre groups from both East and West, mainly from Europe. They presented at international student theatre festivals in Parma, Erlangen, Istanbul and Zagreb annually.¹¹⁶

Decolonization and students of the Global South

The political map of the world changed dramatically during the two decades following the Second World War. This was largely thanks to the process of dismantling the European empires – decolonization. Sometimes reluctantly but willingly, sometimes under military pressure from anti-colonial rebellions, European imperial administrations turned over sovereignty over their colonial territories to the new states.

The new countries were in need of state-building. The state administration, currency, military, police, border control, control over strategic resources – all that had to be built, often from scratch. The new political representation sometimes turned to their former colonial powers to help with these tasks. But given the European powers' bad reputation earned over the centuries of colonial exploitation, some postcolonial countries naturally looked for alternatives, and the most obvious one was to turn to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Nikita Khrushchev saw it as an opportunity to weaken the colonial powers, spread Soviet influence worldwide and gain the upper hand over capitalism.¹¹⁷

One of the areas in which the postcolonial countries searched for assistance was the buildup of educational systems. During colonial times, the local population had only very limited access to tertiary education. Universities in colonial territories often served mostly the European population; the locals had a chance to study in the metropolises. This was a strategic decision taken to maintain control over who gets the education and of which kind – the European colonists were not willing to create an efficient and accessible educational system in place and create a local elite with emancipatory tendencies. (As it turned out, this elite still emerged but was formed by those who got an education in metropolises.) Particularly, this was true in Africa – during colonialism, as per Walter Rodney, the tertiary education for Africans was 'virtually non-existent'. In 1960, 'at the time of regaining political independence, the Congo had only 16 graduates out of a population of more than 13 million'.¹¹⁸ Eric Burton said that

¹¹⁵ The reunification of the student sports was a complex process. For all its intricacies, see Lidia Lesnykh, *Le sport universitaire international au défi de l'autonomie (1919–1961)* (PhD Diss., Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, 2021), 255–341.

¹¹⁶ Altbach, *Student internationals*, 46; International Student Theatre Union (ISTU), <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100041842> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹¹⁷ Sergey Radchenko, *To Run the World: The Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 156–9.

¹¹⁸ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Black Classic Press, 2011), 245.

‘approaching independence after more than seven decades of foreign rule, there was not a single engineer of African descent with a university degree in Kenya, and only one in Tanganyika.’¹¹⁹ Along with establishing and decolonizing universities in the Global South, a new social group emerged – the students. They often had to deal with very different problems than students in the First and Second Worlds – such as insufficient capacities of student housing, poorly equipped libraries, expertise accessible mostly in colonial languages, brain drain to the West and widespread illiteracy.

With Khrushchev’s turn to the decolonizing world in the mid-1950s, the contacts between the East and the South in the field of education intensified. The Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were certainly not motivated only by solidarity; the assistance in education was a part of a larger framework of developmental policies, the purpose of which was, among other things, to help create a new socialist-friendly elite in the decolonized countries and to establish economic ties.¹²⁰ As a part of these policies, the socialist countries issued a great number of scholarships for students from the Global South. In Moscow, the Soviets established a specialized institution – Patrice Lumumba People’s Friendship University – in 1960.¹²¹ A similar institution was established in Czechoslovakia only a year later – the University of 17th November.¹²² Students were coming to all countries of the Eastern Bloc in growing numbers.¹²³ Following the line, the youth and student organizations also became very active in establishing aid programmes and partnerships – in particular the Soviet Komsomol and the East German FDJ.¹²⁴

The roots and the beginnings of the IUS were intrinsically European – even though it was designed as a global, universal organization, it stemmed from the traditions of European student unionism and activism. As we have seen, however, anti-colonialism and support for national liberation were crucial parts of the IUS’s ideology since its foundation. The Bureau of Students Fighting against Colonialism was one of the key Secretariat departments, producing even its own periodical – the *Bulletin of the Bureau Against Colonialism*. With the ongoing decolonization and the rise of the Non-Aligned

¹¹⁹ Eric Burton, ‘Decolonization, the Cold War and Africans’ Routes to Overseas Education, 1957–1965’, *Journal of Global History* 15, no. 1 (2020): 169–91.

¹²⁰ Katsakioris, ‘The Socialist Countries, North Africa and the Middle East in the Cold War’, 597–612.

¹²¹ Constantine Katsakioris, ‘The Lumumba University in Moscow: Higher Education for a Soviet–Third World Alliance, 1960–91’, *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 2 (2019): 281–300.

¹²² Marta E. Holečková, *Příběh zapomenuté univerzity: Universita 17. listopadu (1961–1974) a její místo v československém vzdělávacím systému a společnosti* (Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2019).

¹²³ Marcia Schenck and Sara Pugach, ‘Agents of Dissent: African Student Organizations in German Democratic Republic’, *Africa* 89, no. S1 (2019): 90–108; Burton, ‘Decolonization, the Cold War and Africans’ routes to overseas education, 1957–1965’; Przemysław Gasztold, ‘Szkoła przetrwania: Studenci afrykańscy w komunistycznej Polsce’, in *Środowisko studenckie w krajach bloku sowieckiego 1945–1990*, ed. K. Dworaczek and K. Łągojda (Wrocław-Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2020), 545–70; Alena Alamgir, ‘Mobility: Education and Labour’, in *Socialism Goes Global*, ed. James Mark and Paul Betts (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 290–317.

¹²⁴ Robert Hornsby, ‘Engineering Friendship? Komsomol Work with Students from the Developing World Inside the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s’, *Social History* 48, no. 1 (2023): 65–86; Detlef Siegfried, *Bogensee: Weltrevolution in der DDR 1961–1989* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021).

Movement, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization and other projects, Third-Worldism became the cornerstone of the IUS agenda.

Decolonization completely shifted the dynamic of the student movement and the practice of student internationalism. It changed the situation in the Cold War division of the student movement; while in the early 1950s, the IUS withered under Stalinist dogmatism and the ISC seemed to be on the rise, the decolonization opened up a competition for many new student unions of the postcolonial world. And thanks to no need for compromises in the area of anti-colonialism, the IUS got in the lead in this race. So active was the IUS in anti-colonial matters that it was rumoured to have run a terrorist training centre in its Secretariat, as Jiří Pelikán recalled.¹²⁵

There was also a visible shift in the layout of the organization – in the early 1950s the power centre was clearly in Eastern Europe. With many new members from the South, however, the composition of the Secretariat also had to reflect it. One of the most visible steps was electing Noori Abdul Razzak Hussein from Iraq to become the IUS's general secretary at the Congress in Baghdad in 1960. Since then, it became habitual that while the president was nominated by the host organization (a Czechoslovak), the general secretary would be from the Global South. General Secretary Hussein from Iraq was thus followed by his compatriot Mehdi Al Hafid, Fathi El Fadl from Sudan, Srinivasan Kunalan from India, and Georgios Michaelides from Cyprus (which was not technically a Global South country – but still a postcolonial one). The International Student Conference also followed this trend – in the 1960s, it elected two Indian general secretaries of its Coordinating Secretariat.

With more member unions from the Global South, the IUS also changed the Secretariat's composition to be more inclusive. Because European socialist countries held their positions almost in a hereditary way, the Executive Committee and the Secretariat itself were enlarged to make way for new members. The shift in the IUS towards Third-Worldism was thus partly an initiative coming from the centre but partly it was happening because anti-colonial student activists from the South were assuming important positions there. They even had experience with anti-colonial resistance, such as Ricardo Ramirez, a Guatemalan delegate, who was in the resistance against the US-sponsored coup against the reformist regime of Jacobo Arbenz.¹²⁶ The Algerians also held a high credit for their national liberation struggle. And they were not powerless in the organization; at the 1964 Congress, as Mazen Hussein recalled, Noori Hussein was to be re-elected as general secretary, but the Soviets pursued that he would not be re-elected because of the Ba'athist revolution in Iraq, and that rather someone from Algeria be nominated. But the Arabs held their ground and voted him through.¹²⁷

The emphasis on the postcolonial world was to be demonstrated not only by the composition of the Secretariat. If the IUS wanted to become – or at least to appear – a truly global organization, it had to open up also in terms of the location of its events. The fact that after the split with the West, all World Festivals of Youth and Students, all

¹²⁵ Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 102–3.

¹²⁶ Peter Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*, 72.

¹²⁷ Interview with Mazen Hussein, 4 August 2020, Prague.

IUS Congresses, Councils and Executive Committees meetings were held in Eastern European socialist countries was sarcastically being pointed out by the Western student counterparts.¹²⁸ On the contrary, the Western organization held its annual conferences in Istanbul, Lima, Quebec, Colombo, Nairobi and Christchurch.

The IUS had to respond but there was concern that events held outside the Soviet bloc would be much more difficult to control. Another trouble was financial – the host country usually took care of a significant portion of the budget that Global South countries often could not afford. The biggest IUS event, a Congress, was first organized outside of Eastern Europe in 1958 – in Beijing, People's Republic of China, which was still a rather safe space. Then, two years later, the first real test was done – the World Student Congress was held in Baghdad. The toppling of the Hashemite kingdom in 1958 changed the dynamic in the Middle East; the leader of the revolution, Abdul Karim Qasim, turned Iraq into a progressive country and abandoned the alliance with the United States. Qasim was more open to promoting his country within the socialist world, including the socialist-oriented INGOs. Following this policy, he was willing to host the IUS Congress, including taking care of most of the budget. Qasim gave the Congress an opening address, followed by messages from provisional Algerian Prime Minister Ferhat Abbas, Antonín Novotný, Nikita Khrushchev and other politicians and academics.¹²⁹ Pelikán remembered that Iraqi communist students protested against Qasim and he had them arrested before the Congress, which resulted in a paradoxical situation. One of the students was to be executed just before the beginning of the Congress, as an Iraqi comrade informed Pelikán and warned him that if it happened, they would flood the streets, and if the army shot, there would be a civil war. Worried about the fate of the Congress, Pelikán demanded a midnight audience with Qasim and tried to convince him not to go through with the execution – and then left worried if he had not made the situation worse.¹³⁰

No one was executed that night, Qasim delivered his opening speech and Pelikán could sleep again. The Congress in Baghdad was considered a success and proved that it was possible to organize even big events in non-communist non-European countries. After this experience, the IUS events organized in decolonized countries became more frequent. In particular Executive Committee meetings, which were smaller and cheaper to organize, were transferred to Africa, Asia and Latin America – in 1960, one was organized in Tunis, and in following years in Havana, Jakarta, Algiers and Cairo.

These experiences contributed to the conviction that it was possible and even necessary to organize the largest event – the World Festival of Youth and Students – in the postcolonial world. The Festivals were held every two years in Eastern European socialist capitals from the 1947 Prague Festival to the biggest and most pompous Festival in 1957 in Moscow. The export of this socialist mega-event was first tested on

¹²⁸ The International Union of Students – A Chronological History, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia V.

¹²⁹ Text of the speech extemporized by his excellency the faithful leader maj. gen. Abdul Karim Qasim, the Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the armed forces, in the opening ceremony of the Sixth Conference of the International Union of Students in the Al-Khayam cinema in Baghdad on 8 October 1960, IISH, col. IUS, 6th Congress 1960 II.

¹³⁰ Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 135–6.

the following Festival in 1959, which was held in Vienna. Three years later, the next Festival was held in Helsinki. This was a risky move because the organizers – the WFDY, the IUS but mainly the Soviets – had a diminished capacity to control the events. The two capitals of European neutral countries proved ambiguous hosts; the festivals had to be smaller because of the lack of funding from the host cities, and the organizers had to cope with strong opposition from local people, including the student groups. The city and state administrations checked every participant carefully before granting the visa.¹³¹ The Western intelligence agencies saw this as an opportunity to harm the Festival, distribute anti-communist literature, and influence the participants.¹³² In Vienna, West Germans organized a state-sponsored ‘anti-festival’ based on a slander of the Soviet Union.¹³³

Even though the two Festivals in neutral countries were not really a success, it was desirable to expand the scope of the movement. After Helsinki, it was decided that the next Festival should take place in the Third World. The first choice was Algiers. Algeria had a high credit in the socialist world after the long and exhausting battle against colonialism which finally resulted in the country’s independence in 1962. For its active role in anti-colonial networks, Algiers was known as the ‘Mecca of revolution’.¹³⁴ Algeria put a lot of effort into the organization, hoping to present itself to the world and to introduce the topics of national liberation. The efforts were thwarted by the coup d’état that toppled President Ahmed Ben Bella and replaced him with Houari Boumedienne. At first, the Festival was to be taken anyway – if we are to believe Ahmed Mahi, the Algerian representative at the Festival’s International Preparatory Committee and an ardent fighter against the new regime, the Komsomol delegation wanted to hold the Festival on an unchanged date. Mahi, however, managed to get the backing of most delegations, including the IUS, for his position, which was to postpone until the national situation was clear and the democratic dialogue reopened.¹³⁵ Subsequently, the venue in Algeria was cancelled and the search for a suitable host continued.

The International Preparatory Committee was still committed to the idea of holding the Festival in Africa – it nominated commissions to inspect possible sites in Egypt, Sudan, Tanzania, Congo-Brazzaville, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Morocco and Nigeria. Another commission was to go to Hanoi, a site proposed by the Cubans.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv – Archiv der Republik. Bundesministerium für Inneres Sektion II, 1959, box 1163–1166.

¹³² Joni Krekola and Simo Mikkonen, ‘Backlash of the Free World: The US Presence at the World Youth Festival in Helsinki, 1962’, in *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 231–56; Pia Koivunen, ‘The World Youth Festival as a Soviet Cultural Product during the Cold War’, *Quaestio Rossica* 8, no. 5 (2020): 1612–28.

¹³³ Quinn Slobodian, ‘What does democracy look like? (And why would anyone want to buy it?) Third World Demands and West German Responses at 1960s World Youth Festivals’, in *Cold War Cultures. Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, ed. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus m. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 254–75.

¹³⁴ For the position and symbol of Algeria among national liberation movements, see Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹³⁵ Ahmed Mahi, *De l’UGÉMA à l’UNEA: Témoignage sur le mouvement étudiant (1959–1965)* (Alger: Inas éditions, 2014), 75–83.

¹³⁶ Report on meeting of working group of 9th WFYS IPC 1965, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 277/8079.

The International Preparatory Committee took the Cuban proposal seriously because Hanoi also had a high credit due to the ongoing war and increasing US presence. Aside from the Cubans, the North Vietnamese capital was also preferred by the Chinese who at this time, as it will be shown, fought against the Soviet dominance and thus also against holding the Festival in Eastern Europe. The Vietnamese, however, had to decline this proposal with the explanation that it would not be possible for them to organize such a big event due to the ongoing war.¹³⁷ The Soviets preferred stability after the Algerian fiasco and argued for Sofia, the only Eastern European socialist capital that had not hosted a Festival yet. At the International Preparatory Committee meeting in Vienna in February 1966, the Ghanaians offered to organize the next Festival in Accra, being supported by many other African delegations. The Cubans countered with the offer to hold the event in Havana which would, according to the Cuban argument, bear an important political message against imperialism. Bulgarians, on the other hand, withdrew their offer in favour of Accra, which in the end won the majority of votes and was chosen to host the ninth Festival – although the IUS delegation, as per its own report, tried to avoid the vote and choose unanimously.¹³⁸ But the history repeated itself; the progressive government of Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 and the Festival had to be called off again. Only then did the Festival move to Sofia but was not held until 1968, marking six long years from the last one. After this experience, the Festival was never again until the end of the Cold War held in a non-socialist country and only twice outside of Europe (in Havana and Pyongyang).

Problems were encountered also in the organization of Executive Committee meetings. In 1965, the meeting was supposed to be held in Khartoum but had to be cancelled last minute, with some of the delegates already en route to Sudan. The reason was apparently that the Sudanese government caught a cable in which the Secretariat was considering changing the venue to Czechoslovakia because of the unstable situation in Sudan. (The IUS claimed the cable was forged.) Angered by the cable, the Sudanese side unilaterally cancelled the meeting.¹³⁹ At the last moment, the meeting was transferred to Karlovy Vary in West Bohemia in Czechoslovakia.¹⁴⁰

After that, even the Executive Committee meetings were rarely held in the Global South, unless it was in a Southern socialist country. These cases were a symptom of a broader phenomenon, which was certain sobering up of the socialist countries in relation to the postcolonial world. While the early 1960s were characterized by enthusiastic support for state development and by hopes to spread socialism, the middle of the decade showed that the Cold War could not have been won so easily; many countries wanted development but not socialism, guarded their independence or established amicable relations with the West. Progressive governments were toppled not only in Algeria and Ghana but also in Indonesia. As scholars have shown in the example of various fields, the relations of European socialist countries to the Global

¹³⁷ On 9th Festival in Hanoi, 23 November 1965, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 278/8140.

¹³⁸ Report on IPC meeting for 9th WFYS in Vienna 1966, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 284/8340.

¹³⁹ Declaration of the IUS Secretariat concerning the convocation of the E.C. in Khartoum, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 274/7670.

¹⁴⁰ EC Meeting of the IUS. Karlovy Vary 1965. Preliminary Agenda. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 279/8168.

South became increasingly motivated by profit rather than politics or solidarity around the mid-1960s.¹⁴¹

The IUS remained driven by solidarity with the Third World, as anti-colonial movements and actors were still a part of their networks. But the increasing instability, as well as the influence of China, meant that holding events in non-socialist countries became scarcer again. In 1964, the IUS tried very much to organize the Congress on African soil but was not successful. In the end, the Bulgarian capital of Sofia was chosen.¹⁴²

The fact that the IUS was a NGO composed of member organizations from all over the world provided a significant leeway; in relation to the topics of decolonization, Third World emancipation, or anti-imperialism, it could afford a radical approach. Unlike the IUS, the socialist states were bound by diplomatic rules. Since the mid-1960s, Eastern European countries increasingly preferred stable relations and business opportunities to export their goods to the postcolonial markets rather than supporting revolutionary activities and ideologically related minority groups.¹⁴³ For example, a lot of sharp criticism was expressed on the account of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie who was labelled as imperialist or even fascist for his ethnocentric policies and occupation of Eritrea in the IUS materials.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the IUS's host, Czechoslovakia, established friendly relations with Ethiopia, developed several business projects in the country and welcomed its head on a state visit to Prague as a true anti-colonial leader.¹⁴⁵ Here, again, the IUS was under the influence of its member organizations; the Worldwide Federation of Ethiopian Students was accusing Selassie of collaboration with the United States and France and of maintaining colonial structures in Africa.¹⁴⁶

The range of current topics that were supported or denounced by the IUS was very wide – published IUS resolutions adopted at a congress often had more than a hundred pages, addressing all world regions and most of the world's ongoing conflicts. In the 1950s, a dominant topic was the war in Algeria, supported not only by resolutions but also work camps and solidarity brigades. One such was organized Sakiet Sidi Youssef where schools were reconstructed. At the 1956 Congress, delegates from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia pushed the resolution to honour the fallen Algerian students fighting for their country's independence, without consulting Pelikán, who tried to set the tone in a more friendly way towards the West.¹⁴⁷ The motion was approved, however, despite the opposition of some Western and a Nigerian delegate. To protest

¹⁴¹ Buzássyová, *The Eastern Bloc and Sub-Saharan Africa: Czechoslovakia, UNESCO and Development Aid from the 1960s and Beyond*, 65–105.

¹⁴² Plan of secretariat work in connection with IUS congress in Nigeria 1964, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 235/6531.

¹⁴³ Mikuláš Pešta, 'Reluctant revolutionaries: Czechoslovak support of revolutionary violence between decolonization and détente', *Intelligence and National Security* 37, no. 7 (2022): 1003–19.

¹⁴⁴ Secretariat materials on Ethiopia, 1961–1962, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 204/4446.

¹⁴⁵ Petr Zídek and Karel Sieber, *Československo a subsaharská Afrika v letech 1948–1989* (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007), 55–67.

¹⁴⁶ Statement on Haile Selassie's visit to the USA, 4 June 1973, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 381/4175.

¹⁴⁷ Report of the NUS Observers to the IVth World Student Congress of the International Union of Students, Prague 1959, IISH, col. IUS, box 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

the resolution, the French, British, Canadian, Swiss and Dutch observers left the room.¹⁴⁸

From 1959 on, there was the Cuban issue on the table; the socialist project in the Caribbean had the full IUS support. A sharp critique was formulated in response to the Western involvement in the Congo crisis and the murder of Patrice Lumumba.¹⁴⁹ In 1960, another huge topic of transnational activism was brought to the forefront. After the massacre in Sharpeville, where the South African police opened fire on the crowd of anti-discrimination protesters, the struggle against apartheid became one of the key topics of the transnational socialist networks. The apartheid regime remained a crucial topic until the 1980s, being a widely shared topic. The IUS was coordinating efforts with the activists in the West on this topic too – the American Students for Democratic Society sent the IUS a list of companies that trade with South Africa and called for cooperation in a boycott.¹⁵⁰ In the mid-1960s, the IUS Secretariat condemned the 1964 US-backed coup in Brazil and the 1965 US invasion of the Dominican Republic. It vigorously supported the Palestinian national liberation – it condemned the Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956 supported by the UK and France and strongly protested against the occupation that was the result of the Six-Day War in 1967. The Vietnamese struggle against the US military intervention was also very significant – it was another theme that united activists across all three worlds of the Cold War.¹⁵¹ Zbyněk Vokrouhlický attested that he was part of a delegation to Vietnam, during which they even went to the front and witnessed bombing first-hand. To discuss the topic with the US students, he also claimed to have gone to the United States illegally; when he took part in a seminar in Toronto (organized by the General Union of the Students of Quebec, an IUS member organization), they crossed the border to the United States in a car to attend a discussion there.¹⁵²

Another area in which the IUS showed its solidarity with the anti-colonial world was its support for international emancipatory projects, even if they were supported by the Soviet Union, only hesitantly. In relation to the 1955 Bandung Conference, the IUS expressed enthusiastic support and helped with the mobilization and publicity of the event.¹⁵³ Eleven years later at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, the common Third World project was not about emancipation anymore but rather about active struggle against imperialism. The conference was attended by hundreds of delegates from seventy-nine countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as observers from Europe and North America, to express mutual solidarity and unite on a common transnational anti-imperialist front. The stance of the Soviets was

¹⁴⁸ 4th World Student Congress, 15 September 1956. IISH, col. IUS, 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

¹⁴⁹ Statement on murder of Patrice Lumumba, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 216/4671.

¹⁵⁰ Secretariat of the IUS to student organizations, April 1965, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

¹⁵¹ Pierre Asselin, 'Fuelling the World Revolution: Vietnamese Communist Internationalism', in *The Tricontinental Revolution: Third World Radicalism and the Cold War*, ed. R. Joseph Parrott and Mark Atwood Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 113–38.

¹⁵² Interview of Petr Zídek with Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, 31 August 2005, Prague. I thank Petr Zídek for providing me with this interview.

¹⁵³ The work of the IUS in relation to the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Indonesia 1955, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 209/4543.

ambiguous – because of China and because Cuba seemed to be more and more renegade and not accepting the Soviet leadership. The IUS, however, supported the conference fully, sending a large delegation headed by the president to the conference. After the end of the conference, the Secretariat issued and distributed a declaration wholeheartedly supporting the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle of the gathered countries.¹⁵⁴

However, anti-colonialism was standard even in the ISC, even though more moderate – as a compromise of more radical Global South member unions and the Western which refused to attack their governments directly. Even though it was supposed to be apolitical, the political matters crept back in the agenda. At the 1956 Conference in Ceylon, the matter of Algerian independence was thoroughly discussed. It was also conducting work in the Global South – not only conferences but also a seminar on racism in Uganda in 1961, a seminar on the 'Role of students in independent Asia' in Ceylon in 1958, or work camps to help Chile in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake in 1961.¹⁵⁵ It has to be acknowledged that both organizations were genuinely working with the student movement in the Global South. The ISC also attempted inclusiveness. In reaction to the 1960 IUS Congress, a West German observer noted: 'There remains the question of how far the ISC will have to go with making greater concessions to the necessities of the representatives of the non-European National Unions. In respect to the IUS Congress, it can however be criticized that an actual control of the Executive can not be granted in practice.'¹⁵⁶

The IUS Secretariat, however, was criticizing the COSEC for using Third Worldism as a political tool and adopting anti-colonial stances insincerely. In 1962, the ISC was criticized for refusing to deal with the situation in Puerto Rico and other matters in the Global South.¹⁵⁷ In an IUS report from the ISC Lima Conference in 1959, its authors (delegates from Ecuador, Japan and Iran) noted that 'a big number of ISC participants and its leadership – being from Western countries – are linked to or influenced by the policies of their governments. The representative of [the Netherlands] when he spoke on the West Irian resolution openly stated that they as Dutchmen cannot condemn their own government's policy'.¹⁵⁸ While the UNEF was almost unanimously against colonialism in Algeria, they continued, the Anglo-Saxon bloc was trying to manipulate and use them.

The whole outcome of the 8th ISC in condemning colonialism and imperialism is limited to French colonialism in North Africa, and a resolution on West Irian which was so unsatisfactory that the Indonesian delegation did not vote for it. No condemnation of British atrocities and aggression in Kenya, Nyassaland,

¹⁵⁴ Declaration in support of results of tri-continental conference (Africa, Asia, Latin America) in Havana 1966, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 281/8194.

¹⁵⁵ Altbach, *The Student Internationals*, 38.

¹⁵⁶ Report on the participation of the representatives of the German student newspaper DSZ at the 6th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, 6th Congress 1960 II.

¹⁵⁷ IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress I.

¹⁵⁸ Report of the IUS Delegation on the VIIIth ISC, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

and the Middle East. No condemnation of US imperialism in Latin America and elsewhere.¹⁵⁹

In 1966 the *World Student News* accused the ISC that the Indonesian union that attended the ISC was closely linked with the movement that killed hundreds of thousands after the coup in Indonesia.¹⁶⁰

The representation problem

In 1964, the Coordinating Secretariat of the ISC elaborated an internal document entitled 'Issues embarrassing to the IUS'. It contained instructions to the ISC delegation to the upcoming IUS Congress in Sofia, specifying which topics would cause the biggest embarrassment to the IUS Secretariat and should therefore be brought up at the Congress. The document stated that 'Berlin, Hungary, etc. are standard issues, but will make little impression on non-European unions' whose hearts and minds were apparently the ones at stake, with the Global North rather clearly divided. Some topics, such as Israel, Malaysia or Cyprus, were indicated as 'issues that will arise without our help'. Other topics that needed a little push to be debated included the Chinese trade with South Africa, the Chinese nuclear testing, the USSR support for the Shah of Iran, including Brezhnev's visit to Iran in 1963 and the call for support of the Organization of African Unity.

But the most embarrassing problem that was to be used against the IUS was representation. The document listed the IUS member unions that were not representative and even strategized who should raise the matter at the congress to increase impact. The list included national unions from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, India, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Portuguese Africa, Puerto Rico and West Africa.¹⁶¹ The fact that the ISC found the representativity of the IUS members the most embarrassing problem is illustrative. In the rivalry between the two organizations, the key issue was legitimacy – and if an organization was composed of unrepresentative members, its legitimacy was undermined.

What is meant by representativity? On the global level, it was the share of studentship that the IUS or ISC represented. In 1967, the IUS had 87 members, of which 75 held full membership, 11 held associate membership and 1 held consultative status.¹⁶² At the same time, the ISC had 59 members, out of which 49 with full membership, 8 with associate membership and 2 with observer membership.¹⁶³ Eighteen of these organizations were members of both student federations.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Włodzimierz Konarski, 12th International Student Conference. The Rotary Club, in *World Student News* 20, nos. 7–8–9 (1966), 24–33.

¹⁶¹ Issues embarrassing to the IUS, IISH, f. IUS, 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

¹⁶² Resolutions of the 9th IUS Congress, IISH, f. IUS, 9th Congress III.

¹⁶³ Résolutions provisoires de la douzième conférence SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

These numbers, however, do not account for how big a proportion of students the individual national unions represented. This is not easily assessed because every student movement in every country had a different structure. In many countries, the national unions did not represent a majority of students, as the membership was completely voluntary. In other countries, there was no national union – students were only organized in regional, political and religious unions, or at the level of the university. In some cases, there was more than one national union claiming to represent a country's studentship. Student unions in the state socialist systems were closely linked with the ruling party. They either had a separate organization (Poland) or were part of a broader youth union (Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Soviet Union). The membership varied, but most students were members. For Komsomol, Robert Hornsby said that they were 'almost all members, at the best universities especially'.¹⁶⁴ The question remains, however, to what extent the Eastern European unions really represented the needs of their students, and also to what extent the delegates really represented their unions. This also pertains to the student unions in the West, which had an automatic membership, such as in Great Britain.¹⁶⁵ These questions are not easily quantifiable, and it is not an ambition of this book to give an answer; this is merely to acknowledge the complexity of the problem.

The structure of the IUS itself created a distance between the organization and the students. The IUS Secretariat was usually not in direct contact with the students, but rather with its member organizations or ad hoc partner unions. Its constant preoccupation with major political issues, such as the struggle for peace or decolonization, could sidetrack the student problems. The IUS was meant to serve as a student trade union, speaking on behalf of students as a social group with specific needs and problems. Many of these problems were transnational and went across the Iron Curtain and the North–South divide. The IUS addressed them in its production; the Secretariat gathered knowledge regarding student problems in individual countries and regions from its members, partners, correspondents and investigative missions. The analysis and interpretation of the gathered data were constrained by the dominant political worldview but the knowledge production was still one of the ways in which the IUS represented student problems.

The issue of representativity was a problem the IUS had to address from the very start. At the founding congress, the representation of individual countries was unrestrained; many countries still did not have a national union and were represented by mixed delegations. The acknowledgement of membership was a political problem – the representative of Spanish students was the Federal Union of Spanish Students, an anti-Francoist exile organization.¹⁶⁶ With the emerging Cold War, choosing which parallelly existing unions would be the best equipped for the membership was more frequent. In the case of China, the IUS started acknowledging the communist student organization before the civil war was over, while initially, China was represented by pro-Kuomintang students. With the secessions from the IUS due to its political

¹⁶⁴ Robert Hornsby, 'Engineering friendship?' 65–86.

¹⁶⁵ Morder, 'Internationalismes et internationales étudiantes'.

¹⁶⁶ Materials on Situation of Students in Spain, NACR, f. MSS, PA 8/175.

orientation, the Secretariat accepted membership of marginal student organizations, classifying them as national unions – which was the case of the United States, the Netherlands and India.

In 1953, the British National Union of Students elaborated a report that analysed IUS membership. The report divided the sixty-three member organizations that the IUS declared into seven categories: the unions in people's democracies (11), representative national unions from non-socialist countries (6), minority or specialized organization from a country where a representative national union exists (14), organizations from countries where no single umbrella union exists and there are several organizations (6), organizations of students studying outside their country (14), uncertain cases (7) and specific cases (5).¹⁶⁷ While it is difficult to verify the exact numbers the report works with, it is clear that a substantial problem with membership existed and that the IUS violated its own constitution in this regard.

In the post-Stalinist times, the IUS tried to improve its image. It got rid of the marginal, non-representative member organizations. This led to a decrease in membership – as the British observer reported, 54 countries were represented at the 1953 Congress in Warsaw and only 38 in 1956 in Prague. After the IUS proved unable to condemn the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the last Western unions left – the Finnish and the Icelandic unions.¹⁶⁸ However, removing the marginal members helped the organization's image in the long run.¹⁶⁹ Another measure was associate membership status, introduced in 1953 to attract the seceded organizations that were not ready to commit fully.¹⁷⁰ And most importantly, advancing decolonization brought new unions to the IUS, compensating for the loss caused by the Cold War.

In the early 1960s, it seemed that the world was going the IUS way. In eleven years between 1956 and 1967, it more than doubled its membership.¹⁷¹ The IUS and the ISC never reunified but they slowly converged. Many unions from the Global South were members of both organizations – for example, unions from Ethiopia, Iran, Sudan, Tanzania or Tunisia – and did not see the membership as mutually exclusive. In the 1960s, some of the Western unions considered renewing their association with the IUS. The French were the pioneering force – they always advocated for unity and after considering pros and contras, in 1964, the UNEF gained the status of an associate member.¹⁷² For some time, the UNEF tried to be the 'Third Force' between

¹⁶⁷ Analysis of membership in the International Union of Students, 1953, IISH, col. IUS, box British National Union of Students.

¹⁶⁸ SHI – Iceland: Disaffiliation from the IUS, 16. May 1957, NČR, f. MSS, PA 278/8158; SYL / Finland – on mutual cooperation, 1964, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 244/6409. The Finnish renewed their associate membership in 1971. SYL Finland – application for associated membership within IUS, 5 February 1971, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 334/11428.

¹⁶⁹ Report of the NUS observers to the IVth World Student Congress of the International Union of Students, Prague, 1956, IISH, col. IUS, 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

¹⁷⁰ Changes of the IUS Constitution as proposed by student organizations and summarised by the Executive Committee of the IUS, IISH 10–14 4th–5th Congress 1956–1958.

¹⁷¹ 4th World Student Congress Prague 1956. List of member organizations submitted to the congress, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 136/2322; Resolutions of the 9th IUS Congress, IISH, f. IUS, 9th Congress III.

¹⁷² Affiliation de l'UNEF à l'UIE. IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III; Agreement on the Status of Associate Membership between IUS and UNEF, IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia, 1964 II; Didier Fischer, 'L'UNEF et l'Union internationale des étudiants (1945–1965)', 84–105.

the East and West.¹⁷³ At the 1967 IUS Congress in Ulaanbaatar, the association of the Union of Students of Ireland (USI – representing also Northern Ireland), the General Union of the Students of Quebec and the Democratic Syndicate of the Students of Spain was approved, as was the Yugoslav Student Union. A union that applied for membership but was declined was the National Union of Israeli Students. The Israelis were a member for a long time; they finally decided to disaffiliate in 1958 in protest against the General Union of Palestinian Students becoming a full member.¹⁷⁴ In 1964, however, they sent an application to re-affiliate; this time, Israeli students were opposed by the students from the Global South, while European members advocated for the acceptance. In the end, the Israelis were turned down with 34 votes against 16 with 8 abstentions.¹⁷⁵

A discord among revolutionaries

The Western student organizations left after the Cold War broke out but by no means that did not leave the IUS a monolith. While the members from state socialist countries were rather united in their positions and language during the 1950s and 1960s, non-European members were not so restrained and expressed their own opinions. These could have been incorporated into a compromise stance, but some cases also caused the IUS internal struggle. We have already seen that the Soviet military intervention in Hungary in 1956 provoked condemnations; some member organizations were not happy with the Secretariat's insufficient response, as they saw it.

And the critique coming from within continued with destalinization. In 1957, the Foreign Commission of the Polish Students' Association (ZSP) issued a report analysing the IUS's past errors. Although the report acknowledged the IUS's positive activity, it also stated that it 'continues to devote too much attention to the defence of its position as an international organization, and that it cares more for preserving and strengthening its prestige than for the true interests of member organizations'. The main problem, as the authors of the report saw it, was the IUS's centralized structure, sectarian programme and 'ideological Gleichschaltung'. The important decisions, the report continues, are made by the Secretariat, which is not even a constitutional body, and those who are not represented in the Secretariat have only limited means to influence the IUS's main line. The alignment with the Soviet foreign policy was even explicitly, although carefully, criticized. And the report added that the ZSP as a member organization should be informed of the IUS financial situation.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Jean-Louis Peninou, 'Les années 1960: Hors des structures de l'UIE et de la CIE un nouveau pôle de mouvements étudiants', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, 185–91.

¹⁷⁴ NUIS/Israel: On decision to disconnect ties with IUS. 1958. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 199/4244.

¹⁷⁵ Bericht über den S. KONGRESS des Internationalen Studentenbundes in Sofia, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#257.

¹⁷⁶ Attitude of the Association of Polish Students (ZSP) to the International Union of Students, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

Some problems stemmed from the legacies of past conflicts. When the Yugoslavs invited the IUS to their congress in 1959 and the IUS, after long discussions, did not attend, it caused discontent among several African and Asian member unions.¹⁷⁷ In 1962, the Executive Committee was organized in Jakarta.¹⁷⁸ Such an arrangement, even though promoted for political reasons, created its problems. For the student organizations of the decolonized countries, albeit progressive, it was far from obvious that they should adopt Soviet stances on all problems. In this case, the Indonesian student union invited some countries to the meeting on its own, including Yugoslavia or New Zealand who were not members of the EC or even the IUS. The Indonesians especially insisted on the invitation of Yugoslavia, under the pressure of the government which wanted to strengthen relations forged within the Non-Aligned Movement. That was a delicate situation; in the end, the Yugoslavs did not attend in because they did not have money.¹⁷⁹

Even bigger troubles awaited the IUS with the upcoming discord among revolutionaries. The relative unity of the socialist camp was torn by the Sino-Soviet split and by the growing criticism of the Soviet Union's foreign policies. While supporting decolonization and national liberation in the Global South, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev also pursued the policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West, but also significantly enlarged the Soviet nuclear arsenal. These sometimes mutually dissonant policies provoked mixed responses from the socialist countries, the Global South and the left-wing activists of the West. And the IUS, as a space of encounters between all these three worlds, witnessed heated discussions and performances in this regard.

The Japanese student organization Zengakuren grew into a sharp critic of Soviet policies. At first siding with the Chinese, it shot at the Soviet Union from the left, accusing it of not being radical enough. Towards the IUS, the Japanese complained that the organization was dedicating too much space to sport and that the quest for unity might destroy the IUS.¹⁸⁰ While it still defended the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the Zengakuren underwent a significant change in the early 1960s towards strict pacifism. In the early 1960s, the Zengakuren fell apart into several factions; the one that remained active within the IUS broke up with China and started criticizing all nuclear powers equally. Given the Japanese experience with nuclear destruction, the Zengakuren was in particular radically opposed to nuclear armament.¹⁸¹ In 1962, the Zengakuren took part in the IUS Congress in Leningrad where they tried to amend a resolution against nuclear weapons – one of the many that the IUS issued on the topic. Only this time, the Japanese reading specifically implored the United States but also the Soviet Union to stop the tests, a proposal seconded only by the West Indies

¹⁷⁷ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Agreement between the Secretariat of the IUS and the PPMI on the organization of the IUS Executive Committee meeting of the IUS. IISH, col. IUS, box Executive Committee I.

¹⁷⁹ Jiří Pelikán to the International Department of the Central Committee of the KSČ, Archivio della camera dei deputati, fondo Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Naoko Koda, *The United States and the Japanese Student Movement, 1948–1973. Managing a Free World* (London: Lexington Books, 2020), 188–93.

delegate.¹⁸² Even worse, the Japanese delegation tried to advocate for a nuclear test ban directly at the Red Square in Moscow. They were swiftly arrested as 'fascists' and interrogated.¹⁸³ According to the IUS President Jiří Pelikán, the Soviets approached him with pictures of the detained Japanese students and asked him to expel them from the Congress, which he refused, as per his own words.¹⁸⁴ In Leningrad, the Japanese apologized for distributing the leaflets, but at the same time blamed the Soviet students for being only 'representatives of Soviet bureaucrats'.¹⁸⁵

Similarly, another First World student union – the National Union of Australian University Students – criticized the Soviet Union from a radical universalist perspective as observers at the Congress in Sofia in 1964. The Australians vigorously condemned the apartheid regime in South Africa and called for a naval blockade. While they acknowledged that the 'worst villains in trading with South Africa are Britain and the United States', they also declared that the GDR and China are also doing business with the 'Verwoerd's fascist regime', and therefore have to be also condemned.¹⁸⁶

But the biggest challenge awaited the IUS in the growing discord between the world's two largest socialist countries – the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Despite Nikita Khrushchev's efforts to keep China in the fold, the paths of the two socialist regimes diverged already in the late 1950s and in the early 1960s, mutual relations degraded to open hostility and even a brief armed conflict in 1968.¹⁸⁷ One of the biggest reasons for the growing animosity was the conviction of the Chinese leadership that Thaw and Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence was the abandonment of the revolution and making peace with the capitalists. The Chinese, who gradually posited themselves in the role of the protectors of the interests of the Third World, argued that there can be no peaceful coexistence while the oppressive colonial system exists – there is only revolution or counter-revolution, and the revolution is violent. Another reason was that China wanted more autonomy in its actions – there was to be polycentrism.¹⁸⁸

This growing dissonance permeated the IUS, too. The first signs that China would pursue its own policies showed already at the IUS Congress in 1958 which took place outside of Europe for the first time – in Beijing. In the role of the hosting organization, the All-China Student Federation could dictate the conditions and fight against the tendencies it disagreed with. It was the first event in which the representatives of Yugoslav students were supposed to take part following their expulsion in 1950. The

¹⁸² Summary Minutes of the 7th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress II.

¹⁸³ Zengakuren leader writes about bitter experience in Russia (IUS Congress) 1962, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 258/7326.

¹⁸⁴ Jiří Pelikán, 'De la guerre froide au dégel? Levers de rideau', 173–84.

¹⁸⁵ Sino-Soviet Conflict at the 7th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, 7th Congress II; Summary Minutes of the 7th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, 7th Congress II.

¹⁸⁶ General Intervention of the National Union of Australian University Students, IISH, col IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia II.

¹⁸⁷ For the Sino-Soviet split, see, for example, Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962–1967* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2009).

¹⁸⁸ Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 157–93.

Chinese, however, did not wish to amend the relations with the Yugoslavs like the majority of the Secretariat and refused to issue the visa for the Yugoslav delegation. The Yugoslavs did come in the end but the host organization ignored them which led to an awkward situation.¹⁸⁹

The centrifugal tendency of the All-China Student Federation fully manifested at the 1962 IUS Congress in Leningrad. There, the Chinese expressed their discontent with the policy of peaceful coexistence and accused the Soviets and other Europeans of being 'revisionists' and 'capitulationists'. According to them, it was not only peace that needed promotion but also national liberation, which is at least equally important. The Soviets, in return, accused the Chinese of 'dogmatism' and 'sectarianism'. As the Canadian observer to the Congress remarked, the Chinese managed to gain the sympathies of most of the Global South member organizations which regarded the issue of decolonization as of primary importance.¹⁹⁰

The IUS President Jiří Pelikán later admitted that the Secretariat was pressed to support the peace initiatives because they were important to Khrushchev, even though they had little to do with the student movement. 'For the students from the countries that were still fighting for national independence, peace was of course very important, but not at any price, not because of the agreement of the Soviets with the US or with France and so on.'¹⁹¹

In December 1962, the IUS welcomed a new Chinese representative in the Secretariat, Hu Qili. In a get-to-know-you discussion with Pelikán, Hu criticized the Soviet solution to the Cuban crisis and especially blamed the USSR for providing arms to India in the Sino-Indian conflict. As Pelikán reported, Hu said that the quarrel between their parties was already public knowledge which meant that they did not have to hide the differences and could use an open discussion to find out where the truth lay, for all parties, according to him, had 'their Marxist-Leninists, their revisionists, and their in-between groups'. Subsequently, during the first meeting of the Secretariat, Pelikán continued, Hu showed what his work in the IUS would look like. He strongly opposed the plans that the World Student Chess Championship, co-organized by the IUS, should convene in Yugoslavia in the following year, and that a seminar on contemporary problems in higher education should take place at the University of Dubrovnik. He strongly criticized Tito as an agent of imperialism and did not care about the objections that it had nothing to do with the work of the IUS, Pelikán complained.¹⁹²

In his reports to the Czechoslovak Communist Party organs, Pelikán further observed that a new strange alliance had emerged in the IUS, composed of the Chinese and Albanian representatives and 'representatives of certain nationalist organizations which, despite their fight against colonialism, have strong anti-communist prejudice'.

¹⁸⁹ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹⁹⁰ Frank Griffiths, Sino-Soviet Conflict at the 7th IUS Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box 7th Congress II.

¹⁹¹ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

¹⁹² Záznam o rozhovoru s čínskými zástupci na MSS, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 3.

Among these organizations, he named the Federation of Students from Black Africa in France, the Union of Students from West Africa and the North African Student Confederation, as well as the Japanese Zengakuren, 'whose leadership is at the time in the hands of Trotskyist elements'.¹⁹³ Pelikán then identified the lines that this alliance pursued, the first of which was the interpretation of peaceful coexistence as contrary to anti-colonial struggle and the struggle for peace as repugnant to the interests of colonial countries fighting for their freedom. Secondly, he also mentioned underestimating the practical aspects of IUS activities, such as student sports, tourism, mobility, etc. The Japanese participation in the pro-Chinese alliance was quite stretched but in general, the pro-Soviet group had a reason to worry.

In another report, Pelikán complained that the Chinese opposed any initiative that would be aimed at peace or disarmament. Furthermore, he said, they also saw the IUS as the only platform of the international student movement and rejected all proposals to establish contact or cooperation with other student bodies, effectively boycotting the roundtable talks, unity meetings, and joint projects with the ISC and other rivals or partners. Despite this attitude, the All-China Student Federation aspired to organize a conference for African, Asian and Latin American students separately from the IUS to strengthen its position as a leader of the Third World. Furthermore, the Chinese had limited their financial contributions to the IUS and basically stopped taking part in any IUS activity except for running the sanatorium for Asian students.¹⁹⁴

The IUS Congress in Sofia, greeted by Norodom Sihanuk, Bertrand Russell, Albert Schweitzer and Ho Chi Minh, took place in November and December 1964.¹⁹⁵ showed that the fall of Nikita Khrushchev a month earlier did not ease the feud. On the contrary, the animosity was not even hidden behind the façade of politeness any longer. In his speech to the Congress plenum, the Chinese delegate did not pull back any punches, saying that the IUS leaders, 'while vociferously paying the lip-service to "anti-imperialism," they have in practice tried their utmost to prevent others from fighting against imperialism and especially forbid others to oppose US imperialism'.¹⁹⁶ The Chinese representatives also went ahead in their opposition to the IUS peace campaigns and openly defended their homeland's own nuclear test, describing it as an 'inspiring success to the anti-imperialist forces and peace-loving people of the whole world'. The First World member organizations opposing all nuclear tests indiscriminately, namely the Japanese and the Canadians, condemned the Chinese bomb nonetheless.¹⁹⁷ Western observers noticed the unprecedented disunity at the Sofia Congress – the body that was used to pass motions unanimously was now split between pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese forces.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Proti pokusům o revizi linie MSS. Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹⁹⁵ Messages of greetings to the 8th Congress, IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

¹⁹⁶ Bericht über den 8. Kongress des Internationalen Studentenbundes in Sofia vom 28.11–10.12 1964, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#257.

¹⁹⁷ 8th Congress of the International Union of Students, IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

Despite the fact that the policies of the pro-Soviet leadership of IUS received the support of the majority of member organizations, the Chinese can boast of surprising success in the last day's vote on the final general resolution. Of the 78 delegations entitled to vote, only 39 voted in favor; two (China and Albania) voted against, six abstained and 31 did not take part in the vote.¹⁹⁸

The ISC delegation to the Congress reported growing dissatisfaction with the IUS on the part of the Global South delegates – the representative of the Federation of Students from Black Africa in France supposedly complained that he was not allowed to speak because of his 'geographical position in this Congress' and the WASU delegate should have outright said that 'IUS stinks.'¹⁹⁹ Another point where the delegations disagreed was the Organization of African Unity, condemned by the EC report as a neocolonial project. However, not everybody was on the same page about that.²⁰⁰ Another controversy was caused by an Israeli application for membership which was considered but ultimately denied – largely by the votes of the Global South.²⁰¹ And cracks appeared in the unity of the Warsaw Pact – the Romanian delegate was also very critical of the IUS practice, complaining about 'discriminatory actions' and 'undemocratic methods' in the IUS against member organizations.²⁰²

The Executive Committee meeting in Karlovy Vary in Western Czechoslovakia in December 1965 was the last official IUS event in which the Chinese took part in a long time. The meeting was called a farce by the Chinese delegation, but they remained alone in their opposition in the Executive Committee voting. Only when voting on a letter to the ISC on possible future cooperation – an act seen as a gesture of peace by some but as a betrayal of revolutionary principles by others – the Chinese opposition was joined by North Korea, Puerto Rico and a couple more unions, while several others abstained.²⁰³ The All-China Student Federation, in the end, decided to leave the IUS altogether, as the rift between China and the Soviet-led socialist countries was beyond repair. For years to come, China had a reserved spot in the IUS Secretariat but never again nominated a person to fill it.

At the 1967 Congress in Ulaanbaatar, therefore, the torch of the biggest troublemakers was passed to Cubans. They took on their role dutifully. After the compromise deal Khrushchev closed to solve the Cuban missile crisis in 1963, Cuba adopted a rather critical policy towards the Soviet Union, aligning to some extent with the Maoist argument that the USSR was not pursuing revolutionary goals anymore. At the Congress, again, they saw the problem in too much openness and universalism that hindered the revolutionary zeal. Indeed, the Congress was more representative

¹⁹⁸ Disunity at IUS Congress, in News Features. Special Items of Interest to Students and Youth, Vol. V, No. 12, 21 December 1964, 1–4, IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

¹⁹⁹ The Growing conflict in the IUS, IISH, col. IUS, 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Bericht über den 8. Kongress des Internationalen Studentenbundes in Sofia, SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#257.

²⁰² The Growing conflict in the IUS, IISH, col. IUS, box 8th Congress Sofia 1964 II.

²⁰³ Moved from Sudan to Czechoslovakia, IUS meeting labelled 'Farce' by China, News Features, Vol. VII, No. I, IISH, col. IUS, box Executive Committee I.

than ever before: 'From Latin America came Christian Democrats, the Fidelistas, and Social Democrats. From Western Europe syndicalists. From Africa progressive Nationalists representing various ideologies. From South Vietnam the National Liberation Front. From Europe exile groups such as the Kurdish Students' Society. From all continents Communists of many persuasions.'²⁰⁴ The trigger of the conflict was the Federation of Chilean University Students, denounced by the Cubans as reactionary. The Chilean delegates, despite one of them being a communist, were dubbed 'agents of US imperialism', because it was Christian Democrats who were the major force in the union. When the Congress did not pass their motion to expel the Chilean union, Cubans along with ten other Latin American unions walked out of the Congress and did not return. Instead, they issued an angry statement condemning the decision not to expel the Federation of Chilean University Students, dubbing it a consequence of the 'erroneous conception of unity and cooperation.'²⁰⁵ Another surprise came from the French who tried to add a point to the agenda to discuss the reform of the Constitution. This came as a surprise to the Secretariat but the motion was supported by many and finally only defeated by 24 votes against 23 with 7 abstentions.²⁰⁶

To complement the picture of the 1960s student internationalism, let us briefly mention also the situation in the ISC, for it must be reiterated that discords did not avoid the West, either. Since the very beginning, the ISC was divided between the 'northern group' led by the United States, the British and Scandinavian students, and the 'southern' led by the French and Italians who were more 'activist and politically oriented.'²⁰⁷ The southern or 'minority' group increasingly criticized what they saw as the conservative and rigid leadership of the northern 'majority', which threatened to cause a loss of membership especially in Latin America. At the ISC in Quebec in 1962, several member organizations from the southern group left in protest against the policy adopted by the majority – that the pro-independence Puerto Rican student union was not admitted to the conference.²⁰⁸ In Christchurch in 1964, a scandal damaged the ISC's reputation – some member unions were not invited when the majority adopted a new Charter.²⁰⁹ In 1966, at the twelfth ISC in Nairobi, the position of the minority strengthened. At the conference, they created a report; the list of signatories included representatives of Iran, Philippines, Madagascar, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Quebec, France, Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Palestine and Kuwait. In the report, they complained about the practice of the Northern Bloc, stating that because of the leadership policies, the ISC was losing ground in Latin America (only one – Paraguay – was supporting the leadership), in the Arab world, in French Africa and also in Europe. It also criticized the 'Indian predominance in the ISC', which

²⁰⁴ The IUS: Ulan Bator and beyond. IISH, col. IUS, box 9th Congress III.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 36.

²⁰⁸ Rapport d'activité de la F.I.A.N.E.I. Problèmes généraux communs à tous les étudiants. IISH, col. IUS, box Varia III.

²⁰⁹ It turned out that the "NSA/CIA team had controlled the travel grants to the 1964 ISC in Christchurch, New Zealand, and had manipulated visa requests so that only friends and allies were able to attend". Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 297.

supposedly manifested vengefully against critical student unions from Asia. The report further demanded 'unequivocal condemnation' of the US policy in Vietnam and South America, an open ISC accepting all opinions, and cooperation with the IUS.²¹⁰

The ISC did not survive long enough to resolve its problems. One of the effects these quarrels had – both between the IUS and the ISC and within them – was that they contributed to the general disenchantment about student unionism. Both the IUS and the ISC seemed quite inefficient and alienated from student problems. Increasingly, many students were losing respect for them and their political fighting. This was even strengthened with the multifaceted crisis at the end of the 1960s – the dissolution of the ISC, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of the student protest movement.

Bittersweet victory

Jiří Pelikán finally retired from the Presidency in 1963 at the Executive Committee in Algiers, at the age of forty. Having become the director of Czechoslovak television, he turned into one of the proponents of the reform movement in Czechoslovakia. His successor in the presidential chair was Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, a man with little prior experience in the student movement.²¹¹ The fact that another Czechoslovak was picked without any serious discussion on alternatives was also not taken well by all. Nevertheless, Vokrouhlický was confirmed in the position by the IUS Congress in Sofia in 1964.

It was during his Presidency that the long-lasting rivalry with the IUS's Western counterpart, the ISC, finally came to an end. In 1967, the *Ramparts* magazine published a revelation that the ISC was in fact funded through its member organization, the United States National Students Association, by the Central Intelligence Agency. The scandal that followed effectively killed the organization, as most its members disaffiliated quickly. It was a moment of triumph for the IUS; at last, its adversary was gone and unification of the world studentship could be achieved again. Just next year, however, the IUS was hit hard, too. Its host country, Czechoslovakia, was invaded by the Warsaw Pact troops and the uneasy navigation through the crisis damaged the organization.

Until recently, it was believed that the ISC was linked with the New York-based Foundation for Youth and Students Affairs since 1952. This Foundation, which provided for a large part of the budget, was funded by the CIA.²¹² Joël Kotek interpreted the CIA funding for the ISC as a necessity – for the Western student unions to resist the communist-led IUS offensive. The subsidies, according to him, were not open because of McCarthyism – it would be seen as undesirable for the US society distraught by anti-communist hysteria to financially support organizations such as the ISC, WAY or

²¹⁰ Press release, 27 August 1966. SBA, IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#256*.

²¹¹ The International Union of Students – A Chronological History, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia V.

²¹² Altbach, *Student Internationals*, 55.

the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which 'stood for liberal and progressive policies that were regarded with suspicion and outright hostility by the reactionaries who dominated Congress and intimidated the US administration.' But as he continued, the 'chief objective of the intervention was not to control or interfere in the internal affairs of these organizations, but to break the communist monopoly.'²¹³

Karen Paget, a US political scientist, disagreed and in 2003, she published her research paper (followed by a 2015 monograph) in which she presented the whole scope of the CIA involvement. Paget discloses the nature of the liaisons between the CIA and the US NSA, showing that it was involved in student politics as early as in 1949. In the first period of 1949–50, the aim was to build 'a consensus among the Western students to challenge the monopoly of the Soviet-backed International Union of Students'. Then, in 1950–1, the NSA received direct subsidies. For years to come, the CIA covered as much as 90 per cent of the ISC's budget.²¹⁴ Along with the ISC, other international unions and civil society organizations were funded – the Pax Romana, IUSY, World Assembly of Youth (a mirror organization to the WFDY) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (a mirror organization to the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions). Furthermore, the CIA funding also went to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a respectable organization uniting anti-communist intellectuals, and the magazine launched under its auspices, *The Encounter*.²¹⁵

Paget further stressed that the clandestine funding cannot be only explained by hysterical anti-communism in the United States. The motives were driven by appearances – the ISC needed to look independent. It was obvious that the IUS was sponsored by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries via the youth and student unions dependent on and controlled by the state and party structures. This funding from socialist countries was an important part of the criticism of the IUS. In the rhetoric of the ISC, the IUS was a Soviet front organization while the ISC was apolitical. Promoting the 'students as such' principle, it tried to pose as an actor outside of the Cold War polarities and court the student unions that favoured non-alignment. For these reasons, secret funding suited the purpose better.²¹⁶

Paget further proved that the involvement of the CIA was not only about funding but that the agency also influenced its work, from the agenda to personnel politics to the securing of the Anglo-Scandinavian bloc's dominance.²¹⁷ It cannot be said that the ISC was controlled by the CIA, because there were democratic procedures, and the policies were adopted at plenary conferences. Paget also admitted that a 'careful distinction must be made between CIA objectives and its capacity to execute them'.²¹⁸

²¹³ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, xi. In more detail then on 200–9.

²¹⁴ Karen Paget 'From Stockholm to Leiden: The CIA's Role in the Formation of the International Student Conference', *Intelligence & National Security* 18, no. 2 (2003): 134–67.

²¹⁵ Saunders, 'Who Paid the Piper?' 165–89; Neil Berry, 'Encounter', *The Antioch Review* 51, no. 2 (1993): 194–211.

²¹⁶ Paget, 'From Stockholm to Leiden', 134–67.

²¹⁷ Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 97–114.

²¹⁸ Paget, 'From Stockholm to Leiden', 134–67.

After the source of finances was revealed, chaos ensued in the organization. The ISC member organizations were outraged by this finding and many decided to disaffiliate immediately. Others were more reluctant to break the ties and called for more information and for an investigation. The Swiss VSS tried to defend the ISC, saying that most likely it was only about the CIA getting information. They suggested installing a control commission and suspending the membership of the US NSA.²¹⁹ The West Germans called for the suspension of the US NSA membership until more details about the relations with the CIA were known²²⁰ and the Cypriots also asked for an investigation.²²¹

On the incentive of the National Supervisory Board, the US NSA itself launched an in-house investigation to discover the extent of the CIA's influence. 'We are shocked at the ethical trap into which young men of great integrity have been placed by covert actions of the CIA', said the report and disclosed details on the CIA involvement; it stated that even though the CIA did not have direct influence over the NSA, the subtle impact on its programmes and personnel policy was substantial. The report then suggested that the NSA withdraw from the ISC.²²²

The ISC Secretariat reacted defensively to the revelations, likening the situation to McCarthyism. The Secretariat's press release justified the ISC's activities by supporting the UN and UNESCO and stressing its alleged impartiality in the Cold War:

The ISC has consistently upheld the Universal Declaration of Human Rights against all forms of human oppression. The ISC spoke out against the United States invasion of the Dominican Republic; the poisoning of mankind's atmosphere by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain and later by the People's Republic of China and France with atmospheric nuclear tests; the policy of inaction and ineffectiveness towards the racism in Rhodesia by the British Government; the denial of the fundamental human rights by the Soviet Union for its Jewish citizens. (...) It has vigorously condemned the United States bombing of North Vietnam and called for an immediate de-escalation of military operations in South Vietnam and a peace negotiated by all those actually a part of the conflict, including the National Liberation Front.²²³

The press release did not comfort the member organizations. This strategy of damage control could not prevent a massive exodus from the organization, including some of its most important members – such as the French, who thought the whole 'leading group' in the IUS was responsible and felt used by the United States.²²⁴ The ISC General

²¹⁹ CIA und Studentenorganisationen. SBA, IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#258*.

²²⁰ VDS/FRG – suspension of US NSA as a member of ISC, 14 March 1967, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 294/9083.

²²¹ Resolution of FNUCS / Cyprus as regard financing of US NSA by CIA 1967, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 294/9084.

²²² USNSA/USA – statement on NSA-CIA involvement, 17 February 1967, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 294/9063.

²²³ ISC – press release on relationship between CIA and USNSA, 17 February 1967, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 294/9065.

²²⁴ UNEF materials on withdrawal from ISC, 18 August 1967, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 301/9339.

Secretary Ram Lakhina tried to salvage the situation. In the spring of 1968, he wrote a text in which he admitted that what happened was unfortunate. At the same time, he insisted that the ISC had done a lot of commendable work that had nothing to do with politics, including assistance to students in need, development of student mobility, aid to students from unstable and war-torn areas, or finding refuge to students on the run. He then suggested possible alternatives to how the ISC could develop – either become completely apolitical, consciously political or merely a platform for the exchange of ideas. The alternative that the ISC might dissolve altogether he did not consider in the text.²²⁵

The scandal was a perfect ammunition for the IUS to target the old rival, delivered on a silver platter. After the revelations by the *Ramparts* magazine, the IUS Secretariat used every possible opportunity to fuel the scandal – to make sure the ISC stays discredited and make itself look more virtuous and attractive for possible ISC dropouts. When the news broke out, the Secretariat reacted:

It is obvious that the above-mentioned news items are far from complete. More revelations may follow in the months ahead. Although all statements and facts are not yet available in full and never will be in view of the nature of the CIA, still it is clear beyond doubt that the US NSA, one of the major organisations in the leadership of the ISC and in the ISC itself, has been receiving CIA money since around 1950 – the period when a number of student organisations following reactionary policy and the ‘free world’ ideology broke away from the only united international organisation of students – the IUS – and established the ISC/ COSEC.²²⁶

To the Secretariat of the IUS, as it said, it was long obvious that the ISC’s funding was shady and the scandal was thus no surprise. After the ISC cut off all ties with the US NSA, the IUS Secretariat thought it was only trying to exculpate itself: ‘It is obvious that the ISC Secretariat is trying, in this manner, to channel all the responsibility on the US NSA and thus to extricate itself from the mess. But the 17 years of ISC history linked to CIA money cannot be wiped out so easily.’ The IUS then asked all member national student unions to ‘challenge the policy of the ISC, expose it, for despite its lip-service to “anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism”, the ISC, and particularly its leading group, has engaged in splitting and spying activities within the international student movement’. And the statement added that all national student unions will undoubtedly see it the same way. The appeal was particularly addressed to those IUS members who were full or associate members of the ISC at the same time. For the IUS, it was evident that the days of careful rapprochement and détente were over and that there could not be any further cooperation.²²⁷

²²⁵ Future direction of the ISC, 4 June 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 304/9606.

²²⁶ Statement of the IUS Secretariat on the close relationship between the CIA-USNSA and the ISC, 23 February 1967, IIHS, col. IUS, box Circulars III.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Of course, the critique of the IUS was hypocritical, to some extent. The finances of the IUS also depended on the state structures of the European socialist countries. Jiří Pelikán said apologetically in retrospect that during his Presidency, ‘the funding of the IUS came from the countries of the communist Bloc, not from the KGB’.²²⁸ While this is true, the influence of the socialist countries was still tremendous and the exact budget balances were not transparent at all. The fact that the communist secret services did not fund the IUS is therefore no measure of the influence actually exercised in the organization.

The ISC, however, did not need any kicking to stay down. By the end of the 1960s, it was already a disintegrated structure. The 1969 Conference was planned to be held in Austria but it never happened – due to the lack of funding, which was only reflecting the lack of interest. Aside from the funding scandal, another problem was that European students grew disinterested in student politics and adopted a more radical course of action. By the end of the 1960s, Western European students had manifested their activism in a significantly different way. So, the ISC did not have much wiggle room. In February 1969, the Supervision Committee officially dissolved the International Student Conference.

Interestingly, not all organizations funded by the CIA were dissolved. The Congress for Cultural Freedom ceased to exist, too, but the IUSY, or the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, did not. The reason, perhaps, was that the students were more radical and more sensitive about their independence, in the tradition of the autonomy of universities. Still, not all of the ISC agenda was dismantled. The FISU persisted and kept organizing the Universiades. The ISIC also survived, its issuance having been outsourced by the ISC to the International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC). The International University Exchange Fund was an agency set up by the ISC to issue and facilitate scholarships – it also survived the ISC by ten years. In 1979, it was dissolved when it turned out that one of its employees, a South African member of the Secretariat, Craig Williamson, was a spy monitoring anti-apartheid activists and an operative working for the South African secret police, on whose behalf he even murdered people.²²⁹

The people of the IUS celebrated the victory in the long-fought Cold War battle with the ISC but could not enjoy the moment for long – it had to face its own crisis. This crisis was the occupation of the host country, Czechoslovakia, by the armies of the Warsaw Pact countries.

In the years and months before the invasion, Czechoslovakia produced an original reform movement – known as the Prague Spring. The reform process was largely

²²⁸ Pelikán, ‘De la guerre froide au dégel? Levers de rideau’, 173–84.

²²⁹ Billy Keniston, ‘An Obvious Plant: Craig Williamson’s Role in Sabotaging the Anti-Apartheid Struggle’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 50, no. 2 (2024): 245–62.

homegrown, stemming from internal social development and intellectual milieu.²³⁰ Nevertheless, it was widely observed internationally. Czechoslovakia became an attractive destination for people from the West and the East. In 1967–8, 2.6 million East Germans travelled to Prague, many of them young, for the cultural and literary offer.²³¹ The international organizations that resided in Prague were affected by the changed atmosphere, too. Several editors of the *World Marxist Review* later became advisors to Mikhail Gorbachev, including Georgy Shakhnazarov, Vladimir Lukin, Georgy Arbatov and Anatoly Chernaiev. According to Arbatov, the journal was ‘an intellectual bridge between the XX congress and perestroika.’²³² In the IUS, its President Zbyněk Vokrouhlický was also active in the reform movement. In March 1968, he also became the president of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth; as per his own words, he played a part in the disintegration of the Union a couple of months later, pursuing re-structuralization and pluralization of the youth, including the renewal of the boyscout movement.²³³

Czechoslovak students, in general, played an active part in the Prague Spring. They became active already in 1956 under the influence of the XXth CPSU Congress. Student demands coming from within the system gradually turned into dissenting voices opposed to the Czechoslovak authorities.²³⁴ One of the non-conformist platforms for student action was the traditional student celebrations held in May – hence its name, Majáles. They were revived, and already in 1956, they had a political message. The parade of a hundred thousand people chanted ‘Don’t worry, people of Prague, the students are here!’ – alluding to the role of students in Czechoslovak history. The police intervened but did not prosecute anybody.²³⁵ After this incident, the tradition decremented but was slowly reintroduced in the early 1960s, as an independent student action not organized by the ČSM. In 1965, it became a mass event again, the students elected the American beatnik poet Allen Ginsberg the ‘king’ of Majáles – even though he was a leftist who sharply criticized the US war in Vietnam, he was later expelled from the country for disorderly conduct, drunkenness, drug abuse and propagation of homosexuality.²³⁶ Next year it was organized by the ČSM again. In October 1967,

²³⁰ Jakub Rákosník, Matěj Spurný and Jiří Štaif, *Milníky moderních českých dějin. Krize konsenzu a legitimacy v letech 1848–1989* (Praha: Argo, 2018), 211–49. The role of the radio in the process has been recently introduced by Rosamund Johnston, *Red Tape. Radio and Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1969* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024), 168–227.

²³¹ Steffi Lehmann, *Jugendpolitik in der DDR: Anspruch und Auswirkungen* (Chemnitz: Nomos, 2017), 375.

²³² Georgii A. Arbatov, *Zatianuvsheesia vyzdorovlenie (1953–1958): Svidetelstvo sovremenika* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, 1991), 75–9.

²³³ Interview of Petr Zídek with Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, 31 August 2005, Prague; I thank Petr Zídek for providing me with this interview. Jaroslav Pažout, *Mocným navzdory: Studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. Století* (Praha: Prostor, 2008), 108.

²³⁴ Zdeněk Nebrěnský, ‘Early Voices of Dissent: Czechoslovak Student Opposition at the Beginning of the 1960s’, in *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and revolt in Europe, 1960–1980*, ed. Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder and Joachim Scharloth (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 32–48.

²³⁵ In Czech: ‘Nebojte se, Pražáci, ještě jsou zde štuďáci!’ See Milan Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968–1989* (Brno: Dokořán, 2003), 13.

²³⁶ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 84.

students organized a protest against the bad living conditions – started by the electricity blackouts at Strahov dormitories but with much larger connotations, using the allegory of light and darkness for the Czechoslovak state. The parade encountered a police barricade and was dispersed with many students brutally beaten.²³⁷

The reform process accelerated when it became the official KSČ policy after the election of Alexander Dubček as the party's general secretary in January 1968. The reforms that were implemented throughout the year included the abolition of censorship, liberalization of the economy and federalization of the country. The students also reflected this – in May 1968, they founded two new student organizations, the Union of University Students of Bohemia and Moravia and the Union of University Students of Slovakia.²³⁸ They informed the IUS about this change, claiming to represent together all the students in Czechoslovakia. Their relationship with the IUS, as they claimed, was yet to be decided, but they were committed to fighting for democratization, civil liberties and reformist socialism.²³⁹ The reform was also appealing to the students of the West – many saw Prague as the hub of democratic socialism. Many of the Czechoslovak students, however, were more interested in cultural liberalization. This discrepancy can be illustrated in the visit of the German radical student leader Rudi Dutschke to Prague in the spring of 1968, invited by the Christian Peace Conference. Dutschke talked about Marxism and the radical revolution in the Third World but encountered an unreceptive audience.²⁴⁰ Czech students saw Dutschke as a utopist – even though they agreed on 'ideal' socialism, he did not reflect the experience of socialism in practice in Czechoslovakia.²⁴¹

The invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies led by the Soviets in August 1968 was a shock for the world. Many leftists and Marxist thinkers condemned it too, including prominent philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse, Roger Garaudy, Jean-Paul Sartre and Ernst Bloch. Even the Italian Communist Party issued a statement condemning the invasion. The student movement in the West, even though largely leftist and anti-American, was mostly shocked or even outraged by the invasion. The socialist INGOs were dependent on Soviet money but some of them still condemned the invasion. The World Federation of Trade Unions expressed 'disapproval of the military intervention which contrasts with the fundamental principles that form the basis of the life of the WFTU' and 'full solidarity with the workers and people of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic'.²⁴² The president of the Christian Peace Conference, Josef Lukl Hromádka, called the presence an occupation and said that it caused 'possibly irreparable' damage

²³⁷ Jaroslav Pažout, "‘Chceme světlo! Chceme studovat!’: Demonstrace studentů z vysokoškolských kolejí v Praze na Strahově 31. října 1967." *Paměť a dějiny* 2, no. 1 (2008): 4–13.

²³⁸ Milan Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích* (Praha: Dokořán 2003), 21.

²³⁹ On new organisation of Czech students, 1968. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 306/9766.

²⁴⁰ Gretchen Dutschke, *Wir hatten ein schönes, barbarisches Leben. Rudi Dutschke. Eine Biographie* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1996), 190–2.

²⁴¹ Paulina Bren, '1968 East and West. Visions of Political Change and Student Protest from across the Iron Curtain', in *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*, ed. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 119–35; Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 169–74.

²⁴² WFTU communique on occupation of CSSR 1968 NAČR, f. MSS, PA 305/9697.

to the true socialists.²⁴³ The World Peace Council's General Secretary Romesh Chandra and President Isabelle Blume called for a 'rapid withdrawal of the occupying forces'.²⁴⁴

The reaction of the IUS was slow. While most member unions were probably critical to the invasion, the organization was used to pass decisions consensually and to push a condemnation against the will of the Soviet delegate seemed impossible. The critical discussion within the IUS was therefore aimed mainly inward. One of the people who reacted swiftly was the president, Zbyněk Vokrouhlický; there was a printer at the IUS headquarters and Vokrouhlický printed a manifest.²⁴⁵ The former President Jiří Pelikán who was at the time a member of the parliament, director of the Czechoslovak television, and one of the prominent reformists, called the General Secretary Noori Abdel Razzak Hussein in those days and told him that 'now the IUS should show that it is an independent organization'.²⁴⁶ But the Secretariat did not adopt any stance; officially because it could not do it, as it did not have a quorum. By that time, Vokrouhlický was not there anymore; he had to go in hiding, fearing that he would be arrested by the Soviets. On 28 August, he sent a letter to the Secretariat, apologizing for not having come in person. As he said, he understood that the Secretariat did not adopt any position and repeatedly stressed that he was not blaming them for it. But also tried to make them understand by making parallels: 'Dear friends, many of you know what does it mean if his own country is militarily attacked, occupied. My Arab friends know it, Ocran knows it, Tran and Kwon know it and by the way all my friends from socialist countries know it. If you will think from this point of view, you will certainly understand me.'²⁴⁷ Not long after, though, he realized that the danger was perhaps not so imminent – or perhaps that the occupation was *fait accompli* – and came back to continue in his work for the Secretariat. In September, he was signing the IUS documents again.

The Secretariat as well as the official publications, like the *World Student News*, remained silent on the matter. In the following days and weeks, the letters from the member organizations and from non-member student unions started piling up at the Secretariat. Cables and letters of solidarity and condemnations of the invasions were also received from the students of the UK, Malaysia, Sweden, Mauritius, Romania, Yugoslavia, Finland, the Netherlands, Ireland, Tunisia, Israel, Tanzania, Portuguese students in exile in Czechoslovakia, African students in Czechoslovakia, Norway, Australia, Argentina and Denmark.²⁴⁸ They were from member and non-member organizations alike. Many of these were communists – the Argentinians spoke about 'pursuing the legacy of Che Guevara'. When it became clear that the Secretariat would not adopt any position, more letters came to object to it. The Irish condemned

²⁴³ Peter Morée, 'A broken man? Josef L. Hromádka in 1968 and 1969', *Communio Viatorum* 54, no. 3 (2012): 53–67.

²⁴⁴ Günter Wernicke, 'The Unity of Peace and Socialism? The World Peace Council on a Cold War Tightrope Between the Peace Struggle and Intrasystemic Communist Conflicts', *Peace and Change* 26, no. 3 (2001): 332–51.

²⁴⁵ Interview with Mazen Hussein, 4 August 2020, Prague.

²⁴⁶ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NAČR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

²⁴⁷ Secretariat member letter on events after 21 August 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 305/9688.

²⁴⁸ Letters and cables on the occupation of Czechoslovakia, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 305/9691–9728.

the failure of the Secretariat to 'adopt any public position on the recent invasion of Czechoslovakia,' calling for its resignation and new elections.²⁴⁹ A similar thought was expressed by the Tunisians, urging the Secretariat to take a position and condemn the armed invasion.²⁵⁰ The National Union of Kenyan Students stated very expressively that the 'Warsaw Pact troops raped the sovereignty of that peace-loving nation' and stated that with the renewed censorship in Czechoslovakia that the IUS is unable to escape, the IUS is therefore 'incompetent to serve the best interests of its member unions and of the student world'. The Kenyans proposed that the headquarters of the IUS be moved to the 'capital of a liberal and neutral country such as Dar-es-salaam, Bucharest, Geneve, Belgrade, New Delhi and Djakarta'. Furthermore, the Kenyans also asked for financial transparency.²⁵¹

On the day after the invasion, Czechoslovak students sent a request for support to the IUS Secretariat and a week later, they sent a letter to the IUS stating their dissatisfaction with the Secretariat's silence.²⁵² The SVS was seen as a centre of opposition and found itself under pressure in the following months. One of the problems of the union was that there were several currents, including some inspired by the Western New Left, which made it incapable of action. In October, the Union of University Students of Bohemia and Moravia made a deal with the Union of University Students of Slovakia, expressed their desire to continue the work at the IUS, and applied for a formal change. A common federal organ was established – the Czechoslovak Central Council of Higher School Students.²⁵³ Czech students wanted to organize a manifestation on International Students' Day in November, but it was prohibited by the authorities. In reaction, they organized an occupation strike on 18 November, prolonged to 21 November. But in the end, the union was 'normalized' and made a part of the newly established Union of Socialist Youth (Svaz socialistické mládeže, SSM). The students, however, retained their autonomy within the SSM, being grouped in the Czechoslovak Center of University Students (Československé ústředí vysokoškoláků).²⁵⁴

Former President Jiří Pelikán was seen as one of the most harmful protagonists of the Czechoslovak reform process by the Soviets, having been labelled as a part of the 'counter-revolutionary center' by Brezhnev already before the invasion. After August 1968, he was quickly removed from his position as the head of the Czechoslovak TV

²⁴⁹ USI protests UZS failure to adopt statement on occupation of CSSR 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 306/9778.

²⁵⁰ UGET declaration on problem of Czechoslovakia. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 306/9784.

²⁵¹ Proposal for the transference of the IUS Secretariat from Prague, 2 September 1968, PA 306/9834.

²⁵² CSSR students asking for IUS clear position after 21 August 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 305/9689; CSSR students asking IUS for supporting declaration after 21 August 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 305/9690.

²⁵³ New CSSR students organisation establishing representation in IUS, 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 306/3798; Czechoslovak students endorse their membership in the IUS, 29 November 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 306/9826.

²⁵⁴ Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích*, 37–43.

and not long after that, he emigrated to Italy, becoming the most prominent face of the Czechoslovak left-wing exile and proponent of democratic socialism.²⁵⁵

The invasion certainly harmed the image of the IUS in the world. Mazen Husseini, the Palestinian member of the Secretariat, recalled that he found himself under fire when he took part in a student conference in Yugoslavia soon after the invasion, being asked to clarify what the position of the IUS was on the Soviet invasion. As he claimed, he had to answer that there was no position because the member organizations were divided on the matter.²⁵⁶ The Sudanese Fathi El Fadl who would later become the general secretary, said that the IUS was in a 'make it or break it' moment. Because of the Soviet invasion, the Africans in the Secretariat then wanted to organize the Executive Committee outside of Europe. They envisaged the meeting, scheduled for the beginning of 1969, in Egypt. The reason was that they wanted to thematize more Arab national liberation and the 1967 war. But the Egyptians could not host it, so it was held in Varna in the end.²⁵⁷

Student revolt

The most urgent aim which we set this organization (...) is to capture UNESCO. The bureaucratization of art and the whole of culture, unified on a world scale, is a new phenomenon (...). As the very existence of this directorial concentration, localized in a single building, favours seizure by means of a coup; and as the institution is totally destitute of any possibility of meaningful use outside our subversive perspectives, we feel justified before our contemporaries in seizing this apparatus.²⁵⁸

These are the words of the 1960 manifesto of the Situationist International, a group uniting avant-garde artists and activists in the 1950s and 1960s. The situationists' subversive, anti-institutional, and anti-bureaucratic ideology became one of the factors that strongly inspired the forming of the student protest movement in Western Europe. The UNESCO became the situationists' target as it embodied the suppression of creativity and promotion of a globalized and highly institutionalized form of art. It was the same organization that the IUS was desperately courting; the IUS was trying to get a position in a higher-ranking UNESCO list of affiliated NGOs in order to legitimize its activity globally. These two very different internationalist standpoints towards UNESCO illustrate the changing operability of the student movement and even the

²⁵⁵ Kristina Andělová, 'Socialismus bez Moskvy: Skupina Listy mezi Východem a Západem', in *Pro nás dějiny nekončí: Politická práce a myšlení českého levicového exilu 1968–1989*, ed. Kristina Andělová, Jiří Suk, Tomáš Zahradníček (Praha: Argo, 2023), 33–120.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Mazen Husseini, 4 August 2020, Prague.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

²⁵⁸ 'Situationists: International Manifesto', in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrad (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 172–4. See also Ingrid Gilcher Holtey, *Die 68er Bewegung. Deutschland, Westeuropa, USA* (München: C.H. Beck, 2001), 14.

first traces of the growing obsolescence of the traditional student internationalism embodied in the IUS vis-a-vis the animated student protest of the long 1960s.

The 1960s were a time when the role of the students in society significantly changed. A university was not a temple for the few anymore, using the parable from the introduction. All over the world, tertiary education was democratizing – in the sense that it was becoming accessible to a large portion of society in contrast with the elitist approach of previous decades and centuries. The massification itself, however, also created various problems. The increasing number of students was accompanied by the foundation of new universities and the enlargement of the old ones, but the infrastructure did not grow nearly as fast. The new university campus of Paris Nanterre became a symbol of the revolt – the new concrete buildings on the outskirts of the French capital symbolized the alienation of the studies and the obsolescence of the organization of the student life, with the sex-based segregated dormitories. The student protest that started in Nanterre is very telling about the changing forms of action. The UNEF, the French student union and a member organization of the IUS, had been criticizing the worsening situation in the French education system for a long time. In 1967, it helped organize a strike in Nanterre but it did not have any consequences. As per Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ‘the mobilization process that led to the May movement in France was not triggered until small core groups of students began undertaking limited unconventional actions in the spring of 1968 and noticeably upsetting university operations by breaking rules, violating taboos, and committing other provocations.’²⁵⁹

The problem was also generational – the students in the late 1960s were largely already born after the Second World War and desired to cut themselves from the world of their fathers. This generational feeling was epitomized in the slogan ‘Don’t trust anyone over thirty’. Detlef Siegfried demonstrated this feeling in a quote by the American rebel Jerry Rubin: “Those who grew up before the 1950s live today in a mental world of Nazism, concentration camps, economic depression and Communist dreams stalinized. A pre-1950s who can still dream is very rare. Kids who grew up in the post-1950s live in a world of supermarkets, colour TV commercials, guerrilla war, international media, psychedelics, rock’n’roll and moon walks. For us nothing is impossible. We can do anything. This generation gap is the widest in history. The pre-1950’s generation has nothing to teach the post-1950’s.”²⁶⁰

Another feature widely shared was the alienation from contemporary left-wing policies. The student movement was formed by the Cold War but in a different sense than twenty years earlier, when it caused the split between the East and the West. In the late 1960s, students were rejecting the superpowers and searching for alternatives elsewhere – mainly in the Global South. ‘Young activists across Europe were spurred in by a sense that there was a fundamental hypocrisy present at the heart of postwar European society,’

²⁵⁹ Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ‘France’, in *1968 in Europe. History of Protest and Activism 1956–1977*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 111–24.

²⁶⁰ Detlef Siegfried, ‘Understanding 1968: Youth Rebellion, Generational Change and Postindustrial Society’, in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980*, ed. Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 59–81.

as Rebecca Clifford, Robert Gildea and James Mark put it.²⁶¹ The inspiration was sought in Cuba and China, the rogue socialist states stressing the necessity of revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle, unlike the Soviets, who became too comfortable in the status quo. The German revolutionary and student leader Rudi Dutschke did not consider the Soviet Union a socialist country – according to him, the USSR had to choose either to become a *foco* of the world revolution or to end up in the counter-revolutionary camp for good.²⁶² The most mobilizing topic of the Global South was the Vietnam War. As Robi Morder, a French student activist, put it, for the students, Vietnam became the ‘Spain of their generation.’²⁶³ The Vietnam Congress organized at the Freie Universität in West Berlin in February 1968 became the flag event of the whole era, bringing together activists and intellectuals from all of Western Europe and North America.²⁶⁴

The ‘student movement’ encompassed various currents, at times incompatible. The US hippies had little in common with European university neo-Marxists, situationists or anarchists. Even though there were many regional or national topics, the massification, alienation and strong generational positioning turned the students into a formidable transnational political force, characterized by strikes and protests against the power as well as cross-border transfers and activities. Student demonstrations took place all over the First World – in the United States, Italy, West Germany, France, Japan and the United Kingdom.²⁶⁵ The universities were at the centre of the protests – the most common form of action was an occupation strike. Students were taking over university buildings, disrupting lectures and insulting professors. In Italy, students were discussing new forms of university organization, conceiving the idea of a ‘negative university’ – a more autonomous institution with an emphasis on democratization, removal of hierarchies, and student participation in university management and curriculum content.²⁶⁶ From the universities, the protests were soon taken also to the streets. In Italy and France, students allied with workers, organizing mass strikes. In Germany, students were concerned with insufficient denazification and democratic backsliding.²⁶⁷ Rising activities of neo-fascist militants mobilized students in

²⁶¹ Rebecca Clifford, Robert Gildea and James Mark, ‘Awakenings’, in *Europe’s 1968. Voices of Revolt*, ed. Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21–45.

²⁶² Michaela Karl, *Rudi Dutschke: Revolutinär ohne Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 2003), 104–8.

²⁶³ Robi Morder, ‘Transformations des mondes et mouvements étudiants’, *La contemporaine* no. 1 (2018): 10–15 and 127–8.

²⁶⁴ Klaus-Uwe Benneter and Jochen Donner Hartmut Häußermann (eds.), *Februar 1968: Tage, die Berlin erschütterten* (Frankfurt am Main: EVA, 1968).

²⁶⁵ For general overviews of the student protest internationally, see Gilcher Holtey, *Die 68er Bewegung: Deutschland, Westeuropa, USA*; David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Smithmark Pub, 1988); Schildt and Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*; Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe. History of Protest and Activism 1956–1977*.

²⁶⁶ Jan Kurz, *Die Universität auf der Piazza. Entstehung und Zerfall der Studentenbewegung in Italien 1966–1968* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2001), 109–16.

²⁶⁷ Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction and the Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2004), 31–4.

Italy.²⁶⁸ In the United States, the protests were framed by the resistance to the Vietnam War and civil rights for African Americans. Everywhere, people were alarmed by the coup d'état in Greece, the assassination of Martin Luther King and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and outraged by the violence of the authorities, from the murder of Benno Ohnesorg by the police at the demonstration against the Shah of Iran in West Berlin through the suspicious death of Giuseppe Pinelli at the police station in Milan to the shooting on students at an anti-war rally at the Kent State University with four fatalities.²⁶⁹ At the same time, people were inspired by the example of Ho Chi Minh and the legacy of Che Guevara.

Even though the student revolt is most often associated with the West, it was by no means limited to it. As we have seen, students rebelled in the socialist East as well. The movement differed in themes and took various forms, but materialized also in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, East Germany and Romania.²⁷⁰ Student revolt also manifested in the South. The protests in Mexico were aimed against the organization of the Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968 and turned bloody when the police opened fire against the crowd, killing hundreds.²⁷¹ In Brazil, the student protest took the form of a demonstration against the military dictatorship.²⁷² The authoritarian rule of Ayub Khan was shaken by the protests, initiated by Pakistani students.²⁷³ In Africa, large student protests were organized in Senegal, Madagascar and Ethiopia during the 'long Sixties' – the motivations there lay rather in the riddance of the neocolonial institutions and the build-up of truly independent education while in South Africa took the form of an action against the apartheid.²⁷⁴

The Secretariat of the International Union of Students observed all these events carefully. Because of their scale and topicality, it was impossible not to address them, but the stance proved to be rather reluctant. Yes, the movement could provide valuable ammunition for the criticism of the capitalist West, for the protest movement and ideological line of the IUS Secretariat aligned in the denouncement of the university fees or neocolonial influences on educational systems in the Global South. But in many aspects, their standpoints also differed.

One could argue that the difference between the IUS-style student internationalism and the protest movement was similar to the discrepancies between the 'old left' embodied in the traditional communist and socialist parties or traditional trade unions on one side and the 'new left' with student and workers movement, autonomism and

²⁶⁸ Guido Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa: La violenza politica nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta (1966–1975)* (Torino: EINAUDI, 2009).

²⁶⁹ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 131.

²⁷⁰ Klimke and Scharloth, '1968 in Europe: An Introduction', in *1968 in Europe*, 1–9.

²⁷¹ Eric Zolov, 'Non-Alignment and Student Protest in 1968 Mexico', in *Global 1968: Cultural Revolutions in Europe and Latin America*, ed. A. James McAdams and Anthony P. Monta (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 107–28.

²⁷² José Luis Hernández Huerta, 'Public Forms of Anti-authoritarian Protest in Brazil in 1968. Student Leadership and Social Complicity', *Encuentros* 20, no. 1 (2023), 295–308.

²⁷³ Talat Ahmed, '"The Brilliant Sun of Revolt" Rising in the East: Solidarity in Britain with the Uprising in Pakistan of 1968–69', in *Transnational Solidarity: Anticolonialism in the Global Sixties*, ed. Zeina Maasri, Cathy Bergin and Francesca Burke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 232–54.

²⁷⁴ Françoise Blum, Pierre Guidi and Ophélie Rillon (eds.), *Étudiants africains en mouvements: Contribution à une histoire des années 1968* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016).

alternative trade unions. The IUS was a tightly organized, hierarchical organization with a strict set of rules regarding membership, competencies and procedures. It had a nice and representative building, it had cars and drivers; it was very much an institutionalized part of the system. On the other side, there was the protest movement, struggling against the 'spectacle' and 'repressive tolerance' of Western consumerist capitalism, but also against the bureaucratism and authoritarianism of the Soviet model of socialism.²⁷⁵ The movement, as heterogeneous as it was, could be in general characterized by its anti-authoritarianism, autonomism, and opposition to institutions and hierarchical structures. For the IUS, conceived as the 'student United Nations', the disorganization and the lack of designated leaders were also a hindrance to seeing the protest movement as a partner. Vladimir Ponomaryov, the Soviet delegate in the IUS Secretariat in the 1970s, expressed this problem pregnantly: 'You cannot cooperate with a movement, there has to be structure.'²⁷⁶ Lázsló Labody, the Hungarian representative in the Secretariat, also remembered the confusion in the IUS regarding the spontaneity of the protest movement: 'Nobody understood what the hell is happening. Easterners, Westerners, nobody understood.'²⁷⁷

The Eastern European socialist countries mostly reciprocated the negative feelings towards the student revolt, if only for the fact that the students rebelled in the Soviet Bloc as well. The IUS did not have such a negative approach to the student movement, but a careful one at best. The ambiguous relationship of the IUS Secretariat to the protest movement manifested in its official publications and reports. The support for the student movement in the Global South was almost unconditional. The revolt in Dakar was observed with great sympathies and the repressive measures on students, including arrests and beating, were condemned.²⁷⁸ The protests in Latin America were also closely monitored and supported.²⁷⁹

However, sympathies were less vigorously expressed towards the West. In this regard, the IUS production focused mostly on the problems of university infrastructure and the quality of student life. A common ground was the protest against the Vietnam War, the anti-colonial dimension of the movement and Third-Worldism, and the struggle against authoritarian tendencies in the West. In 1968, the *World Student News* published an interview with Karl Dietrich Wolff, the president of the radical West German Union of Socialist Democratic Students (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, SDS) where he argued his position against the so-called Emergency Laws and the ongoing university reform.²⁸⁰ The demonstrations, strikes and mass protests were interpreted as a weakness of Western society. Authors and editors of the WSN acknowledged that the

²⁷⁵ Society of the spectacle is a term introduced by Guy Debord in *Société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967). Repressive tolerance is a term by Herbert Marcuse, 'Repressive Tolerance', in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, ed. Barrington Moore, Herbert Marcuse and Robert Paul Wolff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 81–123.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Vladimir Ponomaryov, 11 December 2021, online interview.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Károly György and Lázsló Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

²⁷⁸ Report from Dakar, 5 January 1968, NACR, f. MSS, PA 303/9439.

²⁷⁹ Mariana Lopez, 'Militarism against the University in Santo Domingo, Mexico and Colombia', *World Student News* 22, no. 7 (1968): 18–20.

²⁸⁰ "Emergency laws" and West German Students, interview with Karl Dietrich Wolff, *World Student News*, 1–2 1968, 24–5.

bulk of the students was not of proletarian origin but rather bourgeois.²⁸¹ Still, the fact that many students identified as anarchists or Maoists was largely concealed from the readership. On the pages of the WSN, the May 1968 events in France were interpreted primarily as a result of the efforts of the UNEF in coordination with the traditional trade union, *Confédération générale du travail*.²⁸²

Should any police brutality occur to suppress the protesting students, however, there was no ambiguity anymore – the IUS reported on such incidents thoroughly and in detail. The fateful demonstration against the state visit of Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran to West Berlin on 2 June 1967 was brutally suppressed by the police, and one student, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot dead. The event subsequently became one of the trigger points of the German extra-parliamentary opposition and the ensuing spiral of violence. The IUS categorically condemned the ‘massacre of the progressive forces’, executed by the ‘police riot squads in an entirely fascist manner’, leaving one student murdered in cold blood and many more beaten so badly they had to be hospitalized.²⁸³ The fact that the policeman who shot Ohnesorg was left unpunished sparked further condemnation and was seen as proof that it was not a mistake of one man only but of the system.²⁸⁴ The assassination attempt on Rudi Dutschke’s life which left the revolutionary seriously wounded was strongly condemned by the IUS Secretariat in a resolution that called Dutschke ‘a model and expression of the progressive development in the student movement in West Germany’ and said that the assassination attempt ‘cast light upon the dangerous political development of West Germany into a neo-Nazi police state’.²⁸⁵ When student protesters were shot by the National Guard during a demonstration at Kent University in Ohio, leaving four dead and many more wounded, the IUS Secretariat protested against the ‘use of the armed forces against the American students fighting for an end to the US aggression in Indochina’ and called it a ‘further serious attempt to silence the American anti-war movement’.²⁸⁶

One thing, however, was to express solidarity with the student rebels who were getting beaten and teargassed in the West and another to find common ground with them in direct discussions. Especially since the protest movement was largely critical to the IUS’s inability to detach itself from the East. As we have seen in previous chapters, this conflict with radical First World students already manifested at the beginning of the 1960s in the activity of the Zengakuren, the Japanese student union and a member of the IUS. The Japanese expressed themselves as unrelenting fighters against nuclear armament. On the way to the 1962 IUS Congress in Leningrad, they protested against Soviet nuclear tests at the Red Square in Moscow.

²⁸¹ Gert Billing, ‘The student rebellion’, *World Student News* 21, nos. 9–10 (1967): 8–11.

²⁸² Roland Demarcy, ‘French University Explosion’, *World Student News* 22, nos. 10–11 (1968): 27–30.

²⁸³ Statement of the IUS Secretariat on the police massacre against students in West Berlin, IISH, col. IUS, box Circulars III.

²⁸⁴ On student events in West Berlin, 12 January 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 303/9454. The policeman who shot Ohnesorg, Karl-Heinz Kurras, was later discovered to be an agent of the East German Staatspolizei. Cornelia Jabs and Helmut Müller-Engbers, *Der 2. Juni und die Staatssicherheit, in Deutschland Archiv* 3 (2009), 395–400.

²⁸⁵ Statement on attempt upon life of R. Dutschke in West Berlin, 25 April 1968, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 303/9564.

²⁸⁶ Statement on murder of students at Kent University, Ohio, 1970. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 322/550.

The IUS congresses were no small events but still, they did not get as much media coverage outside of the socialist world. A much better stage was the World Festivals of Youth and Students, with their wide and rather pluralistic international attendance. There were small disturbances already at the Festival in Moscow in 1957.²⁸⁷ During subsequent experiments to organize the Festivals in neutral capitalist countries – Austria in 1959 and Finland in 1962 – many more local and international students expressed their disagreement. In Helsinki, Icelandic attendees wore the sign ‘Stop the Tests in East and West’ in a nuclear disarmament parade to protest the Soviet hydrogen bomb testing that happened during the Festival – the sign was torn down by a Festival’s spokesman who had lost his nerves.²⁸⁸

The next Festival after Helsinki took place in Sofia six years later – in the summer of 1968. It was the time after the general strike in France, the time of protests and growing extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany and Italy, the time of the peaking reform process in Czechoslovakia, and the time after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. To appeal to as many participants as possible, Vietnam was chosen as the primary topic that was meant to unite internationalists from all over the world.²⁸⁹ Vietnamese participants were lauded and greeted as heroes who could ‘put aside their weapons for a while’. The Vietnam Center became a crucial instalment of the Festival. The IUS and the WFDY launched a voluntary campaign the profit of which was handed over to the Vietnamese delegation.²⁹⁰

Even though Vietnam was a uniting topic, there was a big difference in the way it was handled. The Festival organizers preferred declarative solidarity manifestations, stressing the communist affiliation of North Vietnam, and making parallels between the war and the Second World War. ‘This is earth from the blood-drenched battlefield near Leningrad where fascists were beaten off; just as we have won, so will the Vietnamese people be victorious!’ Those were allegedly the words of a Komsomol leader as he presented a lump of dirt to a Vietnamese colleague.²⁹¹ On the other hand, the Western protest movement’s name of the game was direct action, propaganda by the deed.²⁹² Karl Dietrich Wolff, head of the West German SDS delegation, came to Sofia with the intention of organizing a sit-in protest in front of the US embassy in Sofia. Such a form of action was strange to the organizers who wanted to keep control over the programme. After attempts to dissuade Wolff from his intention failed, the rally that in the end gathered by the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum was finally physically disrupted: ‘A column of about 250 rugged-looking young Bulgarians, dog trotting and with arms

²⁸⁷ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 235–6.

²⁸⁸ Nick Rutter, ‘Look Left, Drive Right. Internationalisms at the 1968 World Youth Festival’, in *The Socialist Sixties*, ed. Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 193–212.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ ‘Impressions of the Ninth Festival in Words and Pictures’, in *World Student News* 22, nos 10–11 (1968), 2–7.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² The concepts were developed under the influence of Mikhail Bakunin and other Russian anarchists. Tobias Wunschik, *Baader-Meinhofs Kinder: Die zweite Generation der RAF* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 61.

linked, singing communist songs, plowed into the crowd from behind', while another group 'rammed into [it] from the front'.²⁹³

As per historian Nick Rutter, Wolff was not only expressing his opinion in an unorthodox manner but was actively trying to disrupt the Festival. Since China and Cuba were absent in Sofia, it was the SDS' task, Wolff thought, to represent their position. In his speech by the Dimitrov Mausoleum, he mocked the prohibition of showing portraits of Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh and Mao Zedong.²⁹⁴ And in his defiance of the Bulgarian hosts, he whipped up support also among other delegations. During one discussion, Wolff was complaining about the procedures – that the Bulgarians spoke when it was not their turn. In reaction to the accusation, a Bulgarian speaker compared him indirectly to Josef Goebbels. When enraged Wolff stormed the stage to respond, he was punched in the face and dragged away – after which the auditorium loudly protested and finally 'a long line of West German, Yugoslav, Czechoslovak, British, Dutch, Italian, Belgian and Scandinavian delegates walked out'.²⁹⁵

Bulgarian authorities tried to prevent potential troublemakers from ever entering the host country – two Frenchmen from the May movement were denied access to Bulgaria. And the Czechoslovaks were also in this category, as the reform process continued and tensions between Czechoslovakia and the rest of the Bloc grew. Some were not allowed to enter the country, others were not allowed to perform. In Sofia, this situation created discrepancies between Czechoslovaks and other socialist delegations.²⁹⁶ On the other hand, Czechoslovaks were getting support from other delegations, such as or West Germans who were chanting – 'Dubček! Dubček!'²⁹⁷ The anti-Soviet expressions from the delegations of France, West Germany or Czechoslovakia, could not be overlooked, and the Bulgarian police intervened.

The Festival in Sofia took place in a turbulent time. Because of how it played out, it was thought that the Festival might be the last one. Two weeks after it ended, the Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia.

The student revolt in the West did not succeed – 1968 was the highest point but after that, it faded away, somewhere faster, elsewhere slower. But despite vacating the stage, the '68 protest movement did not leave the world unchanged. Some of its ideas survived and even were gradually incorporated into mainstream politics.

²⁹³ Description of the event by a participant, quoted in Nick Rutter, 'Look Left, Drive Right', 193–212.

²⁹⁴ Klimke, Pekelder and Scharloth, 'Introduction', in *Between Prague Spring and French May*, 1–11.

²⁹⁵ Nick Rutter, 'Look Left, Drive Right', 193–212.

²⁹⁶ Arnold Freiburg, Christa Mahrada, *FDJ: Der sozialistische Jungdverband der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982).

²⁹⁷ Klimke, Pekelder and Scharloth, 'Introduction', in *Between Prague Spring and French May*, 1–11.

Representing the students of the world

Turbulent events at the end of the 1960s shook the IUS and its worldview, but at the same time, left it to be the only student organization with global and universal aspirations in the world. The IUS emerged victorious from the struggle with the ISC, and in the following years, it registered applications for membership from more national student unions than ever before. But still, the golden age of student unionism was over. The 1970s meant sobering up from the passionate Sixties.

The post-war world was undergoing significant social changes. In the West as well as in the East, and to varying degrees also in the South, we could see the nuclearization of family structures (a shift from a wide, diffused family to a nuclear one) and individualization of professional, cultural and economic life. This process of individualization also affected universities. Education itself gradually became seen as a preparation for one's career, not necessarily one's intellectual development.¹ With the rise of neoliberalism, many students adapted to the new realities and started to perceive their education as a commodity.²

Internationalization continued in the overall rise in student mobility (despite the decline of membership and organized unionism in the West). This trend, however, slowed down in the 1980s; France implemented restrictions on visas while Britain regulated the influx of students by boosting the fees. At the same time, the period saw a rapid rise in the mobility of Chinese and Indian students. By the end of the 1970s, China had already become the largest sending country in terms of international students.³

Furthermore, students were far less willing to organize. Not only did the individualization take its toll, but also the protest movement had an effect. The generation of sixty-eighters produced a different kind of political and social action that was not bound to the mass organization. On the contrary, the disrespect for authorities and hierarchical structures created more diffused, horizontal forms of organization. This resulted in massive dropouts from the student unions, even though the absolute number of students increased immensely. In France, the number of students more than

¹ Ulrich Teichler, 'Graduation and Careers', in *A History of the University in Europe, Volume IV. Universities since 1945*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 319–68.

² Rille Raaper, *Student Identity and Political Agency: Activism, Representation and Consumer Rights* (London/New York: Routledge, 2023), 15–34.

³ Perraton, *International Students*, 105–14.

tripled during the 1960s, but the membership of the UNEF decreased five times. While in 1960, it represented more than half of French students, ten years later it was less than 3 per cent.⁴ The British Union of Students was built on the basis of automatic membership – as a trade union from below. It was criticized by the right and then reformed by the Thatcher government.⁵ Big traditional unions found themselves in a crisis; the Italian UNURI dissolved in 1968, the French UNEF split in 1971 and the West German *Verein Deutscher Studenten* descended into insignificance in 1969.⁶

The IUS itself, despite being a federation of national member unions, was not endangered by this development. The student unions from state socialist countries which were the backbone of the organization, did not mark any significant decrease in membership, as it was more or less mandatory. And the majority of member unions were from the Global South where the process of individualization was slower. However, the problem of representativity still persisted.

This chapter examines the IUS and the student politics in the 1970s and early 1980s. It was the era of *détente*, accelerating globalization, and discussions about a new international order, all of which shaped the IUS agenda. For the IUS, it was an era of consolidation. After the main rival, the ISC, left the stage, the IUS could once again attempt to represent all students of the world. Cubans and other radicals who walked out of the Congress in Ulaanbaatar in 1966 mostly returned. Additionally, I have incorporated two sub-chapters in this section that are not strictly chronologically defined but provide a broader perspective on the organization's functioning – one about the IUS as part of the transnational space in socialist Prague and another about its relationship with the state and ruling party structures of the host country, Czechoslovakia.

In the era of *détente*

The 1970s brought a significant de-escalation of the Cold War. Decolonization was over in most territories, the protest movement both in the East and West calmed down, and political leaders started talks to normalize the international relations system. In the 1930s, when the Comintern changed its policy and started promoting cooperation with other socialist and progressive forces within popular fronts, it meant the decline of support for the anti-colonial revolution in European empires. Similarly, the *détente* of the 1970s also emphasized European cooperation on account of the relations with the Global South.

For many revolutionaries in the West or the South, *détente* was not seen as a way to achieve peace and cooperation but rather a new Holy Alliance – an agreement

⁴ Jean Philippe Legois, 'Archives et mémoires étudiantes. "Non-lieu" de "mémoire"?' *In Situ: Revue des patrimoines* 17 (2011): 1–21.

⁵ IISH Varia, also Morder, 'Internationalismes et internationales étudiantes', 17–46.

⁶ Timothy Schürmann, Leadership Exchange, Ski Camps and European Meetings. East-West Contacts of the Swiss Student Union before 1968, forthcoming.

between the world powers to suppress the true revolution that would endanger their dominion.⁷ One of the key architects of the détente was, after all, Henry Kissinger, a self-proclaimed disciple of Klemens Metternich.⁸ Détente was a precondition of the cutting of Western support for the right-wing dictatorships and military authoritarian regimes, as well as the drop in support for such reforms of the international system as the New International Economic Order – all in favour of the renewed East–West cooperation.⁹ The economic exchange between the socialist and capitalist countries increased significantly; the global economic crisis made European socialist countries also seek loans from the West. They were also scouting options to become part of the international financial system; Romania entered the International Monetary Fund in 1972, Hungary in 1982 and Poland in 1986.¹⁰ At the same time, the failure of the New International Economic Order and the gradual advent of neoliberalism also led the countries of the Global South to pursue loans in the West, making further rifts between the East and the South. The age of solidarity was largely over; in the relations with the postcolonial countries, the socialists started looking mainly for profit.¹¹

International NGOs had to navigate these changes too. Internationalisms of the Cold War were slowly coming closer already since the early 1950s, when the greatest antagonism between the blocs abated. The godfather of the European protest movement, Herbert Marcuse, spoke about political convergence in his 1964 *One-Dimensional Man*.¹² But only in the 1970s can we speak of a serious convergence in the international arena.¹³ The cooperation of state institutions was often facilitated by the structures of international organizations; the trans-bloc integration that was agreed on by governments was to a large extent effectuated by international non-governmental bodies.¹⁴ The transnational socialist network and the socialist INGOs within it adapted to the new realities.

At the same time, even though the East–West axis strengthened during the 1970s, socialist INGOs retained their position in the Global South, too. The reason was twofold. First, because they did not have to follow the economic logic of interstate relations; the opening up to the West did not have to mean weakening of relations with the South. Secondly, as I argued earlier, the networks of the socialist INGOs were not constructed only in the East; in fact, the majority of member organizations were from

⁷ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 213–59.

⁸ Mazower, *Governing the World*, 1–12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 319–20.

¹⁰ Lorenzini, ‘Comecon and the South in the Years of Détente’, 183–99; Giovanni Arrighi, ‘The World Economy and the Cold War, 1970–1990’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* 3, 23–44; James Mark, Bogdan Iacob, Tobias Rupprecht and Ljubica Spaskovska, 1989: *A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 25–72.

¹¹ Max Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: East–South Economic Relations in the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 155–75.

¹² Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (New York/London: Routledge, 1964), 19–55.

¹³ Kott, Muschik and Roehrich, ‘Introduction’, in *International Organizations and the Cold War: Competition, Cooperation and Convergence*, 1–11.

¹⁴ Kott, *A World More Equal*, 99–128.

the South. And a big portion of the INGOs' activities was happening in the South, produced by Southern actors.

One of the important types of links in the transnational networks of the socialist INGOs was knowledge transfers. These took different shapes and forms, from the distribution of books and journals to direct training. The World Federation of Trade Unions, for example, was very active in the distribution of literature in the South.¹⁵ Similarly, it also ran a trade unionist institution in Bernau in the GDR and also in Conakry and Bamako, training trade unionists from the Global South.¹⁶ The knowledge did not flow only in one direction, from the centre to the periphery. As historian Immanuel Harisch put it, 'Unionists from Guinea and Mali attended a special course at Bernau College, which was taught by East German staff who had previously gathered valuable experience at Conakry, the overall aim of which was that the African graduates of the special course would pass on their knowledge and skills upon their return to Africa.'¹⁷ Similarly, the International Organization of Journalists also ran schools in which it educated Global South trainees in 'democratic journalism'. The first institution, the International Institute of Journalism, was founded in 1963 in East Berlin, followed by schools in Budapest, Sofia, Havana and Prague. These schools were operated by national journalists' unions that hosted them, but were a part of the IOJ network. More loosely connected schools were also founded in Bucharest, Baghdad, Lima and Pyongyang.¹⁸

The IUS worked directly in the field of education so it did not stay far behind. It did not have its own training institutions (it did not require any training to become a student), but it continued to develop its scholarship scheme. By design, the scholarships were intended to be 'an expression of our solidarity with students struggling against colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and fascist dictatorships all over the world', to explain the selection of the applicants who were always too many for a limited number of positions.¹⁹ In the academic year 1969/70, IUS facilitated 125 scholarships for students at Eastern European universities. The students came from forty-eight countries mainly from Africa, Asia and Latin America, but some also from Greece, Spain and Portugal.²⁰ The number of awarded scholarships did not grow very much – it was usually between 120 and 150 a year, with the scholarship lasting for four to seven

¹⁵ Immanuel Harisch and Eric Burton, 'The Missing Link?' in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 1–20.

¹⁶ Immanuel Harisch, 'Great Hopes, False Promises: African Trade Unions in the World of Organized Labor. Institutions, Networks, and Mobilities during the Cold War 1950s and 1960s' (PhD Diss., Universität Wien, Wien 2023), 250–72. See also Ana Moledo, 'The Quest for the Solidarity of the World's Working Class: Luso-African Liberation Movements and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) during the 1960s and early 1970s', in *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, ed. C. Saunders, H. A. Fonseca and L. Dallywater (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 81–101.

¹⁷ Harisch, 'Great Hopes, False Promises', 272.

¹⁸ Nordenstreng, *The Rise and Fall*, 72–3 and 133. For the first and most prolific school in Berlin, see Marc Castillon, *Das Internationale Institut für Journalistik Berlin – 'Schule der Solidarität' 1963–1989/1990* (Norderstett: GRIN, 2010).

¹⁹ Scholarship offer. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 369/3541.

²⁰ Distribution of scholarships for 1969/70, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 314/82.

years.²¹ However, since the scheme was funded by the host organizations mostly from Eastern Europe, it could also be considered a part of the socialist countries' national developmental programmes, with the IUS being only the mediator. Later, IUS member organizations outside of the Eastern Bloc occasionally offered scholarships, such as unions from Yugoslavia, Finland and Syria.²²

The IUS Congress in Sofia in 1977 came up with a new campaign that was meant to bring the organization to the grassroots level and strengthen the connections with students. This campaign was entitled 'Education – a right, not a privilege'. This simple motto proved to be quite successful and was used in promotion of the education for all for years to come. It was a brilliant move – the message of the campaign was very broad and with the potential to get also Western students on board. It addressed a very specific problem of many educational systems – the inaccessibility of tertiary education because of its cost, social impermeability, or other structural obstacles. It was not openly political in the sense of the Cold War division – it addressed especially inequality, student needs, housing, unemployment of the alumni, structural racism, development and autonomy of national universities, alphabetization and student rights, including the right to unionize.²³ At the same time, this delimitation of the campaign could be and indeed was used to criticize the educational systems mainly in the capitalist countries.

Education – a right, not a privilege was an umbrella campaign that arched over various types of activities. It remained active until the end of the Cold War and the slogan was used even after the end of it. Over the years, it included hundreds of events and actions, including seminars, research, rallies, volunteer brigades, and other initiatives that sought to mobilize students of both member and non-member organizations.²⁴ Under this aegis, the IUS realized a variety of projects, from a mission to Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution to help with the literacy campaigns to a humanitarian contribution in Morogoro in the ANC training camps.²⁵ On projects like this, there was a wide international attendance, even from Western Europe; as the calls were spread through the network also to non-members. The détente also opened more possibilities – in October and November 1983, the IUS organized a tour in the United States, with the support of the US Student Association (an heir to the late NSA, founded in 1978) alongside student unions from Finland, West Germany, El Salvador and Puerto Rico. The tour included a great number of discussions and seminars with US students as well as with the US Peace Council.²⁶

²¹ 'The IUS Scholarship Scheme', *World Student News* 34, no. 3 (1980): 17–18.

²² Paper on the 4th consultative meeting of scholarship donor unions, 21 November 1975. Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21597.

²³ Nawrocki and Kamiński, *Za lepszy świat, za lepszy uniwersytet*, 100–2.

²⁴ EC Aden 81 – Draft appeal on further development of IUS campaign 'Education – right not privilege'. NACR, f. MSS, PA 425/5583.

²⁵ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

²⁶ Information zur kürzlichen USA-Tour des ISB. Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21824.

Another showcase activity of the IUS was the revival of the Festival movement. In the spirit of the détente, the World Festival of Youth and Students was once again organized in the divided city of Berlin in 1973. Five years earlier, after the turbulent gathering in Sofia, it was not certain whether there would be another Festival. Organizers from the IUS and the WFDY scouted the African continent for opportunities. Even after the fiasco of the twice-cancelled Festival, the idea that the Festival might be organized there was attractive.²⁷ Ultimately, no suitable venue was found, and it was decided that the next Festival would take place in Berlin, which would thus become the first city to host a second Festival.²⁸ But the renewed Festival in Berlin proved to be relatively successful. One year after the Olympic Games in Munich, East Germany had its mega-event, organized in a spirit of socialist internationalism. Dubbed a 'Red Woodstock', the Festival welcomed the participants in the atmosphere of détente. Even though East Germany retained a tight grip over the organization, eliminating possible subversive elements, the event showcased renewed socialist internationalism in numerous performances, debates and expressions of solidarity.²⁹ The future of the Festival movement seemed promising once again. Five years after Berlin, Havana took up the mantle and organized a Festival on the 'island of freedom'.

The agenda of the IUS continued to be set by the Secretariat. There were changes in the leadership, however, in the 1970s. After taking a stand against the Soviet invasion, President Zbyněk Vokrouhlický was fired from the position in 1969.³⁰ The Czechoslovak SVS was dissolved in the aftermath of the Prague Spring. Subsequently, a new union was established – the Socialist Union of Youth (Svaz socialistické mládeže, SSM), within which the students were organized semi-autonomously. The SSM had two branches – A Czech and a Slovak one, reflecting the federalization of the country in 1969. The IUS Presidency remained vacant until the spring of 1970, when the Czechoslovak students nominated a new candidate; the claim to the position as a host member organization was confirmed by the 1971 Congress in Bratislava.³¹

The position was entrusted to Dušan Ulčák. Ulčák was not an obvious choice to become Vokrouhlický's successor. The thirty-four-year-old engineer had virtually no history in the student movement; he worked in the research department of the Institute of Klement Gottwald New Metallurgical Works.³² But he spoke English very well – he travelled to the UK several times and even underwent training courses there on computers. Not unimportantly, he was also politically reliable – in the post-invasion period, the KSČ was undergoing purges and normalization and apparently did not want to take risks with international student politics. In 1977, at the Congress in Sofia,

²⁷ Report in consultative meeting of festival PC with WFDY and IUS on preparation of festival in Africa, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 381/14141.

²⁸ EC meeting Sofia – Resolution on further preparation of 10th festival, Berlin, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 395/14915.

²⁹ Katharine WHITE. 'East Germany's Red Woodstock: The 1973 Festival between the "Carnavalesque" and the Everyday', *Central European History* 51, no. 4 (2018): 585–610; Freiburg and Mahrada, *FDJ*, 252–4.

³⁰ Z. Vokrouhlický recalled from the function of IUS president, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 319/10484.

³¹ D. Ulčák is president of IUS, 16 March 1970, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 322/10525.

³² Dušan Ulčák's CV, ABS, f. Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB – svazky (I. S – svazky): reg. č. 44199 I. S* (arch. č. AS-12158 I. S).

Ulčák was replaced by Miroslav Štěpán, a communist apparatchik, already thirty-two years old when he assumed the position.

The other head of the IUS was the general secretary. From 1971 until 1981, this position was held by a Sudanese activist Fathi El Fadl of the Khartoum University Student Union (KUSU). The Sudanese union took the position from the General Union of Students in Iraqi Republic, and their representative Mehdi Al Hafid. According to Fadl's own words, the KUSU had a strong position in the IUS, as it was a union that could represent both African and Arab students.³³ In the interviews, former delegates who served in the IUS during the 1970s and 1980s agreed that Fathi El Fadl was the driving force of the IUS and the person who gave it its face. He was praised by the Irishmen John Gallagher and Brendan Glynn, who said that despite being a Sudanese communist, he had a very broad and inclusive perspective.³⁴ Christina Valanidou of Cyprus said that he was the 'most dynamic factor driving the whole process.'³⁵ East German Michael Geiger said that he respected him the most out of all IUS representatives, and his compatriot Frieder Bubl joined the appraisal.³⁶ As per Fathi's own words, President Dušan Ulčák did not interfere in the political activity of the IUS and rather took care of the administrative side.³⁷ In his policy, Fathi El Fadl focused mainly on the situation in the Global South – he emphasized promoting human rights in Chile, South Africa, Central America and other parts of the world. The campaign *Education – a Right, not a Privilege*, was also launched during his leadership, and the IUS intensified contact with other international organizations to collaborate on the issue of human rights, in particular with UNESCO.³⁸ When he left his position in 1981, after having spent almost ten years as the head of the IUS, he received a standing ovation from the Congress plenary session.³⁹ At the Congress in Berlin, the election determined that it would be the All-Indian Student Federation to succeed the KUSU and nominate the general secretary – his name was Srinivasan Kunalan and remained in the position until 1984.

The atmosphere in the Secretariat also changed. After a long time, there were full members in the IUS from non-socialist Europe – the Union of Irish Students and the POFNE from Cyprus, both unions rather representative of their respective studentships. John Gallagher, a representative of the USI in the Secretariat, said that decisions were adopted collectively in the Secretariat; when one union pushed an agenda, it was usually not contested, unless it went against the interests of another. So the Namibians pursued a struggle against apartheid, the Chileans against the dictatorship, the Cypriots the Cyprus questions, the Palestinians were concerned

³³ Interview with Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

³⁴ Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague; Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview.

³⁵ Interview with Christina Valanidou, 19 September 2023, interview per e-mail.

³⁶ Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin; Interview with Frieder Bubl, 18 August 2023, Berlin.

³⁷ Interview Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

³⁸ For example, Fathi El Fadl to Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, 29 March 1978, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG. 1/39.

³⁹ Fathi El Fadl, 'The Outgoing IUS Secretary General', *World Student News* 35, no. 2 (1981): 14.

with the occupation and the Irish had the question of Northern Ireland. Should there be a strong opposition against a particular agenda, then a decision was not made.⁴⁰ Gallagher's successor in the Secretariat, Brendan Glynn, also confirmed that decisions were made on a consensual basis. Representing the Irish students, he said, he could support topics related to national liberation in the Global South or some Western European problems in alignment with the state socialist countries but that did not mean he would applaud them for what they were doing at home. In terms of national liberation, he thought, the USI had even more radical opinions than the official IUS line – for example in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Glynn thought that the Irish had a strong bridge-building position, with contacts and legitimacy in both the East and the West.⁴¹ Christina Valanidou, the Cypriot representative in the Secretariat, also pointed out that the potential line of agenda could not go in particular against Soviet interests. After she was appointed, she demanded that the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 be specifically condemned but the Soviet delegate refused. The reasons were purely political, as the Soviets did not want to anger the Turks. That made her very angry and made her realize that everything must be approved by the Soviets, as per her words.⁴²

According to a Turkish student leader Sadettin Yumuşak, the IUS could not go against the interests of Moscow:

Discussions within the IUS (...) seemed to concentrate on finding the most appropriate wording that would reflect the interests of a particular organization, and at the same time would not contradict in any way with the foreign policy of Moscow. (...) So it was just a matter of finding the optimum compromise in wording to reach a consensus. And when it was not possible to find a compromise, usually the only solution left was saying nothing about the matter in question.

For example, according to him, it was difficult to press the expression 'military dictatorship' in relation to the post-1980-coup Turkey in the resolutions, because the USSR and Bulgaria did not want to harm relations with Turkey. But thanks to rich membership that could provide insight, the IUS could adopt a more nuanced position than socialist countries.⁴³ Fathi El Fadl thought that the Africans in general did not care so much about ideological nuances – such as the Soviet-Chinese conflict or the Soviet-Cuban conflict, and were more open-minded.⁴⁴ Sergei Chelnokov, a Soviet member of the Secretariat from the 1980s, on the contrary, thought it was the Eastern Europeans who had free hands, as they did not have to deal with inter-state diplomacy. The delegates from the Global South had a different position because they often had to represent their country as well. 'When you are a representative of groups, for example, General Union of Palestine Students, and you are the only Palestinian, because there's no embassy of Palestine in Prague (...) you are working as a representative of Palestine.'

⁴⁰ Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview.

⁴¹ Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague.

⁴² Interview with Christina Valanidou, 19 September 2023, interview per e-mail.

⁴³ Interview with Sadettin Yumuşak, 31 January 2023, interview per e-mail.

⁴⁴ Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

The same went with other national liberation movements – the African National Congress (ANC), South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), the Kurds. The Soviet delegate was powerful, Chelnokov added, because of the Soviet Union, but he did not have veto power. For example, if SWAPO was getting arms from the USSR, it would be difficult for the representative to clash with the Soviets in the Secretariat.⁴⁵

The event that disrupted the détente was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The Soviet attempt to salvage the Afghani revolution initiated a deep crisis in international relations and further alienated the New Left, eurocommunists and the non-communist left from the Soviet Union. The Japanese criticized the invasion at the IUS Congress in Berlin and asked for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops.⁴⁶ It also caused the secession of the Irish students. The vote to leave at the USI congress was close – the IUS General Secretary Fathi El Fadl attended the event and made a convincing argument for staying, almost swaying the vote, as John Gallagher remembered.⁴⁷ But in the end, the Irish decided to go, even though they still cooperated with the organization on an ad hoc basis. Another troublemaker from the past, the Yugoslav student organization, disaffiliated from the IUS in 1980, justifying the move with aspiration for a true non-alignment, but at the same time expressing hopes for future fruitful cooperation with the IUS.⁴⁸

Europeanization

The IUS was conceived as a universal organization; the ISC that emerged a couple of years later had the same aspirations. However, with the ongoing decolonization, it became apparent that many problems were easier to address on a smaller scale. This development mimicked the establishment of many regional organizations on the level of states, such as the Organization of African Unity (1961) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (1967), or the radical anti-imperialist and emancipatory organizations, such as AAPSO (Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation).⁴⁹ Decolonization provoked regionalization; either via the creation of new regional bodies or the fragmentation of existing global ones. This was the case with the student movement as well. Despite accelerating globalization, student universalism seemed to lose its potency. Even though the number of IUS member organizations grew constantly, it was the regional organizations that grew in strength in particular, setting the trends and agenda. The IUS cooperated on the regional events as well, but often from the position of a junior partner only.

⁴⁵ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

⁴⁶ 13th Congress Berlin 80 – Speech by Zengakuren NAČR, f. MSS, PA 419/5424.

⁴⁷ Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview.

⁴⁸ 13th Congress Berlin 80 – Decision of presidency of conf. of union of soc. youth of Yugoslavia on disaffiliation of union of soc. youth of Yugoslavia from IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 423/5526.

⁴⁹ For the regionalization of international organizations and the relation of the process to globalization, see Ulf Engel, 'Regionalism and Regional Organizations', in *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*, ed. Matthias Middell and Steffi Marung (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 310–33.

Latin American students organized themselves in 1966, under the influence of the Cuban Revolution and the establishment of organizations like the Organization of Latin American Solidarity. The *Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes* (OCLAE) was founded in Cuba with the Cuban FEU elected to the Presidency.⁵⁰ Perhaps because of the existing political rifts at the time, the IUS reaction to this new organization was reserved⁵¹; but in following years, it was a valuable partner. In Africa, the strong Pan-African movement in the 1960s led to integration initiatives such as the 'Freedom Fighter' scholarship scheme in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, intended for African students.⁵² The All-African Student Union (AASU) was founded in 1972 with the Secretariat in Accra. It is an umbrella organization of national unions of students, cooperating with many intergovernmental organizations and INGOs. In relation to the IUS, the AASU 'mainly served as the vehicle for student mobility (from Africa to Europe), exchange programs, and peer learning'.⁵³ Just as in the case of the OCLAE, the IUS Secretariat had reservations at first, suspecting it of being an anti-progressive organization – despite the lobbying of the Africans within the IUS.⁵⁴ Regional organizations also included the General Union of Arab Students (GUAS), established in 1976 in Baghdad, or the Asian Students' Association, founded in Kuala Lumpur in 1969.⁵⁵

IUS General Secretary Fathi El Fadl did not see regionalization as a problem. In his view, cooperation with regional organizations made the IUS global. The widening of the regional agenda, as per Fathi, was good because it diminished the Cold War divisions and moved the IUS from a 'platform of European culture, which was concerned only with the idea domination and influence of socialist countries, to an organization which represents the interests of the students all over the world'.⁵⁶ Regionalization manifested also in the IUS publications. Aside from the *World Student News*, the Secretariat also published the following periodicals: *Africa Bulletin*, *Asian and Pacific Bulletin*, *Latin American Bulletin*, *European Bulletin*, *Arab Struggle*, *Democratization of Education* and *Student Rights Bulletin*.

But there was another effect of the regionalization. Not only did African, Latin American, Asian and Arab student unions gain momentum, but Europe did too. The regional collaboration that developed in other parts of the world inspired students

⁵⁰ Bianca Borges dos Santos, Giusseppe Lipari and Carmen Romero, 'A Regional Student Movement in Latin and South America: The Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes – OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization)', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics ...*, ed. Manja Klemenčič (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 103–13.

⁵¹ Declaration of IUS delegation on the constitution of OCLAE 1966, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 293/8968.

⁵² Daniel Laqua, 'The Politics of Transnational Student Mobility: Youth, Education and Activism in Ghana, 1957–1966', *Social History* 48, no. 1 (2023): 87–113.

⁵³ See Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu, Awurama Safowaa Kyei-Baffour, Abdul Karim Ibrahim, Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor and Rexford Akrong, 'The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) in Perspective: The Trajectory of the Continental Student Movement, from 1972 to 2022', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics ...*, ed. Manja Klemenčič (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 41–51.

⁵⁴ Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

⁵⁵ Union of International Associations – Global Civil Society Database. Asia Students Association (ASA) <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100067064> [cit. 15 May 2025]; General Union of Arab Students (GUAS) <https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100035835> [cit. 15 May 2025].

⁵⁶ Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

in Europe, the continent split by the Iron Curtain, while many Europeans were yearning for bridges to be built.⁵⁷ The students were much more cooperative than the states – and the détente presented an opportunity for them to be pioneers of East–West communication again. The IUS being seated in Europe and built on European traditions, the Europeanization affected it the most out of all regional integration processes. In 1984, Georgios Michaelides from Cyprus became the general secretary. His predecessor Fathi El Fadl also saw his election as a sign of Europeanization of the IUS – having Europeans for both president and general secretary and breaking the unspoken rule that the general secretary should be from a Global South country tipped off the balance.⁵⁸ There was, however, ‘a tacit agreement’, as per Fathi, that topics like peace or disarmament were discussed at European forums, and in the Global South other topics mattered.⁵⁹ Sergiusz Najar, the Polish member of the Secretariat in the 1980s, confirmed that Europeans had specific interests: ‘The Soviets were interested only in big politics, they led the UN-related things (...) Bulgarians, East Germans, and Polish were more interested in European politics, peace talks, international relations, culture, and education.’⁶⁰

In Europe, regional integration also did not start as late as the 1970s. As shown in the previous chapter, the incompetence of both major student federations – the IUS and the ISC – made the national unions of students take matters into their own hands at the end of the 1950s. As a cross-bloc initiative, the Polish, the French, the traditional contesters of the bipolar world, grew tired of this rivalry and stopped relying on the two rival international unions to reunify. In 1959, they started organizing meetings separately and held the first pan-European meeting of national unions of students in Paris. The European Meetings, as these gatherings became known, got into crisis at the end of the 1960s but in the 1970s they brought new energy. The Meetings served as a platform to discuss, exchange information and if possible, adopt joint declarations. The IUS representatives also took part in them as observers. There were thoughts that the European Meetings could turn into an all-European student organization; in 1981, there was a meeting in Paris, seeking to establish a pan-European Student Information Bureau. This attempt, however, was unsuccessful, as there was no money to fund it. Some national unions were sceptical because of the not-yet-forgotten legacy of the CIA funding scandal.⁶¹ Furthermore, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended the détente and renewed antagonisms which complicated East–West cooperation even more – as per Károly György, the Hungarian representative in the IUS Secretariat, there was an ‘ice age’ after Afghanistan and everything became about the East and West again.⁶² Another reason was that Western student representatives sought to establish an

⁵⁷ Lidia Lesnykh, *Building Europe: How the Global Cold War fostered student cooperation on the old continent*, forthcoming.

⁵⁸ Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

⁶¹ Giuseppe Beccia, ‘Organisations et mouvements européens des étudiants après 1968. Les cas de l’Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions et de l’European Students’ Union’ (MA thesis, Université libre de Bruxelles, 2010), 50.

⁶² Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

alternative having seen the close-mindedness of functionaries from socialist countries who were often professional politicians sometimes even in their late 30s.⁶³

The new Western European body established in 1982 was the Western European Student Information Bureau (WESIB), founded in Stockholm without a permanent headquarters. The WESIB's first general secretary, a Swedish Björn Sundström, said that the European Meetings 'in the mid-'70s were characterized by drawn-out sessions where hour-long speeches were read from papers that all participants already had, often interrupted for long applause, and often following the recital of political slogans.'⁶⁴ This situation, according to him, created a demand for the students to organize on a Western European level. At first, the WESIB was not a proper representative international federation – more of a documentation centre, functioning on a consensus and on the principle of 'students as such'.⁶⁵

The European Meetings continued, with the WESIB present as the representation of the West while the IUS was supposed to represent the East. This was problematic for the IUS because it aspired to be universal – this way, it acknowledged that it was a partisan, geographically limited organization. Given the fact, however, that Europeans represented in the IUS were almost exclusively from Eastern European state socialist countries, the IUS too agreed to it. There were some talks to establish an Eastern European student union as a counterpart to the WESIB but these plans never materialized.⁶⁶

At the beginning of the 1970s, the IUS attempted to expand its scope of activity – not only geographically, courting the Western unions, but also in terms of representation. It would come with an initiative to organize internationally also the secondary school students. The initiative did not materialize; the idea was rejected by Western unions, such as the British or the Irish. The main preoccupation was that such a network would serve for political goals, given the IUS's political dependence. But following up on the topic, Western unions of secondary school students decided to unionize.⁶⁷ In 1975, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) was founded in Dublin. The organization would have its headquarters in the Irish capital and the secretary general of the Irish Union of School Students would also be the secretary general of OBESSU.

Another form of collaboration on the European level was the creation of the Framework for All-European Youth and Student Cooperation, simply referred to as the Framework or AEYSC. The Framework was a direct result of the détente process; the proposal for its establishment was verbalized at the Helsinki Youth Conference on European Security in 1972, which preceded the official intergovernmental Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Yet again, the student politics was

⁶³ The Canadian student delegate, Christoph Sicking, described the confrontation with professional politicians from the East. Interview with Christoph Sicking, 19 May 2023, online interview.

⁶⁴ Björn Sundström, 'How It All Began', in *ESU Turns 30! Fighting for Student Rights since 1982*, ed. Vanja Ivosevic, Allan Päll, Rok Primožič, Marianne Slegers and Martina Vukasovic (Bruxelles: ESU, 2012), 5–12.

⁶⁵ Beccia, 'Organisations et mouvements européens des étudiants après 1968', 51.

⁶⁶ Interview with Stephen Grogan, 1 November 2023, online interview.

⁶⁷ Beccia, 'Organisations et mouvements européens des étudiants après 1968', 40–3.

pioneering the way for the 'grown-up' relations.⁶⁸ The Framework was based on the cooperation of European unions of youth, organized within the Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth. CENYC was a Western European body sheltering the national youth unions, established in 1963. Its main cooperation partner was the WFDY, the IUS's sister organization which was seated in Budapest and united progressive youth unions of the world. The cooperation between these two organizations was the backbone of the Framework. Other organizations involved in the meetings, which took place as often as every two months, were the IUS, the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), the European Union of Young Christian Democrats, the European Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth, and others.⁶⁹

Within the Framework, one could see the convergence of European internationalisms in practice. This showed, for example, at the World Festivals of Youth and Students. After taking part in the 1973 Festival in Berlin as an observer, the CENYC became subsequently involved in the International Preparatory Committee and the organization of the next Festival which was to be held in Havana.⁷⁰ The East and West cooperated in the matter of youth and student tourism and exchange – at a conference held in Vienna in 1975, the twenty international youth and student organizations took part, discussing the educational objectives of mobility, improvement of travel facilities, the role of governments and INGOs in mobility and other topics.⁷¹ In his introductory report, the IUS representative proposed that the initiative should concentrate on social programmes and student tourism, professional exchanges and internships, cultural, educational and scientific programmes, university exchange, international student camps and sports events, and international tourism for school pupils.⁷²

The Framework meetings did not only discuss matters of youth and students. The 1976 meeting in Warsaw urged for a complete ban on nuclear tests and the creation of nuclear-free zones, including the Mediterranean, Central Europe and the Baltic Sea region. In order to 'overcome underdevelopment', the meeting expressed support for the implementation of the New International Economic Order.⁷³ In 1977, the Framework held a conference on disarmament in Prague, stressing the importance of détente, the Helsinki Conference and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT).⁷⁴ The CENYC representative appreciated the Helsinki Accords but at the same time

⁶⁸ Ideas on all European framework for youth cooperation, 15 January 1973, Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), f. CENYC, box 22.

⁶⁹ Press communique on Results of European Conference on Security and Cooperation, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25; Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

⁷⁰ Report on the constituent meeting of the International Preparatory Committee for the 11th World Festival of Youth and Students, 6 March 1975, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁷¹ Recommendations of the European Conference on Youth and Student Tourism and Exchange, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 22.

⁷² Introductory Report Commission I: Presented by the IUS and ISTC on behalf of the Preparatory Committee – 'Educational Objectives and Methods of Youth Tourism and Exchange', 2–4 December 1975, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 22.

⁷³ European Youth and Students Meeting, Warsaw, 19–24 June 1976, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁷⁴ Report from the First Preparatory Thematical Seminar of the European Youth and Student Conference on Disarmament, Prague, 23rd August 1977, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

noted that they were insufficient.⁷⁵ A European student forum in Helsinki in 1979 adopted the IUS's slogan *Education – a right, not a privilege* – it was very focused on educational problems, international cooperation and research, but it also sent a letter of solidarity to Nicaragua.⁷⁶ Not all were aboard such politicization, however – the student unions of the UK and Switzerland criticized the tendential presentation on the role of multinational companies, that the SALT II agreements had nothing to do with the studentship, and saw the conference as one-sided.⁷⁷ Interestingly, the Western European communists also had a problem with these meetings. Young French communists decided not to go to the 1976 conference in Warsaw because the 'young Giscardiens' were invited, which they saw as a joke. In this sense, again, the détente dialogue was seen as a betrayal by the radicals.⁷⁸

In 1980, the Framework (AEYSC) was formally founded as a structure with a permanent body. The constituent assembly gathered in Budapest in October 1980, with a large number of youth and student organizations taking part.⁷⁹ The organization's technical secretariat was established in Budapest. Although the Framework was primarily a European network, it also had some activities in the Global South. One of the topics that was consensual across the East and the West was the support for Namibia and against South African apartheid. It was also proposed to cooperate with the AASU on these topics, with the possibility of hosting a conference in Luanda.⁸⁰ But the end of détente affected the Framework as well. The 1982 meeting in Cyprus ended in a crisis and the activities within AEYSC were put to sleep. There were some attempts to renew the activity – such as the 1984 conference on disarmament in Stockholm.⁸¹ Full cooperation, however, was re-established only in 1986 when the technical secretariat moved to Brussels – but that was already a different time, influenced by perestroika.

After the International Student Conference was dissolved in 1969, the Western unions did not try to re-establish another universal student federation. Instead, as it was shown, they focused on cooperation on the European level. The 'second Cold War', as the cooling in international relations in the early 1980s is sometimes called, however, produced a new rivalry – in 1981, the International Student Association (ISA) was established. In this project, the aspiration of an alternative student union was renewed. The initiative came from the Irish USI that recently left the IUS, and the Polish Independent Students' Association (Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów, NZS). The NZS was established in 1981, after a 29-day-long strike in which tens of thousands

⁷⁵ Intervention of CENYC in the First Preparatory Seminar, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁷⁶ Report on European student forum Education – a right, not a privilege, 27 August 1979, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21808.

⁷⁷ Informationen über den Internationalen Studentenbund (ISB) und über die Kampagne des ISB „Bildung – ein Recht, kein Privileg“, December 1979, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21824.

⁷⁸ Extract from le Nouvel Observateur, 10 May 1976, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁷⁹ Documents of the constituent assembly of the framework for All-European Youth and Student Cooperation, Budapest, 14 October 1980, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁸⁰ Ideas for preparing for an international conference of youth and students in solidarity with the struggle of the people, youth and students of Southern Africa, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 25.

⁸¹ The Stockholm Conference, 23–25 November 1984, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 88.

of students participated – but the introduction of martial law made the NZS illegal.⁸² Before that happened, however, the union had a chance to be active in international student politics; they even proposed that the first congress be organized in Warsaw. The ISA aimed to represent students on a global scale in the field of higher education, especially in international organizations such as UNESCO.⁸³

The IUS Secretariat did not take the establishment of the ISA very well. In a statement on the ‘so-called International Student Association’, the IUS Secretariat blamed the new organization for disrupting the student unity and for being ‘pro-imperialist and reactionary’. The responsibility, according to the statement, lay with the students from the United States, the ‘direct heirs of those who discredited themselves by their overt links with the CIA’, the leaders of the NZS, the ‘so-called independent student union in Poland’, and the leadership of the UNEF-ID, ‘claiming the name of independent and democratic UNEF’.⁸⁴ The Secretariat was not wrong in assessing that the United States Students Association had an organizational role in the new organization. As for the UNEF-ID, it was a splinter group that seceded from the UNEF in 1971.⁸⁵ One of the main points of critique, as explained by the IUS General Secretary Srinivasan Kunalan in a lengthy letter to member organizations, was interestingly the criticism of the poor representativeness of many of the participating unions.⁸⁶ The first ISA Congress ultimately was not organized in Warsaw but in Paris – because of the martial law in Poland. The communists saw it as a hostile event; the East Germans reported that it took place ‘in an anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and anti-IUS spirit’.⁸⁷ The organization, however, proved to be short-lived; the first Congress was also the only one. For the years to come, Western European students focused rather on their activity within the WESIB.

The people of the IUS in Prague

The networks of the International Union of Students were global. The Secretariat, however, resided in Prague. The geographical position also mattered; the organization was influenced by the city that surrounded its headquarters and influenced it back. The position of the IUS officials resembled that of other international civil servants elsewhere in the world, although in some aspects it was specific.

The Secretariat of the International Union of Students was composed of people nominated by their national organizations – their number constantly grew and by the

⁸² Tom Junes, *Student Politics in Communist Poland: Generations of Consent and Dissent* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 191–210.

⁸³ Conférence internationale des étudiants. Fondation de l'Association internationale des étudiants, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG. 1/39.

⁸⁴ Statement of the IUS Secretariat on the so-called International Student Association, September 1981, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG. 1/39.

⁸⁵ Robi Morder, ‘La scission de l'UNEF (1971)’, *Les cahiers du GERME* 34 (2022): 45–54.

⁸⁶ Srinivasan Kunalan to member organizations, October 1981, CME, box UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

⁸⁷ Monatsbericht ISB, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21824.

end of the Cold War, there were more than thirty members. The work in the Secretariat was a full-time job, so the delegates had to put their studies on hold. There were a couple of exceptions of people who studied in Prague and managed to combine the studies with the job – in particular student unions from the Global South sometimes used the opportunity and nominated someone studying in Prague anyway.⁸⁸ The youth and relative inexperience of the officials were disadvantages of the student organization. The student status also caused relatively high fluctuation of the Secretariat members. Quite often, therefore, it became normal that the delegates were actually not students anymore, but relatively fresh graduates who were still in touch with the university environment but had time to be fully focused on the work – especially the state socialist countries used this strategy. At times, they were also postgraduate students who could adapt their study schedule more easily. All these elected officials had to relocate to Prague, where the headquarters of the IUS were, and where the day-to-day operation was taking place. Thus, Czechoslovakia became their new home where they had to settle and live. In this section, I would like to present how the officials of an international NGO in socialist Czechoslovakia lived and worked, and what problems they had to face.

Most of the former IUS officials who were interviewed for this book agreed that they had a great time. They were young and Prague was a great place to live in – with its many historical landmarks and the Czech beer, cultural offer, and rather high living standards – at least compared to most of the Eastern European or Global South capitals. It could have been attractive even from a political perspective – the reform process of the 1960s was inspiring on a worldwide scale. Even during the period of ‘normalization’, which is often associated with a rather dull atmosphere, empty language and ritualized performativity, Prague had the vibe of a transnational hub. This hub was constructed by the IUS and other international INGOs that resided there – the World Federation of Trade Unions, the International Organization of Journalists and the *World Marxist Review*. Other ‘international democratic organizations’ organized their events and congresses in Prague. Moreover, there were also students and workers from the Global South, political refugees, exile communities, travelling intellectuals and tourists.⁸⁹

Even though Prague offered a relatively comfortable living, the IUS and other international organizations remained rather separated from the city and its inhabitants; to a certain extent, the IUS and its officials were living in a bubble within Prague. Many, if not most, members of the Secretariat never learned the Czech language, despite spending years in the city. Hungarians Károly György and László Labody agreed, recalling that they only had been friends with the people in the Secretariat and with other Hungarians in the city – either delegates in other NGOs or expats of other kinds. György also added that he did not spend so much time in the city – whenever he had the chance, he went back to Budapest. He even remembered that he had a reserved spot on the flight to Budapest on Friday evening and came back on Sunday.⁹⁰ Brendan Glynn from Ireland confirmed that the IUS was secluded, partly blaming also the

⁸⁸ Interview with Ahmed Al Wahishi, 21 December 2022, interview per e-mail.

⁸⁹ Pešta, ‘A Hub of Anti-Colonialism’, 492–513.

⁹⁰ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

environment; the Czech people are not 'the most social people in terms of outsiders', he said. But according to him, many communities of foreigners, including students, were a part of this bubble.⁹¹ He also remembered specific restaurants where the foreign communities hung out – as U Fleků, a legendary pub popular among foreigners visiting Prague already since the 1950s.⁹² General Secretary Fathi El Fadl had the same impression, recalling that it was difficult to interact with the people of Prague, as the Czechs were not very open, so he mostly met with other foreigners. He remembered having close relations with the Sudanese across the organizations and institutions, as well as with other Arabs and Africans.⁹³

Michael Geiger, the East German, admitted that the people in the IUS were quite isolated from the city, however, as he remarked, it was not because it would be a bubble, but rather because they were working so much. It was a demanding job – especially during preparations for important events. At the Congress, as the UN observer noted, the programme went every day from about 9 am until past midnight; on the last day, it did not end until 7 am.⁹⁴ Much time was also consumed by travelling – Geiger remembered being out of Prague half the time. And in the rest, they had to work or spend time with the family.⁹⁵ Travelling was an important part of the job. The IUS organized or co-organized many events all over the world, and was invited to many more as a guest or observer. There were congresses of the national unions of students (both member and non-member), conferences organized by other international organizations, such as the UNESCO, UN, Pax Romana, World Christian Students Federation, Western European associations, associations of universities, student sports tournaments and various other events requiring the presence of a member (or members) of the Secretariat.

But not all delegates spent all their time just working or travelling and some did indeed mingle with the Czechoslovak population. Some managed to lead rich cultural lives, such as John Gallagher, who remembered going to Prague's jazz clubs often.⁹⁶ Others have learnt Czech to a fluent level and made friends among Czechoslovakians. The members of the Secretariat were young and often without families, so quite naturally there were also romantic relationships – several foreign delegates had fallen in love with and got married to a Czechoslovak woman, starting a family in Prague. Not exceptionally, the marriage started as an in-house relationship between a foreign delegate and a Czechoslovak staff member, such as a secretary or an interpreter.

As already mentioned, many of the delegates were not students anymore and were somewhat older, even in their thirties. Some of these already had families and brought them to Prague. This situation created different problems. The spouses of the delegates (predominantly women) were also isolated, but the lack of workload also gave them

⁹¹ Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague.

⁹² See, for example, Michal Zourek, 'Roque Dalton: nejen revolucionář z hospody u Fleků', *Civilia* 3, no. 2 (2012): 126–39; Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*, 56.

⁹³ Interview with Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

⁹⁴ Report on the Eleventh IUS Congress, Budapest, Hungary, 7–14 May 1974, UN Archive, reference code S-0446-0576-0003.

⁹⁵ Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

⁹⁶ Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview.

time to build relations outside of the IUS network. And even better connected to the environment were the children who went to kindergarten or school in Prague, made friends and learned the language faster and better than their parents. But despite their alleged prominence, the IUS officials encountered the same problems as the Czechoslovaks. Sergei Chelnokov, the Soviet delegate, said that he could not afford to pay for a nursery for his kids so they had to stay at home with his wife; Michael Geiger said that he could not find places for his children in the kindergarten, even if they asked President Miroslav Štěpán to help with his influence. As per Geiger, the reason was rather petty and vindictive – the response was that Czechoslovaks were denied places in kindergartens in Berlin as well.⁹⁷

The delegates and their families were usually given a flat. The IUS had several flats at its disposal for the housing of the Secretariat. In the 1950s, this was a problem – there were not enough apartments and especially if they were single and with no kids. The hotels, however, were poorly equipped and too expensive. The delegates usually spent a couple of years in Prague, which was too long a time to stay in a hotel, especially since the hotels had security arrangements that prevented the guests from cooking their own meals in their rooms.⁹⁸ Mazen Hussein said the accommodation was still awful during his service in the 1960s. He was living in a hotel, only later he got a one-room apartment, and salaries were also not very high.⁹⁹ A decade later, however, Labody recalled he had so much money that he could not spend it – much above the average salary.¹⁰⁰

One of the interesting facts, visible from the first glance at the lists of the Secretariat members, is that there were only very few women in elected positions. There were many women among the staff – in fact, a majority – working as interpreters, secretaries or accountants. But as representatives of national unions in the Secretariat, there was only a handful, despite the proclaimed fight for gender equality and the rights of female students. International politics was still seen as a domain for men. During the whole Cold War history of the IUS between 1946 and 1989, there were hundreds of people in the Secretariat. Out of those, I was able to find only a handful of female members: Raina Georgieva from Bulgaria, the head of the Intellectual Cooperation Department in the late 1940s, the Soviets Zoya Tumanova who served in the Secretariat in the 1950s, and Mariia Zhuravleva in the 1960s. Christina Valanidou, nominated by the Cypriot union POFNE, served in the Secretariat between 1978 and 1983, and Danica Naďová was the second Czechoslovak representative in the IUS in the late 1980s.

Christina Valanidou, who agreed to an interview, said on this problem:

When I arrived in Prague and entered the conference hall – the IUS Secretariat meeting place – I was shocked. I couldn't believe my own eyes that there were no

⁹⁷ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva; Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

⁹⁸ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

⁹⁹ Interview with Mazen Hussein, 4 August 2020, Prague.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

other female representatives. I was very disappointed because I had been thinking that the socialist countries would at least have two or three female representatives. And I was also disappointed because I realized that despite the theories and leftist positions on women's equality, the socialist countries and students' organizations with left ideology, were applying different policies.¹⁰¹

She continued by saying that as a woman, she felt constantly underestimated and that she was not taken seriously by others: 'When there was a discussion of these issues there was a widespread disregard and irony from the majority of the members of the IUS Secretariat, including the President and the General Secretary.'¹⁰² She concluded that women's rights were in general not such an important issue at the IUS.

Giorgos Michaelides, the general secretary (not the one referred to in Valanidou's statement though, as he assumed the position only in 1984), was aware of the problem of strong women's underrepresentation. To counter the imbalance, he offered a position in the Secretariat to Mairi Johnson, a female representative of the Canadian Federation of Students, even though her union was not a member organization of the IUS. It was supposed to be an appointed, not an elected position, but since the delegates were nominated by their national unions, there was not much else he could do.¹⁰³ One of the problems of the approach to the issue of female students' rights was that there was not a consensus among the representatives. As per Sergiusz Najar, the Polish delegate in the Secretariat in the late 1980s, some Global South and especially Arab representatives did not acknowledge that there even was a problem.¹⁰⁴

Another thing that could make the sojourn in Prague less pleasant was the overt or covert racism in the Czechoslovak society. Even though state socialist countries were stressing that racism and colonialism were only the sins of the West, recent scholarship has shown that thinking in racial and cultural stereotypes was very much alive even in the East.¹⁰⁵ Students and workers coming from Global South countries often had experienced microaggressions, insults, verbal attacks or unwanted attention in the streets, but racist behaviour patterns existed also at the institutional level.¹⁰⁶

Most interviewed IUS officials from the Global South admitted that during their time in Prague, they had some bad experiences – varying from having been attacked

¹⁰¹ Interview with Christina Valanidou, 19 September 2023, interview per e-mail.

¹⁰² Given the span of Valanidou's activity in the Secretariat the president being referred to here has to be Miroslav Štěpán and the general secretary either Srinivasan Kunalan or Fathi El Fadl. Interview with Christina Valanidou, 19 September 2023, interview per e-mail.

¹⁰³ Interview with Mairi Johnson, 21 April 2023, online interview.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

¹⁰⁵ Quinn Slobodian, 'Socialist Chromatism. Race, Racism, and the Racial Rainbow in East Germany', in *Comrades of Color. East Germany in the Cold War World*, ed. Quinn Slobodian (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 23–39; James Mark, 'Race', *Socialism Goes Global*, 221–54.

¹⁰⁶ This field was pioneered by Julie Hessler in her study 'Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics, and the Cold War', *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47, no. ½ (2006): 33–63. For the Czechoslovak environment, see Alena Alamgir 'Race Is Elsewhere: State-Socialist Ideology and the Racialisation of Vietnamese Workers in Czechoslovakia', *Race & Class* 54, no. 4 (2013): 67–85; Mikuláš Pešta, 'Friends of Czechoslovakia: History of Malagasy Students in Socialist Czechoslovakia and Madagascar in the Global Cold War', *Střed/Centre* 17, no. 1 (2025): 55–74.

at a party to harassment by the police.¹⁰⁷ Mohamed Fall, a delegate from Senegal commented on the topic: 'In Paris, there were all kinds of faces in the Sorbonne. But the East was different. There was a special treatment, curiosity, you could see people giggling when you passed them.'¹⁰⁸ The interviewees agreed that this happened in the streets but that the IUS provided a safe and friendly work environment. However, even there, they could encounter condescending behaviour. Franklin Santibanez from Chile confirmed that there was patronizing from the side of the Eastern Europeans towards the Africans, Asians and Latin Americans. In his view, the reason for that was that they were not 'bringing money' – they did not contribute to the budget and were therefore not treated as equals.¹⁰⁹

The race and origin played a role even in task assignment. For example, Africans could have also been used as delegates on international platforms to increase legitimacy and divert attention from the Cold War matters. Sergei Chelnokov, a Soviet delegate in the Secretariat, commented on the topic: 'When you identify good speakers, of course you would give the floor to Senegal and not to the Soviet, because that is more credible.' He continued: 'They were highly motivated, well-controlled, well-organized. So, when you saw that SWAPO is speaking or the African National Congress from South Africa or Palestinian students, you knew that this is serious, and they were given respect accordingly. Nobody could just ignore them.' But it is not just that the IUS was using them for legitimization, Chelnokov reminded, but also that they were using the IUS as a platform to promote their agenda.¹¹⁰

The IUS was not only the Secretariat but also the so-called apparatus. Besides the elected delegates, there were also foreigners among the staff, working as interpreters and editors; in the 1950s, the *World Student News* had Spanish, French, Italian, Arabic, Russian, and Scandinavian editors.¹¹¹ In later years, however, they were largely replaced by Czechoslovak specialists. Since the early 1970s, the apparatus was directed by Miloš Jakeš junior, the son of one of the most powerful apparatchiks of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, who eventually became the general secretary, Miloš Jakeš senior. Organizational order set the rules of the functioning of the apparatus. The apparatus had several departments – administrative, organizational, economic, service, IT, travel agency and the director's office.¹¹² The staff, however, was quite separate from the elected Secretariat members; Jakeš was the only one who participated in the Secretariat meetings.

The staff provided a variety of services; it took care of the functioning of the IUS. It included interpreters who could help the members of the Secretariat in case their English was not good. The editors worked on the IUS publications. There was an

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Félix Andriantsoavina, 10 June 2021, Dresden; Interview with Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview. This kind of behaviour was also noticed by some Europeans – Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Mohammed Fall, 19 April 2021, online interview.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

¹¹¹ Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*, 49.

¹¹² Organizační řád MSS, 15 August 1975, NAČR, f. MSS, box Organizační směrnice ředitele aparátu MSS č. 30, spisový řád.

in-house lawyer who was in charge of civil disputes and bureaucratic relationships with the host city and host country. There were accountants in charge of the bookkeeping. The International Student Travel Bureau took care of student tourism. Additionally, the IUS employed archivists, drivers, bartenders, janitors and other personnel.

The staff were not very much in contact with the Secretariat, aside from the interpreters, the secretaries and the chief of staff who was the only one who could attend the meetings of the Secretariat. According to Josef Komárek, the head of the International Student Travel Bureau, the staff had very little understanding of what was happening in the Secretariat.¹¹³ Even the treasurer who was a member of the Secretariat, traditionally an East German, did not handle the day-to-day financial operations, invoices and accounting, nor was he concerned with personal files and salaries. The chief of staff handled all these matters, the treasurer was responsible for making the members pay the fees, keeping an eye on the budget and giving a report to the Congress.¹¹⁴

The state and the union

When describing the power relations within the IUS, the Hungarian Károly György said: ‘There were three power centres. First, you had to knock on the door of the Soviet representative. Then the President. And number three was the East German – because they were Treasurers and also because they were active in the international field, to establish themselves.’¹¹⁵ As is obvious from the narrative so far, the IUS depended on the state socialist countries quite a lot – it got most of its money from them, as well as the flats, cars, staff and the office building. When the communist regimes collapsed in 1989, as we will see, the IUS and other ‘democratic international organizations’ got into existential problems. The IUS also aligned with Soviet positions on most of the important international affairs and policies, such as the Soviet-Yugoslav split, Sino-Soviet split, ‘peaceful coexistence’ or *détente*. On the most controversial acts, such as the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the IUS remained silent. However, as is one of the main points of this book, the IUS was a polycentric and heterogeneous network and many actors involved in this network produced rather dissenting voices. In this section, I will address the problem of the relationship between the IUS and state (or ruling party) structures, in particular those of Czechoslovakia.

In academic scholarship, there has been a rich discussion on the nature of communist dictatorships, the limitations of individual action, the space for negotiations and the diversity of actors within the systems. Various scholars concluded that the socialist governments and party structures were not monoliths but rather heterogeneous structures, with various involved actors with often conflicting interests and no absolute

¹¹³ Interview with Josef Komárek, 17 January 2023, Prague.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

asymmetry in the power relations.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the relationship between the IUS and the state – be it Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union – was not a binary one, a relationship between the master who delivered instruction and the servant who followed them. Nor was the relationship a cemented one – it was rather a constant negotiation of positions and boundaries with a variety of actors and institutions involved in it.

The composition of the Secretariat evolved but after 1968, it settled on about twenty-seven countries. However, each of the socialist countries had two representatives – be it from Europe or outside: the Soviet Union, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea (although sometimes some of them only had one). There was an established hierarchy – the first representative was a secretary or a vice-president while the other had a specific job. While the first East German representative was the Treasurer, the second was responsible for the World Student News. The first from Czechoslovakia was the president, and the second was usually in charge of the sports activities. But even the second representative sat at the Secretariat (although not as a member) and could be promoted to the position of the first representative if that person retired or was revoked.

This habit – that all socialist countries are represented in the Secretariat by default and in addition also have two representatives there – was certainly viewed as an undemocratic practice by several delegates from the South. It was regarded as if there were two levels of membership – for those who paid and those who could not. General Secretary Fathi El Fadl, as he recalled, tried to limit the number of Eastern Europeans in the Secretariat and democratize the procedure, including the customary holding of certain positions (Czechoslovaks having the Presidency, East Germans the Treasury). In retrospect, however, he considered this effort a failure, as he did not achieve a significant change in this aspect.¹¹⁷

As for other problems with the Eastern European domination over the IUS, Fadl identified the relation between a member organization and its representative as potentially troublesome, as such a representative could be more of a representative of a state rather than a student union. Furthermore, as per Fadl's words, the Soviets were bringing their advisors who were interfering with the work of the commissions at congresses and tried to change the wording of resolutions before they were to be subjected to a vote by the assembly. Fadl also claimed that there was pressure to award the scholarships to Global South communist students, which he refused, according to his own statement.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Martin Sabrow 'Sozialismus als Sinnwelt: Diktatorische Herrschaft in zeithistorischen Perspektiven', *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 14, nos. 40–1 (2007): 9–23; Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik and Martin Sabrow (eds.), *Making Sense of Dictatorship, Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe after 1945* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022); Thomas Lindenberger, 'SED-Herrschaft als soziale Praxis, Herrschaft und "Eigen-Sinn": Problemstellung und Begriffe', in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft*, ed. Jens Gieseke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

¹¹⁷ Interview with Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Fathi El Fadl was not wrong in assessing that the Eastern European member organizations of the IUS were under the heavy influence of the state and the party. The member organizations from Czechoslovakia – the ČSM and later the SSM – were a part of the National Front, an organization overarching all political and civil life in the state and very much interlinked with the KSČ. Through the youth organization, the party was involved in the nomination of the Czechoslovak representative to the IUS. And these representatives – the presidents – were in touch with the party during their term in office, too. Jiří Pelikán used to report to the International Department of the Central Committee of the KSČ, informing about internal developments within the IUS. In 1962, when he heard rumours that he was about to be revoked from the position of the IUS President by the KSČ, he complained to an anonymous comrade. Historian Francesco Caccamo identified this comrade as no one lesser than the president of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný, suggesting that Pelikán was his protégé.¹¹⁹ Pelikán, however, did not complain that the party would be revoking him – that seemed like a standard procedure. He claimed to be ready to assume any other position the party would entrust to him. The problem was that he was not informed about it, leading him to believe he was being punished. In fact, he was not alone in thinking so – his contemporaries also thought that his appointment as the head of Czechoslovak television was a sort of punishment, as they thought he had a brighter future ahead of him.¹²⁰ Josef Skála, the IUS president in the late 1980s, admitted that he was even going to Moscow to consult on his positions and next steps with the international department of the CPSU and with the Komsomol Student Council. He insisted, however, that he did not have to obey orders; to prove it, he recalled a situation when he was pushed by the head of the Komsomol Student Council to organize the IUS Executive Committee meeting in Afghanistan. Skála, as per his own words, refused and warned him that the West would not understand it, since the Soviet Army was present there.¹²¹

A crucial institution on the Czechoslovak side was the Union of Socialist Youth, the SSM, and its student section, *Československé ústředí vysokoškoláků*. The SSM officially hosted the IUS in Czechoslovakia and assisted with organizational matters, including running the headquarters, securing staff and co-organizing the numerous events held on Czechoslovak territory. Additionally, the SSM also held the office of the IUS president and nominated its candidates for the position. The IUS president, just as the whole Secretariat, was supposed to work for the organization, but in reality, he also at least partly answered to the union that nominated him and that could revoke him. The IUS presidents thus wrote regular reports to the Central Committee of the SSM, of which they were also members. Through this relationship, the SSM could influence the direction of the IUS and solidify the position of the Czechoslovak and generally communist students. In the 1970s, for example, President Dušan Ulčák informed the SSM about the continuing expansion in membership in the IUS. However, he also

¹¹⁹ Pelikán to unnamed comrade, undated, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 3; Francesco Caccamo, *Jiří Pelikán a jeho cesta socialismem 20. století* (Brno: Doplněk, 2008), 21–2.

¹²⁰ Karel Lánský, 'Naše jugoslávská skupina' in *Jiří Pelikán 1923–1999*, 24.

¹²¹ Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

warned that the unions that were formerly members of the dissolved ISC could shift the nature of the organization and suggested careful manoeuvring to maintain the decisive influence of communist unions in the Secretariat.¹²²

Other Eastern Europeans were also in close contact with – or even under tight control by – their home organizations. The Hungarians Károly György and László Labody claimed that out of the European socialist countries, the Hungarian organization was the only one that did not have to have its nominee for the Secretariat approved by the party organ. In their words, they could consult what position to pursue in the Secretariat but did not have to. They, too, however, as György continued, had to answer for their actions to their home organization. One time, György said, he was summoned to Budapest and received a good talking-to – he even had to leave his vacation in Bulgaria prematurely to get there. The reason for this, as György recalled, was that he made a joke at a public event, asking where they got the oranges for the refreshments when he could not buy potatoes in Prague for five weeks. A person who did not appreciate the joke was President Miroslav Štěpán, who complained about György to the Central Committee of the CPSU, which forwarded the complaint to Budapest.¹²³

The Eastern Europeans could have represented their states more or less than their student unions, but that did not mean that the IUS Secretariat's agenda was dictated. Even if the delegates from state socialist countries were entirely subservient to their states and parties, negotiation would still occur at the level of the Secretariat. As shown earlier, different delegates had different preferences and priorities, and as long as they did not directly contradict one another, they could coexist. The IUS would thus not adopt any position that would go against its host or the Soviet Union, but there was discussion on which topics to prioritize. Nevertheless, the relations and discussions in the Secretariat and with member organizations were often informal and are therefore difficult to reconstruct or corroborate from existing archival sources.

For Czechoslovakia as the host country, it was rather prestigious to be the home to the IUS and several other organizations. The fact that the Czechoslovak capital was an international city was used in the country's cultural diplomacy, especially towards the countries of the Global South. Czechoslovakia was promoting an image of itself as a modern country with a rich history and culture, as well as an advanced economy and political system. It used the anti-fascist tropes from its history to build a connection with the postcolonial countries, drawing parallels between imperialism and fascism – such as the burning of the village Lidice or the tradition of International Students' Day. The presence of 'progressive', anti-colonial international organizations in Prague

¹²² Informativní zpráva o činnosti a situaci v MSS po X. kongresu, 19 January 1973, NAČR, f. NAD 356 Socialistický svaz mládeže – ústřední výbor, inv. č. 276, ka 27; Informace o činnosti MSS po X. Světovém festivalu mládeže a studentstva a některých problémech MSS a mezinárodního studentského hnutí, 19 October 1973, NAČR, f. NAD 356 Socialistický svaz mládeže – ústřední výbor, inv. č. 276, ka 31. I thank Klára Řiháková for providing me with these reports.

¹²³ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

helped advance this image and was used by Czechoslovak propagational magazines aimed at the readership in the Global South.¹²⁴

Another way how the Czechoslovaks could benefit from hosting the IUS was that they could impress the international delegates, members of the Secretariat, and guests to the IUS events. In the case of student leaders being sent to Prague, it was assumed that they might later end up in important positions in their governments or state administration. It was therefore preferable that they leave Czechoslovakia with good memories of the country. In the report of Jiří Pelikán to Czechoslovak authorities after the Beijing Congress in 1958, the IUS president stressed the necessity of 'political care' that must be given to the delegates. Pelikán saw it as important to show them the construction of socialism in Czechoslovakia, because 'many of the IUS officials will become important informers of the life in the ČSR after the return to their countries'. He further suggested organizations of discussions, visits to schools, factories and cooperatives, as well as taking the delegates to see Czechoslovak movies or other cultural and political events. Similarly, Pelikán reported that many foreign guests were visiting the IUS headquarters in Prague; he was convinced that they should be used for the good of Czechoslovak citizens and Czechoslovak cultural diplomacy. He complained that the ČSM was passive, suggesting it should take care of the guests in Czechoslovakia, as the IUS did not have the capacity to do so.¹²⁵

Another important aspect of the relationship between the IUS and the Czechoslovak or Soviet state was the issue of secret services. In the post-Cold War debate on Prague-based international organizations, it was wildly speculated that the IUS served as a hub or even a training centre for spies and that the IUS networks served as covers for clandestine operations or even arms sales. The archival evidence does not support this view. The IUS delegates were also monitored since the StB was very influential in the Czechoslovak regime and tried to control or at least observe the movement of foreign nationals in the country. According to Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, there was a person in the StB who was responsible for the IUS but I could not find the records in the Security Service Archive.¹²⁶ During the forty years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, with thousands of people circulating within the IUS networks, there were surely various entanglements with secret services and their clandestine operations.

The opinion that the IUS network served as a cover for the training of anti-colonial fighters gained popularity already during the Cold War. Pelikán complained about disinformation campaigns, stating that an 'institute for the training of diversants hides in the IUS headquarters. There were even such examples that the General Secretary of the UPC (Union Populaire de Cameroun), recently murdered by French colonialists, was found dead with IUS instructions with him'. In Ecuador, he continued,

¹²⁴ Jaroslav Janča, 'Czechoslovakia in International Organizations', *Solidarity* 9, no. 3 (1970): 13–15, see also Mikuláš Pešta, 'Polozapomenutý listopad: Mezinárodní den studentstva a jeho překrývaná paměť', *Paměť a dějiny* 15, no. 3 (2021): 90–100.

¹²⁵ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹²⁶ Interview of Petr Zídek with Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, 31 August 2005, Prague. I thank Petr Zídek for providing me with this interview.

the IUS supposedly gave out instructions for strikes to students via the Czechoslovak embassy.¹²⁷

It is impossible to assess what was the role of the KGB in the IUS, given the inaccessibility of the archives. During late Stalinism and the coldest period of the Cold War, the secret services were probably very active in the youth and student movement. Alexander Shelepin was in the Secretariat of both the IUS and the WFDY, as well as the first secretary of Komsomol, from whence his path led him straight to the top of the KGB – suggesting he certainly had previous involvement with the agency. Shelepin's successor Vladimir Semichastny, as the head of the KGB, also previously held the highest position in the Komsomol.¹²⁸ We can guess that probably at least some of the Soviet delegates reported to the security services. In the case of the Czechoslovak StB, we have more concrete information. An operation has been described by Czech historian Prokop Tomek who found out that the StB used the IUS network and credibility to kidnap a person from the West, even with the assistance of President Jiří Pelikán. A West German student Dieter Koniecki, who was allegedly recruiting Czechoslovak students for cooperation with West German intelligence, was lured to East Berlin to meet with an IUS official – instead, he was arrested, transferred to Czechoslovakia, charged with espionage, and sentenced to ten years in prison. Prokop Tomek insisted that Pelikán knew well that the invitation was a cover for the arrest, even though he surely believed he was helping protect state interests.¹²⁹

Two of the later IUS presidents, Zbyněk Vokrouhlický and Dušan Ulčák, had previously cooperated with the StB. Vokrouhlický was approached by the secret services which wanted to use his international connections in his position as a journalist as a cover. In 1956, they wanted to use his address to send letters from informants abroad, with which Vokrouhlický agreed.¹³⁰ His successor Ulčák also signed cooperation with the StB. As a frequent traveller to the UK, he was tasked with operative missions under the codename Uxa already in 1961.¹³¹ He was paid for his service and evaluated as a strenuous agent; there were even talks to send him on a long-term mission abroad.¹³² This ultimately did not happen, for Ulčák got a different job – he became the president of the IUS. However, neither in the case of Ulčák nor Vokrouhlický, there is no record or evidence of their cooperation during their time in office as presidents of the IUS.

¹²⁷ Zpráva o situaci v MSS po V. kongresu, Archivio della camera dei deputati, f. Jiří Pelikán, serie 1, fasc. 5.

¹²⁸ Robert Hornsby, 'The Post-Stalin Komsomol and the Soviet Fight for Third World Youth', *Cold War History* 16, no. 1 (2016): 83–100.

¹²⁹ Prokop Tomek, *Život a doba ministra Rudolfa Baráka* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2009), 48–51.

¹³⁰ Záznam o získání krycí identity 'Havel', 14 March 1956, ABS, f. Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB, reg. č. 41394 I. S* (arch. č. AS-11583 I. S).

¹³¹ UXA – Vyhodnocení dosavadního styku, 25 June 1965, ABS, f. Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB – svazky (I. S – svazky): reg. č. 44199 I. S* (arch. č. AS-12158 I. S).

¹³² Záznam o schůzce, 21 October 1968. ABS, f. Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB, reg. č. 44199 I. S* (arch. č. AS-12158 I. S).

Human intelligence – recruiting people as informants or agents – was an important instrument for the StB.¹³³ In the case of the delegates of international organizations, however, it seems that while they were active in international organizations, the StB did not try to recruit them – this became an option only after they were done. One of them was Ahmed Mahi, a representative of Algeria. He was recruited to cooperate with Czechoslovak services after he left the IUS, but not when he was in office.¹³⁴

The foreign delegates remembered the involvement of the secret services differently. The Irishman Brendan Glynn was convinced that they were not followed – perhaps bugged at best.¹³⁵ Hungarians György and Labody, on the other hand, were sure the secret services were present, tapping their phones and going through the documents. György even said that he ‘went with the Soviet representative to Helsinki and in the student home, he told me, I will show you how to find the pipe, disassembled the telephone, and there was nothing. Then I went home to Prague, I disassembled mine, and I found it.’ When he removed it, he continued, he was subsequently asked by President Miroslav Štěpán not to do it again, as it gives extra work to the boys from secret services.¹³⁶ One generation earlier, Jiří Pelikán also mentioned that he was wiretapped, as he was ordered to break contact with a French woman who worked for the World Peace Council and with whom he only spoke privately.¹³⁷ Many IUS officials have their files in the Security Service Archive in the Czech Republic. In most cases, there is nothing in the file – only a profile and a statement that the file was started as a part of the ‘counterintelligence protection’ of the IUS.¹³⁸ In the case of the Indian Pallab Sengupta, however, the file also included notes that he complained about the overrepresentation of socialist countries in the Secretariat during a meeting or demanded information about censorship in Czechoslovakia during a visit of the *Rudé právo*’s editor-in-chief to the IUS headquarters.¹³⁹ This shows that the StB indeed monitored the IUS meetings closely. In addition, it must be noted that many files have already been shredded, so we cannot know what they contained.¹⁴⁰

Another interesting point could be to explore whether the incoming delegates to IUS congresses and conventions, or even the Secretariat members, were agents or informers of other states’ intelligence services, for example, from China, the United States, France or Israel. It is reasonable to expect that such cases did occur, and these or other forces wanted to influence or at least remain informed of the development of the student movement. There was also a rumour that a Namibian delegate was a spy for

¹³³ Petr Kaňák and Jan Koura, ‘In the Shadow of the KGB: Legacy of Czechoslovak Intelligence (1948–1989)’, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 37, no. 2 (2024): 450–81.

¹³⁴ ABS, f. Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB, reg. č. 47228 I. S*, (arch. č. A 2288 I. S.).

¹³⁵ Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague.

¹³⁶ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

¹³⁷ Pelikán, *S’ils me tuent*, 100–101.

¹³⁸ For example files of José Castillo, Jerzy Kozminski, or Victor Paredes. ABS, Sb. Svazky kontrarozvědného zpracování, arch. č. KR-849586 MV, KR-849920 MV, and KR-850142 MV.

¹³⁹ ABS, Sb. Svazky kontrarozvědného zpracování, arch. č. KR-850319 MV.

¹⁴⁰ For example files of Félix Andriantsoavina, Pius Dakora, Josef Skála, Vesselin Valchev, Ahmed Al Wahishi, Andreas Herger, Jesus Beaton Martinez, Sergiusz Najar, Faysal Mekdad, Hermann Burkhard, Georgios Michaelides, Abebe Hankore, or Franklin Santibañez.

South Africa.¹⁴¹ However, to map these operations would require a completely different approach, which is far beyond the scope of this book.

The IUS had its international relations with sovereign states. In the headquarters, the Secretariat welcomed visitors – not only student representatives but also politicians, including heads of state. Similarly, the Secretariat members frequently went abroad, including visits to parliaments and presidential palaces. Aside from the politics, one of the tools to foster these relations was the awards that the IUS gave out, most notably the Golden Medal of 17th November. The Secretariat gave the medal especially to the political leaders of the Global South, preferably with a history in the student movement, such as Yasser Arafat or Fidel Castro, or with particular credit in the struggle for human rights or in the promotion of peace, such as Nelson Mandela or Oscar Arias. Further recipients were student martyrs and leaders from the Global South, entire unions and collectives, and also the sister INGOs in the transnational socialist network. The most controversial but perhaps politically most important category of recipients was communist politicians from Eastern Europe. Among the awardees were, for example, Leonid Brezhnev, Todor Zhivkov, Nicolae Ceaușescu, or the Czechoslovaks Lubomír Štrougal and Gustáv Husák. These people had no or very loose relationships with the student movement and were only decorated for political purposes. Sergei Chelnokov, the Soviet representative in the Secretariat, admitted that the medal was a political tool, as it opened doors to them, so they gave it when necessary. But as he stressed, it was no different from how other INGOs use their awards.¹⁴² The European socialist countries were providing the money, so it made sense to court their top politicians, even though not all Secretariat members agreed with this practice.

The good relationship with the host country paid off. At the beginning of the 1970s, the IUS was to move its headquarters to another building. The old seat of the Secretariat was increasingly unsuitable for the ever-expanding organization. Planning a new building started in the late 1960s during the Presidency of Zbyněk Vokrouhlický. The space in which the new headquarters was to be built was a prestigious one – in Prague's Old Town, the former Jewish quarter at the banks of the Vltava. The team led by the renowned architect Stanislav Hubička designed an elegant and architectonically innovative seven-storey building that 'to a certain extent comes back to the ethos of the pre-war avant-garde but at the same time, with its plastical and articulate conception, is close to international brutalism'.¹⁴³ The interior decorations were designed by renowned Czech artists such as Eva Kmentová and Olbram Zoubek. The modern new building offered a comfortable workspace and a highly representative venue to impress international guests. It contained a restaurant and a bar, offices, conference rooms and even a cinema theatre.

Not everybody in the IUS had good relations with the state. Many Czechoslovak staff were expelled from the KSČ during the post-1968 purges or had an otherwise peculiar position. As remembered by one Czechoslovak employee, the political profile was not important for Miloš Jakeš Jr. The Czech journalist Zdeněk Velíšek worked

¹⁴¹ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

¹⁴² Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

¹⁴³ Klára Brůhová, 'Mezinárodní svaz studentstva', *Dějiny a současnost* 9 (2018): 28–9.

there as an interpreter after he had to leave the Czechoslovak Television for political reasons; after 1989, he became a prominent reporter again.¹⁴⁴ Another interpreter was Martin Povejšil, who served in Czech diplomacy after 1989.¹⁴⁵ Jan Vitek worked as an economist; in the 1980s, when the IUS brought in the first copying machines, he used them to copy the illegal samizdat publications on them – without the management's knowledge, of course.¹⁴⁶

Another interesting aspect of the relationship between the IUS and the host state was the legal framework under which the INGO stayed in Prague. From the foundation, the IUS was legally based on a governmental directive issued on 10 February 1939, saying that in an extraordinary case, when a body does not fit any other box, it can be recognized as a special assembly and function as such.¹⁴⁷ After the German occupation of the rest of the Czech lands and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the directive was used to make the operation of German companies easier in the Protectorate.¹⁴⁸ After the war, it was used as a provisional arrangement for international organizations until a new law was introduced – but that never happened, so for a long time, there was an ironic situation when the left-wing international organizations were organized according to a directive used by the Nazis. The Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior acknowledged the IUS's status on 12 March 1952. Based on the 1939 directive, it was decided that the IUS was not legally a volunteer social organization but an international organization with the character of a special assembly.¹⁴⁹ In the 1970s, a new law was discussed – in the original proposal, the international organizations in Czechoslovakia were supposed to be organized by the Ministry of the Interior. According to the IUS lawyer Josef Vochozka, the law was so badly prepared that he was delegated to take part in its reformulation.¹⁵⁰ The final rearrangement of the legal status came with the law on conditions of functioning of 'organizations with an international element' in the Czechoslovak socialist republic, passed in 1985.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ 13. Komnata Zdeňka Velíška, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1186000189-13-komnata/216562210800013/> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview Prague – Santiago.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Jan Vitek for the Paměť národa project, available at: <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs/vitek-jan-1948> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹⁴⁷ 30/1939 Sb. I Vládní nařízení o tvoření zvláštních sdružení, nepodléhajících zvláštním předpisům o sdružování, a o dozoru na ně <https://www.aspi.cz/opispdf/opispdf/1939.html> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Josef Vochozka, 23 October 2023, Prague.

¹⁴⁹ Federální ministerstvo vnitra, Mezinárodní svaz studentsva – úprava činnosti – sdělení, 31 March 1979, NÁČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06-2019, Stanovy, org. struktura, prohlášení MSS, korespondence.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Josef Vochozka, 23 October 2023, Prague.

¹⁵¹ *Zákon o podmínkách činnosti organizací s mezinárodním prvkem v Československé socialistické republice. Zákon č. 116/1985 Sb.* <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1985-116> [cit. 15 May 2025].



Figure 11 Vietnamese and Bulgarian students in conversation at the 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students in Sofia. *Source:* Alamy.



Figure 12 Protesters against the Vietnam War at the 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students in Sofia. *Source: Alamy.*



Figure 13 The IUS General Secretary Fathi El Fadl (in the middle) with Czechoslovak cosmonaut Vladimír Remek (right) and Cuban hosts at the 1978 World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana. *Source:* NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 14 IUS poster for the campaign 'Education: a right, not a privilege'. Source: NAČR, col. MSS.

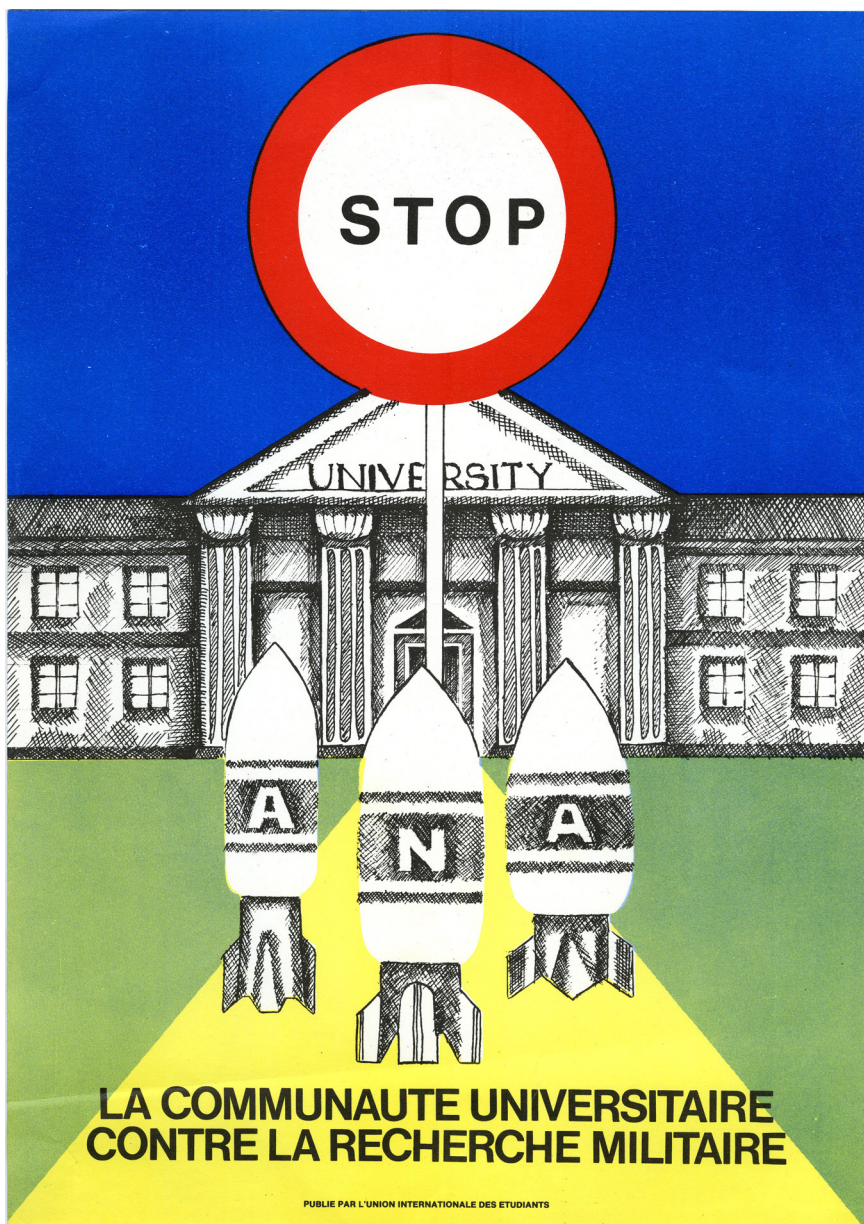


Figure 15 IUS poster for a disarmament campaign. *Source:* NAČR, col. MSS.



Figure 16 The new IUS building, 1974. *Source:* Courtesy of Radan Hubička and Radim Hubička.



Figure 17 The IUS delegation led by Frieder Bubl bringing support to SWAPO camps in South Angola, including scholarships, 1979. *Source:* Courtesy of Frieder Bubl.



Figure 18 Josef Skála speaking at the celebration of the IUS 40th anniversary in 1986. *Source:* ČTK.



Figure 19 Josef Skála awards the Medal of 17th November to Miloš Jakeš, 1989.
Source: ČTK.

Crises and reforms

In many aspects, the 1980s were a period of transition. The global economic crisis of the 1970s induced changes that transformed the world altogether. One by one, Western countries abandoned the decades-long dominance of Keynesianism and turned to neoliberal policies. The oil crisis heavily burdened the South and many countries slowly started adopting neoliberal recipes to secure loans, implementing the structural adjustment programmes recommended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These structural changes opened their markets but complicated development policies, which led development scholars to speak about a 'lost decade'.¹ In the socialist world, the necessity of adaptation was also strongly felt. China started reforms already in 1979.² The political side of the détente was put on hold after the Soviet intervention on behalf of the Afghani revolution, but in economic terms, the convergence went on. Eastern European socialist countries started to turn to the West in search of loans and scouted for options to enter the capitalist financial structures.³ In the Soviet Union, the urge for something to be done manifested in the election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the position of general secretary of the CPSU in 1985. Soon, his policy which became known as the perestroika started radically reforming the Soviet economy. Subsequently, the reforms triggered changes that eventually led to the dissolution of communist dominion in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War.⁴

In the student world, the processes of massification and individualization of education also continued. Neoliberal policies affected the functioning of universities as well; Walter Rüegg spoke of the fall of the university ivory towers and the spread of an entrepreneurial form of management at European universities.⁵ At the same time, the regional integration processes continued – in particular in Western Europe. In the late 1980s, European integration on the governmental level also induced cooperation at the

¹ Artemy Kalinovsky, 'Sorting out the Recent Historiography of Development Assistance: Consolidation and New Directions in the Field', *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, no. 1 (2021): 227–39; Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 160–8; Jakob Marcks, 'Urban Development in the Global Cold War East Germany in UN-HABITAT, 1976–1989' (PhD Diss., Univerzita Karlova, Praha, 2024), 31–4.

² Jeremy Brown, *June Fourth: The Tiananmen Protests and Beijing Massacre of 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 3–36.

³ Mark, Jacob, Rupprecht and Spaskovska, 1989, 25–72.

⁴ See, for example, Archie Brown, *Seven Years That Changed The World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Walter Rüegg, 'Themes', in *A History of the University in Europe, Volume IV*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–30.

university level and harmonization of educational systems. This led to the creation of a mobility programme that became known as Erasmus; a huge success of the programme announced a new form of student internationalism for the post-Cold War era.

The IUS in the changing world

Like the world in the late Cold War, the International Union of Students was also changing. In the second half of the 1980s, it was undergoing significant changes. Already in 1984, the Secretariat was reformed; the departments were reorganized and more stress was put on the regional commissions (for Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia).⁶ 1985 was an important year not only because of Gorbachev's ascent but also it was the International Youth Year at the UN. In this framework, the IUS could cooperate with governments that offered programmes and took part in its initiatives. Furthermore, the World Festival of Youth and Students was held in Moscow that year, signalling the advent of a new era.

This new era meant a reform of the IUS. Károly György said in an interview that he was already about to leave the IUS in 1986 but the ongoing changes and the perestroika made him stay – 'the debates became much livelier,' he said.⁷ The discussions that brought the IUS towards democratization and inclusiveness started already in 1986.⁸ The shift towards openness and inclusiveness then continued at the IUS Congress in Havana in 1987. The process then culminated in Nicosia at the Executive Committee meeting in 1989 where the transformation of the IUS towards a non-partisan, pluralistic, independent and self-sufficient INGO was outlined.⁹

The 1987 Congress in Cuba had a wide attendance. Even US students took part in it – members of the Young Democrats of America, the official youth organization of the Democratic Party – a fact that, according to Josef Skála, surprised the comandante Fidel Castro himself.¹⁰ The Cubans were so nervous about the upcoming Congress that Skála had to go there every six weeks for a year and a half as a part of the vetting process. In Moscow, as per Skála's words, he was warned not to cause any troubles with Castro that they would then have to fix. Castro did not attend the opening ceremony which left the IUS leadership bitter but then showed up at the final celebration along with Gabriel García Márquez, admitting he had doubts about the event.¹¹

The change of times was also underlined by the personal exchange at the top of the IUS. President Miroslav Štěpán, in the position since 1977, was replaced by Josef Skála.

⁶ Final Paper on the Structure of the IUS Secretariat, 14 May 1984, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21796.

⁷ Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

⁸ Interview with Vesselin Valchev, 26 May 2023, online interview.

⁹ 1st Draft Paper with the General Scheme/Schedule of Preparations for the Meeting of the IUS EC and other activities in Nicosia, 23 January 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹⁰ 15th Congress – Havana 87. Draft list of participants. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 449/06186; Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

¹¹ Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

Štěpán was not a very popular figure; the IUS Secretariat members who served under him and were interviewed for this book mostly recalled that he was an apparatchik, concerned with his political career more than with the fate of the student movement. He was smoking Cuban cigars and always wearing a black suit, making him look more like a communist politician and alienating him from the foreign studentship. Michael Geiger from East Germany agreed with this opinion, giving an example from a seminar in Accra which they attended together: 'In the evening took place a meeting with the students but he used the time to go to the Czech embassy and to give there an interview for the newspaper. For him, it was more important that an interview be issued in Prague than to learn something about the real native about the local condition.'¹² The Irish did not remember him very keenly, saying that he 'did not have any opinions of his own' and even that he was 'completely stupid'.¹³ An anonymous East German member of the Secretariat apparently agreed; in a report to the FDJ headquarters, he mockingly provided a four-page-long list of Štěpán's rather inane quotations and ironically commented on his poor English.¹⁴ Not everybody saw him that way, though. Sergei Chelnokov thought that 'he was strong in his peasant way, not because he was knowledgeable about 16 languages and read 50,000 books like Josef [Skála], but in his own way'.¹⁵

As the quote suggests, Josef Skála was a very different kind of man. Already thirty-two years old when he became the president, he had a PhD in history from Charles University. He had international experience from conferences as the delegate of the Czechoslovak youth. He had worked for the Central Committee in the area of the promotion of Czechoslovakia abroad.¹⁶ He was a politician himself – with his education and international experience, he would undoubtedly have a bright future in communist Czechoslovakia, if not for the Velvet Revolution. He styled himself more as a relatable figure; in contrast with Štěpán's fondness for dark suits, Skála claimed he tried to wear jeans and sleep in hostels to stay in contact with the students.¹⁷ The Polish delegate, Sergiusz Najar, thought that Skála was more cultivated than Štěpán but that he was also very much a politician rather than a student leader.¹⁸

The man who occupied the other highest function in the organization – the general secretary – was Georgios Michaelides from Cyprus. He was elected in 1984 and stayed in the position until 1992. While Skála recalled that he set the tone and Michaelides only followed his lead,¹⁹ others remembered that Michaelides was actually the *spiritus agens* of the changes.²⁰ A report elaborated by the East German FDJ concluded that it was General Secretary Georgios Michaelides who pushed the reforms. Michaelides was the prime catalyst of the changes that started at the Havana Congress and culminated

¹² Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

¹³ Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview; Interview with Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague.

¹⁴ Štěpán's quotations, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21796.

¹⁵ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

¹⁶ Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

¹⁹ Josef Skála: Mezinárodní svaz studentsva, a lecture from 20 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YDBCukKejk> [cit. 15 May 2025].

²⁰ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

at the Executive Committee meeting in Nicosia, with the support of the Czechoslovaks, Polish, Bulgarians, Soviets, Ghanaians, Sudanese and Palestinians.²¹ The Chilean representative Franklin Santibañez had the same impression; Michaelides was the moving force with Josef Skála providing backing for him. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the changes in the IUS had the unanimous support of the Secretariat. Many people, Santibañez continued, were against the perestroika – such as the Cubans, the Syrians, the Yemenis and the Koreans.²² The ‘conservative’ wing of the IUS seemed sceptical about the changes. Félix Andriantsoavina from Madagascar blamed Michaelides for the new line which he called ‘social democratic’.²³

Interestingly, also Josef Skála, under whose Presidency the changes in the functioning started taking place, turned out to be no fan of the perestroika. In a 1989 publication on student internationalism and International Students Day, he lauded ‘Gorbachev’s revolution’ and the policies ‘once considered a naïve utopia’.²⁴ In his recent publication, however, he called the process ‘katastroika’ and suggested that the whole thing was deceit orchestrated by the United States to bring the Soviet Union down.²⁵

Regarding its topics and language, the IUS was a very different organization from the one that was established in 1946. When the organization was born after the Second World War, it launched a competition for a new anthem. The winning song, authored by a Soviet composer Vano Muradeli, had the following lyrics:

*Over the World our song is resounding
Pledging our friendship to the world everywhere
Never again shall the bright sun be clouded
Darkened by war threats and despair*

*We who are striving to conquer all nature
Fight for her treasures to build life anew
See that our science to peace is devoted
Youth’s aspirations at last are in view.*

*Can we forget those in battle who perished?
Out of the struggle our friendship has flowered,
Students, defend all the hopes that we cherished,
We’ll be triumphant and the war overpowered.*

²¹ Analyse zur gegenwärtigen Entwicklung des Internationalen Studentenbundes sowie mögliche Schlußfolgerungen für die Freie Deutsche Jugend, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/22401;

²² Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

²³ Interview with Félix Andriantsoavina, 10 June 2021, Dresden.

²⁴ Josef Skála, The IUS: At Work and in Change, in *International Students’ Day. 17 November 1939 and Students Today*, ed. Jan Hrubý, Jana Ertlová and Josef Skála (Prague: Orbis, 1989), 35–53.

²⁵ Gorbačov Josef Skála, ‘Katastrojka’ a tunelářský převrat, in *Převrat II. Události 17. listopadu dnešními očima*, ed. Olin Jurman (Praha: Česká citadela, 2021), 43–61.

Chorus:

*Students unite, peace is our right,
Atomic bombs cannot weaken our fight.
Firm is our stand, war shall be banned,
Beacons of freedom ablazed in each land.
Students unite, on with the fight,
Forward to peace and to happiness.*²⁶

In 1986, even though the anthem was still used as the IUS symbol, the lyrics must have sounded very distant. The claim that students were ‘striving to conquer all nature’ and ‘fight for her treasures to build life anew’ fit in the post-war socialist vision of remodelling nature to human needs²⁷ sounds quite obsolete in the decade when the organization turned to the promotion of environmentalism and the protection of nature. In 1988, the Secretariat issued a statement protesting against the industrialized countries dumping toxic nuclear waste in the Global South and subscribing to the idea of sustainable development.²⁸ In its magazine *Student Life*, the IUS published an article advocating for vegetarianism, offering support in the decision to become a vegetarian and giving advice on how to change dietary habits.²⁹ This shift followed a general trend of international politics within the UN and UNESCO, which contributed to the INGOs turning to environmental politics in the 1980s.³⁰ In the same issue of *Student Life*, the magazine published a profile of Pink Floyd, a band whose anti-systemic drive, embodied in the cry ‘*We don’t need no education!*’ ironically contrasts with the IUS policies.³¹

The changes were not limited to cultural topics only, though. The effort that was pronounced by Mikhail Gorbachev after his ascent to the USSR’s highest position to reduce tensions and military expenses was also reflected in the IUS. In October 1985, the Secretariat stated support of Gorbachev’s proposal for an international ban on space weapons and simultaneous reduction in the US and Soviet nuclear missiles.³² The calls for disarmament were coming from all over the world. In January 1985, even before Gorbachev’s election, heads of state of six countries met in India and issued a Delhi Declaration – the leaders included Rajiv Gandhi of India, Raul Alfonsín of Argentina, Andreas Papandréou of Greece, Miguel de la Madrid of Mexico, Olof Palme of Sweden and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. The Declaration promoted peace and disarmament and warned against nuclear war, especially against the militarization of outer space. It simultaneously asked for more international cooperation, invoking the

²⁶ On the 40th Anniversary of the IUS, in *World Student News* 40, no. 4 (1986), 23.

²⁷ Doubravka Olšáková and Jiří Janáč, *Kult jednoty. Stalinský plán přetvoření přírody v Československu 1948–1964* (Praha: Academia, 2018).

²⁸ Statement on waste dumping, 12 June 1988, SBA, Declarations des IUS, Dossier J2.216#1994/187#268.

²⁹ Do you need support in your decision to become a vegetarian? *Student Life* 2 (1990), 18–19.

³⁰ Laqua, *Activism across Borders*, 301–5.

³¹ Pink Floyd, *Student Life* 2 (1990), 14.

³² Statement on the recent proposals of the Soviet Union, 30 October 1985, SBA, Declarations des IUS, J2.216#1994/187#268.

post-war spirit of the establishment of the UN: 'Forty years ago, in Hiroshima and San Francisco, the horror of nuclear war was matched by the hope for peace.'³³ The IUS, which was at the time developing a worldwide campaign called Students for Peace, against Nuclear War, vigorously supported the Declaration and the initiatives that stemmed from it.³⁴ And the Secretariat continued in their activities to ban nuclear tests even after the Reykjavík meeting that started the superpowers' talk on nuclear arms control.³⁵

In the developmental field, the IUS was also responding to the rising popularity of neoliberal economic recipes, later labelled as the Washington Consensus. In 1985, the Secretariat sent a letter to the member organizations asking them to engage in an international campaign titled 'Students against the imperialist policy on debts' with the goals of mobilizing the student movement to support the debt cancellation policy, to denounce the International Monetary Fund, to show how the IMF-pursued measures have negative effects on education in the Global South, and stress the necessity of the New International Economic Order.³⁶ Fighting against neocolonialism and colonial remnants was also still an important topic. After the decolonization of Zimbabwe, the focus remained on the continuing and intensifying struggle against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia. As the Senegalese delegate Mohamed Fall recalled, apartheid was especially an important topic for Africans in the IUS.³⁷ The support was practical, such as with the literacy campaigns in the ANC camps and but also symbolic – the IUS media covered the topic systematically and Nelson Mandela received the 17th November Medal in 1983.³⁸

One of the features of the changes in the IUS was the growing openness of the discussions and agenda. Josef Skála proudly stressed that he managed to get also the conservatives to the table and find common ground with the 'Thatcherites'. He mentioned that a good example of the opening up was a brigade to harvest coffee in Nicaragua: 'It attracted the participation of not just the traditional friends of the Sandinistas, but student unions of Western Europe and other countries which left the IUS years ago. (...) The banner of the brigade was carried by an activist of one of the West European conservative parties.'³⁹ Again, the IUS representatives travelled to the United States to visit campuses, discuss with students and attend lectures. Sergei Chelnokov recalled that during the tour, he had to often answer questions about Afghanistan, but the US students were open to discussion.⁴⁰ The opening up even led to the re-establishment of contacts with China. An IUS delegation went to China in 1987,

³³ The Delhi Declaration, SBA, IUS – Korrespondenz, J2.216#1994/187#259.

³⁴ Letter from the Secretariat to member organizations, 25 February 1985, SBA, IUS – Korrespondenz, J2.216#1994/187#259; Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

³⁵ Urgent call of the IUS Secretariat for immediate action on a nuclear test ban, December 1986, SBA, IUS – Korrespondenz, J2.216#1994/187#259.

³⁶ The IUS Secretariat to member organizations, July 1985, SBA, Declarations des IUS, J2.216#1994/187#268.

³⁷ Interview with Mohammed Fall, 19 April 2021, online interview.

³⁸ IUS Awards the 17th November Medal to Nelson Mandela, *African Bulletin* 10 (1983), 1.

³⁹ Skála, 'The IUS: At Work and in Change', 35–53.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

after years of silence and mutual competition. One member of the Chinese delegation was Xi Jinping who would later become the president of China.⁴¹

The IUS Secretariat was also observing the development of the student movement in Poland, where social changes were already underway in the spring of 1989. In the field of students, it most notably meant the re-establishment of the Independent Student Association (*Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów*, NZS), dissolved in 1981 after the implementation of martial law, as well as several Catholic student organizations. The situation was reported on with sympathy, even though the report's author was a Polish delegate, Sergiusz Najar, so the sympathetic approach is understandable.⁴² As for the situation in Czechoslovakia, Lubomír Ledl, a functionary of the SSM and, after 1989, a member of parliament, claimed that the IUS Secretariat, together with the Council of European Young Christian Democrats, petitioned for the release of the most renowned Czech dissident, Václav Havel, already in March 1989.⁴³ The archival research, however, did not provide evidence for this claim. The general secretary, Georgios Michaelides, recalled that they pleaded for Havel but only at informal meetings with Czechoslovak state or party representatives.⁴⁴

Business as usual

The changes in the IUS manifested also in the rapid increase of economic activities. The IUS always had its business; from the publication of the *World Student News* to the sales of the International Student Identity Cards, the IUS had always tried to bring the money to the budget this way. In the 1970s, the IUS started operating the hotel Juventus in Prague's quarter of Vinohrady, leasing it from the Czechoslovak SSM. It served primarily to accommodate the IUS guests; its capacity, however, was small and did not suffice for big IUS-hosted gatherings. On the other hand, most of the time in between events, it could generate income. It was administered by one of the IUS 'specialized service bodies', the International Student Travel Bureau (ISTB). For the guests of the IUS events as well as for the student tourists, the IUS could also use other of the numerous SSM facilities. They could have also been used as temporary accommodation for the Secretariat members or, such as the hotels in the Tatra mountains in Slovakia, for recreation.⁴⁵

The ISTB was originally designed to induce student mobility and tourism, offering cheap tours, accommodation or work camps for international students. Over time, however, its services stopped being exclusive to students only, and it started

⁴¹ Ibid.; Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

⁴² Information on current developments in the Polish student movement, 4 October 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

⁴³ Minutes of the Session of the Parliament, November 1990, NAČR, f. MSS, box Odnětí sídla 1991–1995.

⁴⁴ Interview with Georgios Michaelides, 22 February 2025, online interview.

⁴⁵ Interview with Josef Komárek, 17 January 2023, Prague.

functioning as a common travel agency. It was aimed mostly at tourists from the West who, according to the ISTB director Josef Komárek, amounted up to 90 per cent of all clients – in particular West Germans. The ISTB only organized tours in Czechoslovakia for incoming foreigners and not the other way around; it also did not offer tours in other countries, even though there were some initiatives to organize multi-country tours, in which the tourists would continue from Czechoslovakia to Poland, the Soviet Union or other states.⁴⁶

But the tourism was only the beginning. In the last decade of the Cold War, the IUS developed a variety of income-generating activities that had only little to do with student affairs. According to interviewees, the IUS business was generally the idea of Miloš Jakeš jr., the influential director of the IUS staff. After leaving the IUS in 1987, he went on to serve in the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), where he launched similar activities. Only bigger. According to Michal Benda, the director of the Juventus hotel, Jakeš told him: 'We must play it right, before Štrougal notices.'⁴⁷ And play it right, they did. At the end of the 1980s, the IOJ was running several hotels and restaurants, importing computer software and hardware, and interpreting technology. The IOJ was also investing in real estate, owning or renting up to seventy properties in Prague alone at the end of the Cold War. Kaarle Nordenstreng, the last IOJ president in the Cold War era, said that the IOJ had been 'an island of capitalism in the sea of socialism'.⁴⁸

Before he left, Jakeš helped increase the wealth of the IUS. Despite his sassy remark, the business of the two international organizations was not happening without the knowledge or consent of the Czechoslovak authorities. The boss of the ISTB, Josef Komárek, mentioned that regarding the IUS's business activities, there must have been consent from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. As per his words, decisions were approved by the Secretariat, then taken to the Central Committee of the KSČ, and then to the Czechoslovak government.⁴⁹ Despite these words, the interviewed members of the Secretariat did not recall discussing the IUS business at the Secretariat meetings; in fact, only a few recalled that there were any business activities at all, but remembered that these activities were firmly in the hands of Miloš Jakeš, Jr.⁵⁰ In a way, the IUS Secretariat had conflicting agendas in the late 1980s – the work of the elected delegates who tried to bring the organization in closer contact with the student problems, and the business, operated by the local staff, went in the opposite direction.

What was this business actually about? The most profitable enterprise was the import. No doubt thanks to Jakeš's entrepreneurial spirit and prominent position in the system,

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lubomír Štrougal was a long-time Czechoslovak prime minister. Interview with Michal Benda, 20 September 2023, Prague.

⁴⁸ Kaarle Nordenstreng, 'Lessons from Writing History Including One's Role as Author: The Case of the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ)', conference paper at Prague's International Organizations and the Global Cold War, 3 November 2023, Prague. See also Nordenstreng, *The Rise and Fall*, 155–76.

⁴⁹ Interview with Josef Komárek, 17 January 2023, Prague.

⁵⁰ E.g. Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview; Interview with Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest.

the IUS was licensed to foreign trade. The organization was allowed to import Western goods to Czechoslovakia without customs duties and avoiding complicated bureaucratic procedures. The hotel manager Michal Benda explained the mechanism with a story – when they needed a new espresso machine for the hotel restaurant, he went to an expo in Brno and chose one. Then, Jakeš simply took a car and drove to Austria where he bought it. Benda would have the coffee machine on the next day.⁵¹ Such a speed was unimaginable in state enterprises. Or another story told by Benda – when he needed some promotional material from Pepsi for the hotel, they picked up the telephone and the next bus of West German tourists would bring the ads.⁵²

This way, the IUS could bring equipment, furniture, food and anything difficult to obtain. Thanks to the money from the travel agency, the IUS had enough hard currency to buy stuff in the West. As a consequence, the Czechoslovak IUS staff received American whiskey and cigarettes for Christmas, and also other goods considered luxurious such as nylon tights or cosmetic products.⁵³ The IUS cars were Mercedes or Volkswagen bought in West Germany; having these West German cars, as per Michael Gieger, was sometimes good for representation, but sometimes harmful because they showed the alienation from the grassroots student movement.⁵⁴ Stephen Grogan from Ireland, however, said that the IUS was not extraordinary in this sense – that it was not unusual that student organizations in Western Europe had cars, and ran music venues, bars and travel agencies.⁵⁵ The cars were regularly taken to West Germany for maintenance. These maintenance trips, however, were used for another purpose – the IUS had bank accounts in Germany and Jakeš used the opportunity to deposit or withdraw cash.⁵⁶

But the true treasure lay elsewhere still. In April 1989, the extent of ‘foreign trade activities’ was still further amplified. Permission was issued by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade to provide tourist services in Czechoslovakia and abroad, to import personal computers with memory units and the necessary equipment, to sell and export its merchandise, and to provide ad space in its publications. The IUS was also to take care of the maintenance of the imported products.⁵⁷

The most significant import goods were computers, chips and computing technology. In the late 1980s, the information revolution was already underway and computers had become a demanded article in offices, at universities and in schools.⁵⁸ Thanks to its connections and business activities, the IUS soon had one of the best-equipped offices in Prague. There were personal computers in the offices, even interconnected in an intra-organizational network, and there were printers and copying machines.

⁵¹ Interview with Michal Benda, 20 September 2023, Prague.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

⁵⁵ Interview with Stephen Grogan, 1 November 2023, online interview.

⁵⁶ Interview with Michal Benda, 20 September 2023, Prague.

⁵⁷ Povolení k zahraničně obchodní činnosti, 26 April 1989, NAČR, f. Mezinárodní svaz studentstva, k. 1499/06-2019.

⁵⁸ Check Carmen Flury and Michael Geiss, ‘Computers in Europe’s classrooms: An Introduction’, in *How Computers Entered the Classroom, 1960–2000*, ed. Carmen Flury and Michael Geiss (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 1–12.

And the IUS did not just equip its offices – the demand was far bigger. In Czechoslovakia, many wanted to use the IUS connection to the West to get computers easily. For many Czechoslovak companies, even if they were licensed for foreign trade, buying technology from the West was difficult because they did not have reserves in hard currency. Others were not licensed but had hard currency, such as hotels, and yet others had neither. With the easy way to the West and hard currency reserves from the tourism business, the IUS could provide a full service. So, for example, the IUS could buy a computer for a hotel's reservation system and get either paid in hard currency or reimbursed by some accommodation capacity for the IUS's next event in return; it was mutually beneficial.⁵⁹

The new emphasis on economic activities was to some extent the work of entrepreneurial individuals who made the business happen through their connections, influence and industriousness. That is surely the reason why the IUS and the IOJ replenished their wealth in the last years of the Cold War, while other INGOs faced an economic crisis and had to resort to budgetary cuts.⁶⁰ But at the same time, we can see the economization of the INGOs' functioning as a symptom of the era – what is sometimes called a 'long transition' from socialism to capitalism. This long transition manifested in many ways but one of them was the gradual adoption of managerial and individualistic thinking in companies in socialist countries.⁶¹ This could have been observed in experiments that the Czechoslovak socialist government allowed to take place – such as the hugely successful agricultural cooperative Slušovice which was given autonomy and could run a profit-oriented business.⁶²

Maybe it is no accident that the IUS became involved in a business. In the Soviet Union, one of the most visible pioneers of proto-capitalist entrepreneurship was the youth organization, Komsomol. During perestroika, it was decentralized which allowed the local committees to engage in business activities. If we adopt a perspective of the 'long transition', we can also observe how the Komsomol functionaries were among the first who got oriented in post-socialist Russia and other successor states. 'Russia's first aspiring entrepreneurs took great advantage of the special economic privileges enjoyed by the Komsomol committees,' as per Kristiina Silvan.⁶³ Some of these economic activities and networking were then important during the privatizations of

⁵⁹ Interview with Michal Benda, 20 September 2023, Prague.

⁶⁰ For example the journal *World Marxist Review* – see *Poyasmitenunaya zapiska k proektu smery raskhodov i dokhodov redaktsii i izdatelstva PMS na 1988 god.*, 12 January 1988, Rossiyskiy gosudartvenniy arkhiv noveyshey istorii (RGANI), fond 112, Redaktsia zhurnala 'Problemi mira i sotsializma' (1958–1990), 1/48.

⁶¹ Michal Kopeček and Václav Rameš, 'Od socialistické teorie řízení k neoliberalnímu manažerismu', in *Architekti dlouhé změny: Expertní kořeny postsocialismu*, ed. Michal Kopeček (Praha: Argo, 2019), 155–84.

⁶² Vítězslav Sommer, Matěj Spurný and Jaromír Mrňka, *Řídit socialismus jako firmu: Technokratické vládnutí v Československu, 1965–1989* (Praha: NLN a ÚSD, 2019), 131–3.

⁶³ Kristiina Silvan, 'From State to Society The Komsomol in Yeltsin's Russia', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 23, no. 2 (2022): 289–314. See also Steven Lee Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 60–124; Ol'ga Kryshantovskaia, 'Biznes-elita i oligarkhi: Itogi desiatiletiia', *Mir Rossii* 11, no. 4 (2002): 3–60.

state property in the 1990s giving rise to the future post-Soviet Russian oligarchy.⁶⁴ In the Czechoslovak context, one might name Martin Ulčák, the last president of the Central Committee of the SSM and the son of Dušan Ulčák, former president of the IUS and in 1989 the general secretary of the IOJ. After the Velvet Revolution, he became a successful businessman and a billionaire.⁶⁵

The world of international organizations

International organizations, whether inter-governmental or non-governmental, were the natural working partners of the IUS in the international arena. It was such an important part of the IUS's agenda that the Secretariat even set up a specialized body – the Department of Cooperation with International Organizations was one of the nine official sections of the IUS in the 1980s.⁶⁶ The Soviets were elected as the conveners of the department, affirming their interest in international matters.

The closest allies the IUS had were the so-called 'international democratic NGOs', as they called themselves, or the 'closely cooperating NGOs'. These organizations were largely founded after the Second World War and represented various social, gender, professional, religious or pressure groups. These organizations were seated primarily in the East and were largely sponsored by their member organizations from state socialist countries, which is why they were seen as communist fronts in the West. The trajectory of these organizations was in many cases similar to the one of the IUS, even though each of them had its own history and specifics. Established after the Second World War as universal bodies complementing the work of the intergovernmental organizations and addressing problems from their respective field of agenda, they became Stalinized in the late 1940s. With the Thaw and decolonization, they opened up and promoted anti-colonial topics at the international forums. In the 1970s and 1980s, they adopted a more universal language of human and social rights, despite staying on the Eastern side of the Cold War.

The socialist INGOs met about once a year to discuss strategies and priorities, each time the meeting was hosted by one of the organizations. The framework of the cooperation was secured by the World Peace Council, perhaps the most prestigious of the socialist INGOs. In January 1989, the 'closely cooperating NGOs' met in Prague, hosted by the IUS. Thirteen organizations took part besides the host: the World Peace Council, World Federation of Democratic Youth, World Federation of Trade Unions,

⁶⁴ Sergei Zhuk, "The Disco Mafia" and "Komsomol Capitalism" in Soviet Ukraine during Late Socialism", in *Material Culture in Russia and the USSR: Things, Values, Identities*, ed. Graham H. Roberts (London: Routledge, 2016), 173–96.

⁶⁵ Jiří Pšenička, Z komunistického kádra kapitalistickým miliardárem: Martin Ulčák staví na nohy zbytky vítkovického průmyslového impéria. *Hospodářské noviny (iHNed.cz)* <https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-66568620-ulcak-von-witkowitz> [cit. 15 May 2025].

⁶⁶ Final paper on the structure of the IUS Secretariat, 14 May 1984, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21796.

Women's International Democratic Federation, Christian Peace Conference, Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, Berlin Conference of European Catholics, International Organization of Journalists, World Marxist Review, International Student Research Center (an IUS-affiliated organization), Trade Union International – Public employees and International Centre for Trade Union Rights (subsections of the WFTU). Furthermore, seven other organizations were invited but excused themselves from attending: the International Radio and Television Organization, World Federation of Scientific Workers, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Institute for Peace, International Federation of Resistance Fighters, World Federation of Teachers Unions (subsection of the WFTU) and Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁶⁷

The topic of the 1989 gathering in Prague was the 'work with and within the UN system and other intergovernmental bodies'. At the meeting, in particular the WPC and Christian Peace Conference stressed the importance of having a permanent representative at the UN in New York and being active in the UN system. The WPC representative also called for a coordination of efforts of the closely cooperating NGOs, for example, in the form of support for statements and regular meetings of their representatives at the UN. The IUS, while praised by the WPC as one of the organizations that was very active in the international field, said through its representative that the UN was not that important for the IUS's work; it was more useful to focus on the work and cooperation in UNESCO.⁶⁸ This was rather confirmed by the IUS delegate at UNESCO, Sergiusz Najar, who claimed that UNESCO and ECOSOC were priorities while 'New York was too expensive and complicated'.⁶⁹ In further discussions at the 1989 meeting, the INGOs also stressed more topics; the IUS the importance of the upcoming UN International Literacy Year, AAPSO the need to cooperate with the Non-Aligned Movement and the WFTU urged the INGOs to contribute to the implementation of the campaign 'Health for All till 2000'.⁷⁰

As we can see, these INGOs were a cluster in a broad sense. Some cooperated more closely, while others were more on a solo path. Despite the efforts to coordinate activities, they operated in different fields. Still, as was already iterated, they formed a certain transnational network, aiming at an alternative form of globalization and civil society formed by liberal NGOs. The INGOs promoted similar topics outside of their fields (such as peace, anti-fascism and support for the struggle against apartheid). They sent delegates to each other's congresses and events. They awarded each other with their medals. The links between the 'international democratic organizations' can also be demonstrated by the mobility between the individual NGOs. There were cases when

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Report from meeting of the closely cooperating NGOs on work with and within the UN system and other intergovernmental bodies, 6 February 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

⁶⁹ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

⁷⁰ Report from meeting of the closely cooperating NGOs on work with and within the UN system and other intergovernmental bodies, 6 February 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

one person circulated over positions in various organizations. East German Frieder Bubl went from the IUS to the WFDY.⁷¹ The Soviet delegate Alexander Zharikov went from the IUS to the head of the World Federation of Trade Unions; IUS General Secretary Noori Abdel Razzak Hussein from Iraq later became the general secretary of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization in Cairo; the Indian IUS delegate Pallab Sengupta became the general secretary of the World Peace Council in 2022. In particular, those who were under the threat of persecution in their home countries would find refuge in the NGOs; in such cases, the Secretariats could serve as safe havens and provide jobs for those who might struggle to find them elsewhere. It was, for example, the case of the Palestinian Naim Ashhab who served in the Prague-based journal *World Marxist Review* for sixteen years.⁷² His compatriot Mazen Husseini first spent time in the IUS, then moved to Helsinki to the World Peace Council, only to return to Prague to work for the World Federation of Trade Unions and then the IOJ.⁷³ General Secretary Fathi El Fadl, after he finished in the IUS, also continued to engage with the transnational network, finding a job in the International Center for Trade Union Rights.⁷⁴

The easiest cooperation could be with the INGOs that were also seated in Prague – especially the WFTU and the IOJ. But a true sister organization was another one – the World Federation of Democratic Youth with its Secretariat headquarters in Budapest. Contrary to the IUS, the WFDY was profiled more as a partisan federation of communist youth organizations. The problem of the WFDY was that youth organized in a single national organization was a feature of socialist and communist societies – in other countries, this was not a standard form. The IUS managed to retain a relative political openness for the same reason – because there was a tradition of student unionism even outside of socialist countries. The IUS and the WFDY cooperated on many initiatives, including the AEYSC Framework or the World Festivals of Youth and Students, and attended each other's events. By its Constitution from 1946, the IUS was even a member organization of the WFDY, but this clause was omitted from a new version of the Constitution from 1956.⁷⁵ Sergei Chelnokov, the Soviet delegate in the IUS, however, remarked that the WFDY people always had a little paternalistic approach, as they saw that students were only a subsection of youth.⁷⁶ The IUS had a junior position also in the Festival International Preparatory Committee. Chelnokov's predecessor, Vladimir Ponomaryov, even saw the WFDY as rivals – precisely because of the different political basis.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Interview with Frieder Bubl, 18 August 2023, Berlin.

⁷² Mikuláš Pešta, 'The World Marxist Review as a Transnational Space in Socialist Prague: Naim Ashhab and the Middle Eastern Delegates in the Editorial Office of a Global Journal', in *Relations in the Ideospace: Middle Eastern Students, Activists and Intellectuals in the Eastern Bloc between Knowledge and Power*, ed. Birgitt Schäbler and Constantine Katsakioris (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

⁷³ Interview with Mazen Husseini, 4 August 2020, Prague.

⁷⁴ Interview Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview.

⁷⁵ 4th World Student Congress, Prague 1956 – Constitution of the IUS. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 136/2314.

⁷⁶ Interview with Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva.

⁷⁷ Vladimir Ponomaryov, 11 December 2021, online interview.

The key inter-governmental organization for the IUS was UNESCO. Since the first post-war years, the IUS attempted to legitimize itself through association with this UN-affiliated body. After its foundation, UNESCO gave the IUS a consultative status, which, however, was revoked in 1952; the official reason was insufficient activity. But the Secretariat never gave up; on the contrary, in post-Stalinist times when the Soviets returned to international organizations and started advocating for their own ideological, cultural and developmental goals within them, the IUS also intensified its efforts in this arena.⁷⁸ Since the 1950s, the IUS has been trying to re-establish its consultative status with UNESCO to broaden its recognition. However, even though the IUS representatives tried hard, their efforts to get the organization recognized were in vain. In 1960, UNESCO introduced the system of three-level categories of partnership: Category A (associate relations), Category B (consultative relations) and Category C (mutual information relations).⁷⁹ The IUS was classified in Category C, meaning it was not eligible for UNESCO subsidies. UNESCO declined the status B in 1960, pointing out various technical problems with the application.⁸⁰ In 1965, the consultative status was denied again, mostly for the lack of or not up-to-date information; the IUS Secretariat official, however, complained that the applications 'were not treated with all the attention they had deserved', suspecting a discriminatory treatment.⁸¹ The pill was all the more bitter a swallow that the rival organization, the ISC, had enjoyed consultative status since its establishment. But the report's author stressed that it was necessary to continue in the effort, not only for practical motives like closer cooperation or eligibility to UNESCO subventions but also because it was 'a question of prestige'.⁸²

The consultative status was finally bestowed upon the IUS in 1969. This development was undoubtedly affected by the circumstances of the break-up of the ISC, which left the IUS the only global and universal student federation.⁸³ The B list was not enough, though. To silence all critics who were pointing out that the IUS was promoting Soviet interests in the international sphere, it would serve greatly to be accepted in the A list – to gain associate status in UNESCO. In 1974, the IUS Congress mandated the Executive Committee to pursue status A, arguing that it was the only representative international student organization.⁸⁴ It was rejected, however, even though UNESCO's Executive Board appreciated the long-term work the IUS had been conducting in the field of 'education, advancement of youth, struggle against apartheid, assurance of

⁷⁸ For the Soviet activity in UNESCO, see Porter, *Reds in Blue*, 63–120.

⁷⁹ Co-operation by UNESCO with international non-governmental organizations, 11 March 1988, UNESCO Archive, 129 EX/INF.5, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000077797> [cit. 15 May 2025].

⁸⁰ Vladimír Herčík to Abu Gidary, 10 December 1960, IISH, col. IUS, box Varia IV.

⁸¹ The present stage of the IUS relations with UNESCO, 12 November 1965, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS 1992–1995.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Classement des organisations internationales non gouvernementales (104 Ex/39) et Rapport du Comité Conseil exécutif sur les organisations internationales non gouvernementales à ce sujet. UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG. 1/39.

⁸⁴ Resolution on UNESCO, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG.1/40; Report on the Eleventh IUS Congress, Budapest, Hungary, 7–14 May 1974, UN Archive, reference code S-0446-0576-0003.

peace and security, human rights'. The rejection was motivated, as it was argued, by the fact that there were more organizations of similar agendas on the list B. UNESCO encouraged further cooperation and integration and expressed hopes that fruitful cooperation could continue on the same basis as before.⁸⁵ The efforts to get on the A list was renewed in the 1980s but were successful before the end of the Cold War. The IUS appreciated the collaboration with UNESCO with a medal For Merits in the Struggle for the Reform and Democratization of Education and Students' Rights on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of UNESCO in 1986.⁸⁶

Despite the rejections, the IUS and UNESCO indeed were on converging paths. The presence of the IUS and other socialist-oriented organizations grew even stronger with the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO in 1984, followed by the United Kingdom – a decision that the IUS criticized, as it undermined the organization's universal character.⁸⁷ At the UN, the United States was also less active – Ronald Reagan prioritized other forms of communication.⁸⁸ During the service of Secretaries-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and Boutros Boutros Ghali after him (both from the Global South), the topics of emancipation and development thus became prominent, as well as the environment became an important topic in the UN.

In the late 1980s, with the changes unfolding within the IUS, the cooperation thrived particularly. UNESCO was regularly invited to all IUS public events, and its representatives took part in them or at least sent a letter of support to be read. Significant were the initiatives of UNESCO and the UN – International Youth Year (1985), and the International Literacy Year of UNESCO (1990). In 1987, the IUS and UNESCO co-organized an international roundtable 'Role of the University in the Development of the Society' in Addis Ababa.⁸⁹ The IUS even had a permanent representative with UNESCO – in the 1980s, it was the Senegalese Ravane Kone, and after him, the Polish Sergiusz Najar who had an internship at UNESCO working as a volunteer in the Division of Primary Education, Literacy and Adult Education and Education in Rural Areas.⁹⁰ Najar reported that he worked especially on the preparation of the International Literacy Year while admitting that UNESCO was in a state of crisis after the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom.⁹¹ UNESCO stressed the importance of lifelong education, literacy and education as a right – topics very much aligned with what the IUS was pursuing.⁹²

For its efforts, the IUS gained recognition also from the UN, namely Mohammad Sharif, the head of the UN NGO Branch, who came to Prague to decorate the president

⁸⁵ Dragoljub Najman to Fathi El Fadl, 7 July 1978. UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG. 1/39.

⁸⁶ Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow to Josef Skála, 3 December 1986, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG 39.2.

⁸⁷ Declaration sur la politique des Etats-Unis concernant UNESCO, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG 39.2.

⁸⁸ Mazower, *Governing the World*, 331–42.

⁸⁹ Report on the international student round table 'The Role of the University in the Development of the Society', UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG 39.2.

⁹⁰ Report from the NGO intern in UNESCO, UNESCO Archive, box BRX/ONG 39.2.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

of the IUS, Josef Skála, with the Medal for Merits, on behalf of the UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. The ceremony took place on 17 November 1989, on the fiftieth anniversary of the events that gave birth to International Students' Day, in the ceremonial hall of Charles University. The celebration, however, was overshadowed by another historic event – the Velvet Revolution that just started in the streets of Prague – but more on that later.

International studentship in the times of Perestroika

The opening up of the IUS paid off. Between the Congress in Sofia in 1984 and in Havana in 1987, the IUS received eighteen new applications for membership, including student unions from Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Pakistan and Zaire.⁹³ At the peak of its scope at the end of the Cold War, the IUS membership amounted to 114 national organizations. Western Europe was still very poorly represented – most organizations were still reluctant to join. After the Irish USI left, the only representatives of Western Europe were the UNEF of France, the POFNE of Cyprus, the SYL of Finland and the IGD of Turkey; the latter three, of course, lay geographically more to the East than most 'Eastern' socialist countries. The SYL was not a full member and only had a consultative status because it did not want to give too much legitimacy to the IUS and the policies they disagreed with, but cooperated with the IUS on many initiatives.⁹⁴ The Turkish IGD was not a national student union but rather a political youth organization, but it was still accepted and considered a European student organization. The reason was perhaps that it was desirable to build the appearances; the global claim had to be supported by representation from all world regions. As the IGD's representative Sadettin Yumuşak iterated: 'For example, there were annual meetings of all national unions of students from all Europe, both East and West, and naturally IUS didn't want to appear as representing Eastern Europe at those meetings, and our presence helped to strengthen its Western wing, so to speak.'⁹⁵ The IUS President Josef Skála said that at the end of the 1980s, he had applications for membership renewal from the US and UK national unions on the table – a piece of information I could not corroborate.⁹⁶ But there were allegedly other factors at play than just the Cold War politics – the Malagasy delegate in the IUS Secretariat Félix Andriantsoavina claimed that the French UNEF was manoeuvring to recruit unions from French-speaking Africa to boost the influence of the French language in the organization.⁹⁷

As was always the case, the World Festivals of Youth and Students became symptomatic events of their time. In the age of perestroika, only two Festivals took place – one in Moscow in 1985 and the other in Pyongyang in 1989. The 1985 Festival

⁹³ Although not all of them were ratified by the Congress as full members. EC Havana 87. Draft Report on affiliations. NAČR, f. MSS, PA 448/6181.

⁹⁴ Interview with John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview.

⁹⁵ Interview with Sadettin Yumuşak, 31 January 2023, interview via e-mail.

⁹⁶ Interview with Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague.

⁹⁷ Interview with Félix Andriantsoavina, 10 June 2021, Dresden.

was organized, only for the second time, in a city where it had taken place before (the first one was Berlin, hosting Festivals in 1951 and 1973). While in 1957, the mega-event served the purpose of showcasing the Soviet capital and promoting Khrushchev's opening to the world, in 1985, it would demonstrate the changes that were undergoing in the first workers' state after the ascent of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Not that it was planned like this. The venue of the Festival had been decided long before Gorbachev's ascent to power. As soon as January 1984, the CENYC, the Western European youth federation, complained about the choice of Moscow, stating that a city in a non-aligned or Global South country would have sent a far better message. Even though it adopted a pro-attendance position in the 1970s, the CENYC was assessing the pros and cons again.⁹⁸ Despite some hesitations, however, youth and student organizations took an active part in the Festival's preparation. The student section was coordinated by the IUS but many more student organizations were involved; in March 1985, there was a preparatory meeting hosted by the World Students Christian Federation (WSCF) and the International Students Movement for the UN in Geneva. Among other participants, there were representatives of the IUS, the All-African Student Union, the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Organization of Students, the General Union of Arab Students, the International Student Research Center, the International Student Travel Bureau, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions and others, agreeing on the main points of the programme.⁹⁹

In his opening address to the Festival, Mikhail Gorbachev expressed his hopes that the Festival would 'become a convincing demonstration of solidarity and dedication to peace and friendship between peoples.'¹⁰⁰ One of the performers at the Festival who was supposed to contribute to that was Bob Dylan who arrived in Moscow for a poetry session. And the CENYC was not entirely disappointed with the outcome. In hindsight, it appreciated the somewhat pluralistic character of the event: 'We believe that the 12th Festival in particular, was underpinned by a desire to broaden the base of the Festivals by making them more receptive to a range of political standpoints (...) On that basis we believed the 12th Festival succeeded in a way its predecessors did not.'¹⁰¹ That does not mean, of course, that there would be complete openness. A British government report noticed that despite the declared inclusiveness, Western participants were sometimes denied permission to speak at gatherings or, if their interventions were critical to the Soviet Union, they were cut short or misinterpreted by interpreters. That was the case of a Swedish delegate, as the report showed: 'Permitted to speak for 15 minutes only after her Swedish colleagues threatened to walk out, she attacked Soviet military activities in Afghanistan, comparing them with those of the USA in Vietnam. As she spoke, the Soviet television cameras stopped recording and the translation became erratic. Her speech was not reported at all in the Soviet press.'¹⁰²

⁹⁸ 12th World Festival of Youth and Students: Moscow 1985. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 89.

⁹⁹ Report from the informal consultative meeting of international and regional student organizations, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 89.

¹⁰⁰ World Festival of Youth and Students: A retrospect. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

¹⁰¹ Report on informal consultation on 13th World Festival of Youth and Students, Nicosia 17–18 October. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

¹⁰² World Festival of Youth and Students: A retrospect. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

Moreover, the social side of the Festival was heavily influenced by the ongoing Gorbachev's reforms. Only a couple of months before the event, the sale of alcoholic beverages had been prohibited in the Soviet Union, a measure designed by Gorbachev's leadership to battle the crippling alcoholism in Soviet society.¹⁰³ However, the Festival had always been also a social event and students in particular are known to have a lot of fun over a drink. 'Some of my colleagues from the Soviet Union were never refusing a good shot of vodka and suddenly they drank juice all the time,' as it was put by an East German IUS Secretariat member.¹⁰⁴

The outcomes of the festivals affected the possible cooperation – the CENYC wanted to be more involved, determined to reform the Festival movement. It pursued a line that the Festival should be 'smaller, less formal, more democratic and cheaper'. As the CENYC report continued, 'It should be an attempt to reposition ourselves in a post-Cold War period.' In this regard, the CENYC thought that on a European level, it had a better position to pursue reforms than the IUS and the socialist countries which 'have to take their Third World friends with them'.¹⁰⁵

In light of the ongoing changes in the Eastern Bloc and in the socialist-oriented youth and students movement, the decision to hold the next Festival in Pyongyang was somewhat surprising. North Korea remained a hard-line communist country where not much had changed since the times of Stalin – even though there was some process of rapprochement between the Southern and Northern parts of the Korean Peninsula at the time.¹⁰⁶ The choice of the host city was driven by various factors – not unimportantly, there were political calculations. Sergiusz Najar, the Polish delegate in the IUS at the time, believed that there was a tendency to organize the Festival in Asia since it never took place there.¹⁰⁷ But there was also an economic factor – the organization of a Festival was an expensive affair and the host country had to be willing to cover the costs. Similarly to the process of choosing a host city for the Olympic Games, in the case of a Festival, it was also a negotiation and it depended on who would offer the best terms.

Many were discontent with the choice, however. Not only Western Europeans expressed their disagreement with the venue through CENYC, arguing that the principle of consensus in the International Preparatory Committee had been broken and that it would be harmful to the Festival movement.¹⁰⁸ But also several IUS officials spoke about the Pyongyang Festival – at least in hindsight – as a surreal experience completely disconnected from the outside world.¹⁰⁹ The Festival took place in the summer of 1989, when there had already been free elections in Poland, roundtable discussions in Hungary and the Soviet dominion in Eastern Europe was crumbling. Many Western delegates took part in the Festival precisely because of these processes

¹⁰³ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 141–5.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Frieder Bubl, 18 August 2023, Berlin.

¹⁰⁵ The future of the Festival movement, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

¹⁰⁶ Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

¹⁰⁸ 13th World Festival: 1st I.P.C., HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview; Interview with Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview.

and the perestroika, hoping they could become a part of the conversation on the democratization of socialism.¹¹⁰

The organization of the Festival seemed to be very much in control of the Koreans, who tried to prevent any unwanted incidents. They were anxious about all the speeches, including some from Eastern Europe, where political change was underway. Similarly, the Koreans were not happy with the changes happening within the IUS at the time. However, the IUS was not the main force in the Festival organization, even though its representatives took part in the International Preparatory Committee. The biggest trouble of the Festival, perhaps ironically, was not caused by the Koreans themselves but by the Chinese. What rallied the undesirable and unplanned protests was not as much the situation in the host country but the brutal crackdown of the opposition in China. Mere weeks before the start of the Festival, Chinese protesters – many of them students – demanding democratization were massacred at Tiananmen Square, leaving hundreds or perhaps even thousands of dead.¹¹¹ The carnage was criticized by many, both from the East and the West.¹¹²

Many reacted emotionally, such as the CENYC, which asked ‘how can a World Festival of Youth and Students committed to the preservation and extension of human rights, peace, freedom do anything other than condemn this murder of young people by those who profess to rule in their name?’¹¹³ Some of the participants organized a spontaneous rally at the Festival to protest the massacre. As one of the protesters, a Canadian James Tate described, they were urged to call it off by the Koreans but they stood by it. So the Festival hosts tried more elaborate diversions to prevent the protest meeting; suddenly their interpreters disappeared and their bus stopped working. As per Tate, they had to hijack a Cuban bus to get to the Swedish National Club where the protest was about to take place, only to discover that two thousand people were singing and dancing in front of it; another ruse to obstacle the gathering. But in the end, they managed to get in and hold the protest meeting.¹¹⁴ And such attempts to say something against China and Korean counter-measures happened during the whole Festival. Mairi Johnson described that at the opening ceremony, ‘Quite a few of the Eurocommunist organizations were trying to unfurl banners, and there were North Korean security forces everywhere within this massive stadium, and they would just kind of jump on them and grab them and take them out.’¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ The Canadian Delegation (2018, directed by Greg Elmer); Interview with Greg Elmer, 24 May 2023, online interview; Interview with Mairi Johnson, 21 April 2023, online interview.

¹¹¹ The numbers are disputed; it is difficult to come to a definitive conclusion due to rigid censorship. Brown, *June Fourth*, 122–30.

¹¹² Interestingly, Hu Qili, a Chinese representative in the IUS Secretariat in the early 1960s who later became a member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, was one of only two people to stand against the implementation of martial law in the spring of 1989. Dingxin Zhao, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 233.

¹¹³ Speech to the Vth IPC of the XIIIth World Festival of Youth and Students, 29 June 1989, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

¹¹⁴ The Canadian Delegation (2018, directed by Greg Elmer), Interview with Mairi Johnson, 21 April 2023, online interview.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Mairi Johnson, 21 April 2023, online interview.

But it was not only the West that protested. At the Festival, the Chinese delegation was excluded from the opening ceremony because of the Tiananmen Square events. The International Preparatory Committee was not unanimous – the Cubans protested against that, for example – but most delegations of the world agreed on it.¹¹⁶ The reaction of the IUS to the massacre was typically unconvincing – various voices in the Secretariat prevented it from taking a stance. The condemnation of the Tiananmen killings came only with the Velvet Revolution in November 1989 when political constraints were being shaken off.¹¹⁷

One of the important features of the late 1980s was the renewed effort to cooperate with Western student structures. After the cooling of political relations in the international sphere at the beginning of the 1980s, the middle of the decade brought an atmosphere of cooperation again. The IUS had a specialized body to analyse the student movement and students as a social group – the International Student Research Center (ISRC). It analysed students as consumers, employees and parents, and it researched the problems of their housing, social life and other matters. The ISRC was established by the Secretariat and resided at the same address but had a separate structure and was only involved in events and conferences that addressed the topics it researched (it was not involved in political campaigns for disarmament or to end apartheid, for example).¹¹⁸ The ISRC was a platform that connected the IUS with the problems of students and with Western students and university structures. It was very internationally entangled, co-organizing international academic events and publishing its research in international fora, such as the *Higher Education in Europe* journal, published by the European Center for Higher Education at UNESCO.¹¹⁹

Another way in which student integration manifested was the success in the unification of the International Student Identity Card, the ISIC. The IUS was issuing its ISICs since its foundation but after the split in the student movement, the project of a discount student card was also divided. The issuance of the 'Western' ISIC was taken care of by the International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC), an organization that promoted student travel and culture. Since the 1950s, there were attempts to merge the two cards into one, which could have been truly helpful to student mobility, but it never materialized – for the same reason why the IUS and ISC never united. One side would have to back down and accept the rival's project. After the scandal broke out in the ISC, which was closely cooperating with the ISTC on the issuance of the 'Western' ISIC, the ISTC severed all ties. With the dissolution of the rival, the door to further cooperation and unification of the two student cards was a little more open again.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

¹¹⁷ Klára Řiháková, 'Transnational Dimensions of 1989: Mobility, Activism, and Internationalism in the Czechoslovak Student Movement' in *Student Activism in Transnational Perspective, 1919–1989*, ed. Daniel Laqua, forthcoming; MSS Zpravodaj, December 1989, UDAUK, Sbírka materiálů k 17. listopadu 1989.

¹¹⁸ The IUS and Its Current Activities. About the ISRC. NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Stanovy, organizační záležitosti, 1979–1993; Interview with Georgios Michaelides, 22 February 2025, online interview.

¹¹⁹ Abu Gosh Awni, Leopold Tanner and Moira Leyden, 'The Changing Roles and Needs of Students in Higher Education', *Higher Education in Europe* 10, no. 1 (1985): 10–17.

In 1970, the IUS Secretariat passed a statement in which it stressed that the IUS was the only representative international student organization and it would make sense for the international student community to 'revive the idea of a unified international student identity card and realise the dream of the democratic world student movement for a world-wide student travel and tourism without discrimination and for the benefit of the student masses'.¹²⁰ At the Bratislava Congress in 1971, the IUS approved the decision to seek the reunification of the two cards. The ISTC was pleased by the decision and suggested moving on to practical matters; to discuss the sponsorship and endorsement of the card, and mutual acceptance of respective cards as proof of student status.¹²¹ Still, it took until the late 1980s before an agreement was reached. For there was another issue with the ISIC that was potentially problematic – it was a good source of money for both organizations. Nevertheless, there was an intensive cooperation happening and the IUS delegates took part in the ISTC annual meetings which took place in various locations all over the world. In the late 1980s, under the circumstances of integration and renewed cooperation, the pressure to merge the cards intensified by both sides.¹²² In 1989, the IUS and the ISTC finally reached an agreement to merge the ISIC projects. It was decided that the ISCT would take care of the technical and administrative part of the ISIC issuance. For this service, it would keep the profits from the sales. To reimburse the IUS for its loss in revenues and to compensate it for the assistance with the card's distribution, the ISTC would pay 120,000 Swiss francs annually to the IUS.¹²³ Both organizations would negotiate the discounts for students: the ISTC mainly in the West and the IUS in the East. So at the very end of the Cold War, the compromise was finally found.

In 1986, the idea of the Framework for All-European Youth and Student Cooperation was renewed after years of stagnation. Aside from regular meetings, the AEYSC Framework organized a wide variety of international events that brought together youth and students from all European countries. One such event that shows the problems that the young people from both East and West shared was the 1988 seminar about environmental threats held in Stockholm. The seminar, addressed among others by the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, discussed various problems, such as acid rains, nuclear pollution, damage to the ozone layer, emissions of carbon dioxide and the greenhouse effect, toxic chemicals and hazardous waste, deforestation and desertification, but also food and energy production and growing income inequality. The key, as it was concluded, was sustainable development.¹²⁴ Another type of event was a summer camp that took place in July 1988 in Austria under the title 'United Friends of Europe'. The motto of the camp – a 'political vacation time with new friends from East and West' – was illustrated by a picture of five young people wearing

¹²⁰ IUS statement on unified ISIC, 13 October 1970, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 330/1160.

¹²¹ ISTC for discussions with IUS on student identity card, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 337/1617; Statement on talks with ISTC aimed at establishing a single int. student identity card, NAČR, f. MSS, PA 341/2000.

¹²² Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

¹²³ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiants-e-s, CME, box UIE 137.

¹²⁴ AYESC Seminar – Environmental Action for a Living Europe, Stockholm 15–17.1.1988. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 35.

different clothes to represent various subcultures or political views: a man in a black suit, a woman in traditional Austrian costume, a woman in hippie clothes, a man styled as a punk and a man in worker's clothes.¹²⁵ The IUS even conflated the Framework meetings with its own events, such as when a Framework meeting was held in April 1989 in Nicosia together with its Executive Committee meeting.¹²⁶

The seemingly harmonious cooperation also had its limits, though. In October 1988, an AEYSC meeting was organized in Prague, co-hosted by the IUS and the European Young Christian Democrats (EYCD). However, the EYCD decided to push the realms of the possible and invited a representative of Charter 77 to the meeting to take the floor as a panellist. Charter 77 was an opposition initiative that fought for the democratization of Czechoslovakia, its signatories were often jailed or bullied and it would be hard to imagine that the Czechoslovak authorities would allow its representative to speak at a public event with international attendance. As it was stated before, the IUS would not go directly against the interests of its host country, so the invitation was cancelled. The EYCD then withdrew from the co-hosting because, as it argued, it was assured that it could invite its speakers, and the cancellation breached this agreement. The IUS then defended the move, arguing that it was against the spirit of the Framework which was above all consensual and it was a last-minute surprise change. Ironically, one of the themes of the workshop was the different meanings of democracy, pluralism and participation.¹²⁷

Another field that was revived in the late 1980s was the European Meeting of National Unions of Students which was primarily holding its annual conferences. With the gradual rapprochement, however, it seemed that a platform specialized in facilitating the East–West contact was no longer needed.¹²⁸ In October 1989, the European Meeting took place in Uppsala where the necessity of a reform of the meetings was discussed.¹²⁹ The main partner in Western Europe, however, was the WESIB. In 1986, the WESIB organized a seminar 'Students as a pressure group' in Vienna, in which the IUS took part and after which it concluded that 'the EM has not been a success, (...) does not serve anything because there is not a dialogue on student problems. WESIB is growing and influences a lot of European countries while IUS does not. WESIB offers more to its members than EM'.¹³⁰ The rather honest report by the IUS delegate in the seminar foreshadowed further cooperation, which was based mainly on relations with WESIB.

¹²⁵ United Friends of Europe, Summer event 1988. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 35.

¹²⁶ 1st Draft Paper with the General Scheme/Schedule of Preparations for the Meeting of the IUS EC and other activities in Nicosia, 23 January 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹²⁷ European Youth and Students: Responsibilities toward the Key Issues. The Final Statement. HAEU, f. CENYC, box 35. Unfortunately, I was unable to find out which person from Charter 77 that was supposed to be.

¹²⁸ Report of the Special Working Group on the Future of the EM of NUSes, 17 August 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹²⁹ Report from the 24th EM of NUSes, 25 October 1989. Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹³⁰ WESIB seminar 'Students as a pressure group in society', 22 April 1986, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21796.

One of the challenges that the student movement both in the East and West had to face was the new forms of student mobility and internationalism, as they were embodied in the European Economic Community's policies on higher education. As the Cold War was slowly heading towards its end, so was traditional student internationalism. The Pyongyang Festival seems to be a telling symbol of the end of an era. Despite its proportions and pomposity, despite the success of the Moscow Festival four years earlier, despite the big and inclusive IUS Congress in Havana in 1987, it was a different kind of internationalism that would define student mobility in the future. It was not an international student organization that would take the big step forward; it was the governments. The process of Western European economic and political integration did not occur in the field of education at first; student mobility and harmonization of tertiary education systems were not included in the Treaty of Rome. At first, the integration started on an inter-university level – with the Conference of European Rectors, which included also universities from Eastern Europe. The European Communities did not start conceptualizing such integration until the late 1960s. In 1974, a meeting of the Conference of European Rectors took place in Bologna, where 'an attempt would be made to reach some sort of agreement aimed at preventing the division of the European universities into two blocs'.¹³¹ But the process was hindered by the Cold War realities.

Then also the governments stepped in. It was deemed that facilitated mobility would contribute to the creation of a common European identity more easily than a common market; an easy chance to study in another European country for a semester or two with other students from all over Europe would make them share their cultures, see both the diversity and the shared roots, in other words, make them Europeans.¹³² The project, conceived in the late 1980s, was titled European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students but became widely known under its acronym, designed to commemorate a great European humanist philosopher – Erasmus of Rotterdam. In 1986, the liaison committee of rector conferences of the European Communities member states adopted a positive stance on the Erasmus initiative.¹³³ It was formally adopted by the Council in June 1987.

Erasmus has since then become one of the most successful mobility schemes in history, but upon the time of its conception, it also raised concerns. The problematic part, in some eyes, was the fact that it was a top-down inter-governmental initiative. The students did not take part in the discussion at first.¹³⁴ The WESIB was directly affected by the new programme but even the IUS had to address it. The WESIB did not

¹³¹ Sofia Corradi, *Student Mobility in Higher Education: Erasmus and Erasmus Plus* (Roma: Roma Tre University, 2015), 55.

¹³² Benjamin Feyen and Eva Krzaklewska, 'The ERASMUS Programme and the "Generation ERASMUS". A Short Overview', in *The Erasmus Phenomenon: Symbol of a New European Generation?*, ed. Benjamin Feyen and Eva Krzaklewska (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 9–17.

¹³³ Meeting of COREPER, November 1986, HAEU, f. EUI, box 1921.

¹³⁴ Even though it was an intergovernmental initiative, the Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE) claims to have significant influence on the talks. History of AEGEE, <https://aegEE-eindhoven.nl/europe/history-europe/> [cit. 15 May 2025].

dismiss the initiative but raised concerns – its representatives saw it as problematic that the Erasmus had been adopted before the national student unions were consulted or even took a stance. In October 1987, the WESIB held a European Student Conference on EC Policy in Higher Education in Ghent to try to develop a collective position on the programmes Erasmus and Comette. Discussions at the conference verbalized various concerns the representatives felt needed to be addressed: How would it be secured that the programme does not contribute to elitization, to the domination of big languages, to divisions between centres and peripheries? Would it be available for students outside of the European Communities? How would the students be selected for the programme, would it be a choice of their professors? Is the goal to create better students or better Europeans?¹³⁵ In other words, the students felt like it should have been more participative from the bottom in the first place. Among those who took part in these discussions were also representatives of the IUS and the International Student Research Centre.¹³⁶

In January 1989, there was a meeting organized by the Erasmus Bureau in Ghent, where students discussed their problems with studying abroad. The meeting produced an idea to establish an international student organization called the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) – every institution participating in the Erasmus exchange would start a branch consisting of students who would help the incoming foreign students integrate socially. The ESN would then be coordinated on national and international levels. Utrecht University, one of the first ESN centres also started experimenting with the buddy system in which each student gets his or her guide, which would later turn out very successful.¹³⁷

In September 1989, a European Student Meeting took place in Bologna, gathering more than 800 students from all over the continent to discuss the new European educational policies. In the report that aggregated opinions expressed in the discussions, it was emphasized that the new Erasmus programme should also give opportunities to students from countries outside of European Communities.¹³⁸ At the meeting, a request was also raised by the representatives of countries outside of European Communities, namely Swiss, Swedish, Hungarians, Poles, Turks, Yugoslavs, Austrians and Soviets, to take part in the Erasmus project.¹³⁹ On the occasion of the meeting in Bologna, a mobility agreement was signed between the University of

¹³⁵ WESIB Newsletter, 1/88. NAČR, f. MSS, box WESIB 1986.

¹³⁶ For example Draft Minutes of the First Students Consultative Meeting, 15–17 February 1989, HAEU, f. Youth Forum of the YFEC-21, 1989–1994.

¹³⁷ Chiasmus. European student meeting, final report, 6–10 September 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Centro di coordinamento studentesco. European Student Meeting '89. Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

Bologna and the universities of Kyiv, Tartu and Vilnius in the USSR. The doors to the European integration project in the field of education did not seem to be entirely closed for non-members. In May 1989, the European University Institute in Florence started negotiations to include researchers from third countries, including those from Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁰ The integration was accelerated even more by an external factor; the fall of communism in Europe.

¹⁴⁰ Participation à l'Institut d'étudiants des pays tiers, 17 May 1989, HAEU, f. EUI, box 1921.

Post-mortem and resurrections

The fall of state socialist regimes in East-Central Europe at the end of the 1980s came as a shock to most people. In the atmosphere of the 'end of history', people started enthusiastically building democratic states, but it soon turned out that the new era would have its problems, too. While in the East, states struggled with the economic transformation to capitalism and with newly awakened demons of nationalism, in the South many countries fell into debt traps.

For the International Union of Students, the Velvet Revolution dealt a heavy blow. The tight alignment with the communist regime in Czechoslovakia meant that after the dust settled, it soon found itself in a hostile environment. Having lost the political and financial cover, despite the efforts to reform itself, the organization slowly disintegrated. At the same time, however, new forms of student activism were on the rise. The last chapter shows the decline and fall of the International Union of Students in the 1990s, as well as its legacies and afterlives in the contemporary world.

Navigating the Velvet Revolution

On 17 November 1989, a ceremony took place in the Great Hall of Karolinum, the age-long seat of Charles University. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the shutdown of Czech universities by the Nazis, a World Student Forum was called to Prague with wide international representation. Mohammad Sharif, a high UN official and the former executive secretary of the International Youth Year, came from New York to present a Medal for Merits to the IUS's President Josef Skála in the name of the UN Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuellar. At 2 o'clock, Skála was decorated for the 'merits of the support of the ideas of the UN'. The Czech prime minister and Charles University's rector put forward their speeches.¹ Even the former IUS President Zbyněk Vokrouhlický sacked after 1968 sat in the auditorium. Only a couple of hours later, a student parade was broken up by the police, leaving several wounded and a rumour about a dead student. The Velvet Revolution had begun.

In November 1989, Czechoslovakia remained one of the last communist-governed countries in East Central Europe unaffected by the democratization wave that swept through the region that year. The big anniversary of International Students' Day was

¹ Milan Otáhal and Zdeněk Sládek (eds.), *Deset pražských dnů. 17.–27. listopad 1989* (Praha: Academia, 1990), 27–8.

about to be celebrated in a tense atmosphere when any misstep could become a trigger for the people to mobilize and demand change.

Two days before the ceremony, the 17th November Medal was awarded to the secretary general of the KSČ, Miloš Jakeš. A discussion was held in the Secretariat, however, if such a gesture was appropriate, with regard to the vibes in the Czechoslovak society. Jakeš was extremely unpopular and became a symbol of the regime's fustiness. His incoherent and confused speech from July of that year was mocked across the society and the demand for his ousting was one of the main slogans of the Velvet Revolution. The idea to award him with the highest IUS medal was pursued by President Josef Skála, with the argument of Jakeš' past in the youth movement.² Historically, the medal was given out not only to the student leaders of the world but for political reasons it was also awarded to active politicians – mostly from socialist countries. Among the recipients were heavyweights such as Leonid Brezhnev, Nicolae Ceausescu or Todor Zhivkov.

Skála's initiative was met with resistance, though. The Chilean representative in the Secretariat, Franklin Santibañez, claimed that he opposed the motion: 'I think that Miloš Jakeš is the worst person to give this medal ... He is a leader of a political party, he's not a social leader, he doesn't have a past, he wasn't in the war, he wasn't fighting with anyone,' as he summarized his argument in retrospect.³ The discussion on the topic lasted the whole day. In the end, Skála's proposition was accepted by the majority, but only after a compromise; the awardee was the Czechoslovak people and Jakeš was only supposed to receive the medal in its name. This was acceptable to most; the Secretariat member from Madagascar said that they did not express their gratitude to Jakeš, whom they did not know, but to Czechoslovakia, which gave scholarships for Malagasy students.⁴ However, this nuance eluded most of the people, especially because the newspaper only showed Jakeš accepting the medal from Skála's hands.

For the fiftieth anniversary of the 17 November 1939, a big student gathering was called to Prague. The World Student Forum was attended by thirty-seven national youth and student organizations from thirty-five countries and by nineteen international and regional organizations, including the World University Service. The agenda consisted of discussions, lectures and commemorations. The main output of the Forum – the Bill for Academic Freedom and the Rights of Academic Communities – formulated the basic rights of each student in areas of political and civil rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. The tone of the Bill was very liberal and universalist and in line with the reformist wing within the IUS; in fact, it was inspired by the WUS' Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education.⁵ Discussed was

² Matěj Bílý, "‘Jak roste nový člověk’. Miloš Jakeš jako regionální komunistický funkcionář (1945–1952)", *Czech Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 1 (2023): 15–67.

³ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

⁴ Interview with Félix Andriantsoavina, 10 June 2021, Dresden.

⁵ Report from the International Student Forum 'Defending Academic and Student Rights – Our Joint Commitments', 9 January 1990, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

the potential establishment of a new body for the defence of student rights, which was to be institutionalized by UNESCO in Paris.⁶ The gathering was used also for a meeting to assess the Pyongyang Festival and discuss the future of the Festival movement.⁷ The scope of the issued resolutions remained global (e.g. a communique condemning crimes against students in Guatemala); the development in Eastern Europe was still outside of the focus. Aside from the discussions, the IUS also organized a commemorative event to honour Jan Opletal and other students killed by the Nazis fifty years earlier.

However, another student event took place on the afternoon of the 17th of November. A parade co-organized by the Union of Socialist Youth went to Vyšehrad to pay respect in particular to the nineteenth-century rebel poet Karel Hynek Mácha. After this official part ended, many students continued and headed for the city centre – Václavské náměstí, Wenceslas Square, a traditional place where demonstrations have been called throughout the twentieth century. The police force, however, prevented the parade from entering the square and violently dispersed the students. Many were injured but most importantly – it was rumoured that one student had been killed. The person who ordered the parade to be stopped at *Národní třída* (National Boulevard) before the Wenceslas Square was none other than the former IUS President Miroslav Štěpán, at the time a high-ranking politician in the KSČ organization in Prague.⁸

Even though the IUS celebration within the World Student Forum and the semi-official event at Vyšehrad were commemorating the same events that had taken place fifty years earlier, both events had a very different tone. While the IUS emphasized universal student rights and the struggle against fascism, sanctioned by the medal from the UN secretary-general, the student protest, even though co-organized by the SSM, a member organization of the IUS, followed up mainly on previous anti-regime protests and events in neighbouring states, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. The protest was framed by the struggle for freedom, drawing parallels between the Nazi and the Communist suppression of freedoms.⁹

Many delegates of the World Student Forum did not see the contradiction between the two ways of commemoration of the 17th November. After the Karolinum ceremony, many continued to take part in the second parade. On the next day, the Forum's assembly demanded a moment of silence to pay respect to the student who had been killed at *Národní třída* – to which Skála reluctantly complied.¹⁰ Many, including the

⁶ Josef Petráň and Lydia Petráňová, *Filozofové dělají revoluci: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy během komunistického experimentu (1948–1968–1989)* (Praha: Karolinum, 2015), 755–6.

⁷ Mémorandum de la Réunion informelle des organisations internationales et régionales de la jeunesse et des étudiants sur le Mouvement des Festivals, 19 November 1989, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 108.

⁸ Štěpán always denied his involvement in the decision but was sentenced for it after the Revolution. Miroslav Štěpán, *Zpověď vězně sametové revoluce* (Praha: Grafit, 1991).

⁹ Petr Svobodný, '17. listopad 1939 a 1989. Čeští univerzitní studenti v období totalitních režimů v současné historiografii a kultuře vzpomínání', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 52, no. 1 (2012): 133–42.

¹⁰ Josef Skála: Mezinárodní svaz studentsstva, a lecture from 20 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YDBCukKejk> [cit. 15 May 2025].

IUS's leadership and staff, took part in the demonstrations for democratization in the following days, as well as in the general strike called on 29 November.¹¹

The November events took a rapid turn. In the days following the 17th of November, huge crowds kept assembling in Prague and demanded the end of the communist rule. On 26 November, half a million people gathered in Letná for a demonstration; the crowd was addressed by the former Prague Spring leader Alexander Dubček as well as the playwright and dissident Václav Havel, who was slowly turning into a politician. The dissidents, in general, took over the initiative, establishing a new political party called Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*) in Czechia and Public against Violence (*Verejnost proti násiliu*) in Slovakia. The students who originally sparked the whole movement lost their pivotal role; but still, the universities remained centres of the protest and pursued democratization reforms vigorously.

The International Union of Students was caught off guard. The World Student Forum was paralysed; even though some parts of the programme still took place, many delegates dispersed to be a part of the historic moment that was taking place in the streets of Prague. As one Western participant of the Forum, Greg Elmer from the Canadian Student Federation remembered, there was a lot of confusion in the IUS as to how to approach the revolution underway, but also concern how things will develop.¹² On 21 November, the IUS Secretariat issued a statement on the events, in which it regretted the violent development of events and asked for an investigation. It offered to facilitate talks on the student level 'towards an outcome which would correspond with the clear choices of the Czechoslovak people in favour of restructuring and democratization' and expressed the 'full respect for the sovereign right of the Czechoslovak people to solve its own problems by itself'.¹³ A second statement followed on 24 November in which it again expressed solidarity with Czechoslovak students and support for the democratization of universities.¹⁴

The people of the Secretariat also tried to connect with the protesting students and offer them cooperation. Georgios Michaelides, the general secretary, remembered that they met with student strike committees at several Prague universities and even visited the Civic Forum headquarters. As he said, some of the students were sympathetic but others saw them as a part of the regime to be taken down.¹⁵ Some of the leaders of the Czech student movement remembered that the IUS people came to them but they were not willing to talk to them. They asked them to revoke the 17th November Medal from Jakeš immediately before the discussion even started.¹⁶ Franklin Santibañez remembered the meeting, recalling that he told the students and proved that the Medal

¹¹ Interviews with Georgios Michaelides, Vesselin Valchev, Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

¹² Interview with Greg Elmer, 24 May 2023, online interview.

¹³ Statement by the IUS Secretariat on the ongoing student events in Czechoslovakia, 21 November 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹⁴ Second Statement of the IUS Secretariat on the ongoing student developments in Czechoslovakia, 24 November 1989, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

¹⁵ Interview with Giorgos Michaelides, 14 March 2021, online interview.

¹⁶ Marek Benda et al., *Studenti psali revoluci* (Praha: Univerzum, 1990), 122.

was not in fact awarded to Jakeš but rather to the Czechoslovak people. But such a subtle difference could not win the trust of Czechoslovak students, determined to eradicate all that they viewed as stained with collaboration with the dictatorship.¹⁷ As a gesture, the Secretariat really revoked the medal from Jakeš, deciding to entrust it to Charles University.¹⁸

The host turns hostile

With the 1989 revolutions, the transnational socialist network took a heavy blow. Foreign students in Czechoslovakia found themselves in a precarious position almost overnight; even though some of them took part in the protests that initiated the Velvet Revolution, the future of their scholarship programmes became uncertain. The Cubans and North Koreans withdrew their students immediately. Other countries faced a democratization process as well, such as Ethiopia and Madagascar and their students in transforming Eastern Europe were abandoned by both sides.¹⁹ The dissent's emphasis on universal human rights gradually turned into the support of human rights primarily in the remaining socialist countries. Instead of the hub of anti-colonialism, Prague rather turned into a hub of anti-communist internationalism. During the presidency of Václav Havel, Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic supported Cuban dissidents, and Dalai Lama became a frequent guest in Prague.

For international organizations, the first immediate problem was finances. As the member organizations from socialist countries provided for large parts of budgets, their loss of access to state funding became a problem. Many of those member organizations faced complete disintegration, as did the whole system of national front organizations. The first international organization to collapse was the *World Marxist Review*. The journal and publishing house struggled with financial problems since the beginning of the 1980s and the Velvet Revolution only delivered the coup de grace. In 1990, only six reduced issues were published. In June the journal was dissolved and its building returned to the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University.²⁰ The International Radio and Television Organization also dissolved and merged with its Cold War counterpart, the European Broadcasting Union.²¹ The Christian Peace Conference had economic problems, too, but did not dissolve until December 2000.²²

The IUS, as well as the IOJ and WFTU, was in a slightly better position. It also lost much of its income. The once powerful Czechoslovak Union of Socialist Youth, which had a large credit for keeping the IUS running organizationally and financially, was dissolved at the extraordinary convention in January 1990. So did the Soviet

¹⁷ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview.

¹⁸ MSS Zpravodaj, December 1989, UDAUK, Sběrka materiálů k 17. listopadu 1989.

¹⁹ Mikuláš Pešta, 'Friends of Czechoslovakia' in *Střed/Centre*, 55–74.

²⁰ Mikuláš Pešta, 'The World Marxist Review as a Transnational Space in Socialist Prague', forthcoming.

²¹ Vladimír Kroupa, 'Prospects of Collaboration of European Broadcasters within the EBU', in *Central and Eastern Europe: Audiovisual Landscape and Copyright Legislation*, ed. Karol Jakubowicz and Pierre Jeanray (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1994), 96–101.

²² Beneš, "Remarkable Ways", 150–73.

youth union, Komsomol. New youth and student organizations were created but not as umbrella organizations; rather as specific university unions, partisan or religious organizations, and they did not affiliate with the IUS. With the transformation of the Czechoslovak economy, the IUS also lost its exclusive access to Western European goods and technologies. For some time, it was living off of its reserves and the income from the Juventus hotel – but the clock was ticking there too, as the new regime started preparing propriety restitutions which would also affect the hotel.

Still, it became obvious that the union must undergo substantial changes if it wanted to survive. First of all, the IUS had to look for a new president. Since the SSM was elected to hold the position of the president, with its dissolution, Josef Skála ceased to be the president by definition. Even before the demise of the SSM, talks started to establish a new student union in Czechoslovakia – the Students' Guild Union. In the following months, however, the student movement became fragmented, and no single representative national student union took the place of the SSM.²³ Skála was replaced by Franklin Gaston Santibañez from Chile as the interim acting president until Congress would elect a new one. Santibañez thought that he was chosen because nobody could object: he was a genuine student leader, fought against the Pinochet dictatorship, spent time in jail and his wife was shot in the head during the anti-government demonstration in Santiago.²⁴ Skála left the Secretariat but not all Eastern Europeans left the IUS immediately. The East German FDJ stayed until 1991 when it withdrew after internal changes and after it lost its representativity.²⁵ The only students from post-socialist countries that remained members of the IUS even after the 1992 Congress were the Polish, the Bulgarians and the Romanians.²⁶

The action to save the IUS was taken primarily by the organization's General Secretary Georgios Michaelides. On 23 January 1990, Michaelides gave a report to the Secretariat in which he asked for the reforms of the constitution and the democratization of the IUS. In his report, he stressed the need to overcome the Cold War splits and to turn the IUS into a true student social movement. According to him, it was necessary to reform the membership rules as well as the organizational structure of the IUS. He further proposed that only students should be delegated to the Secretariat, calling out the decades-long practice of nominating middle-aged functionaries. Another sore spot of the IUS was the gender representation, which was completely imbalanced until then and which was to be fixed. Michaelides then called for an extraordinary congress that would discuss and sanction these steps.²⁷

²³ Report to the Secretariat by Giorgos Michaelides, 8 January 1990, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

²⁴ Interview with Franklin Gaston Santibañez, 6 March 2021, online interview. His wife was María Paz Santibañez, a renowned Chilean musician and human rights advocate.

²⁵ Clarification – FDJ. CME, box UIE Congrès extraordinaire 7–10/4/1991.

²⁶ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiant-e-s, CME, box UIE 137.

²⁷ 2nd Draft Comprehensive Platform of Reforms, Changes and Measures for the Further Democratization and Updating of the IUS, 23 November 1990, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Archivnummer: DY 24/21797.

In the report, Michaelides also assessed the positive and negative sides of the IUS history, which should provide aid for 'the future path of the organization'. Among the positive aspects of the IUS activity, he named the support of student travel and sports, peace and environmental initiatives, relief work and literacy campaigns, support against colonialism, and democratization in the Global South and Southern Europe. But, as he continued, the IUS operation had also negative sides. First and foremost, it was the 'influence exerted on the IUS through member unions who were not independent from their governments' policies (particularly in Eastern Europe) and which resulted in the IUS taking one-sided positions on some issues and political developments' – such as the Secretariat's position to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia or the intervention in Afghanistan. This setting of double standards led to overlooking the problems of students in these countries. He further criticized the awarding of medals to politicians from Eastern European countries. He finished by reiterating that the democratization process had been occurring in the IUS already since 1985 and necessary reforms would be a natural continuation of this trend.²⁸

The first opportunity to discuss the reforms arose in February 1990 at a European roundtable discussion organized in Athens on the topic of 'University Education – Role and Impact of European Intergovernmental Bodies – Trends and Tendencies'. The IUS Secretariat used the venue to talk to the member organizations and hear them express their opinions on the propositions previously circulated by Michaelides.²⁹ One of the topics that were discussed was to expand the field of activity and represent also the secondary school students. It was decided to establish the International Union of Secondary School Students (IUSESS) which would be structurally affiliated with the IUS. The existing European secondary school students union – the OBESSU – was invited to participate in the discussion but did not attend.³⁰

After the Athens meeting, the IUS used the whole year of 1990 to meet with member and non-member national organizations as well as with representatives of international and regional student organizations at events in sixteen countries all over the world. A total of 177 organizations from 121 countries and 9 international organizations were consulted regarding the future of the IUS. When these discussions were evaluated, a reform was seen as a natural solution; it was stated that the 'debates on the reform of the IUS are as old as the IUS itself' and that the debate 'is inevitable due to the natural law of evolution, according to which every living structure has to change, evolve and reform itself'.³¹ The conclusion that Michaelides drew from the talks was that there was unanimous support for a reform of the IUS rather than its dissolution and establishment of a new universal structure. Support was expressed even by student unions that were historically very critical towards the IUS, such as the Swiss VSS which launched an initiative already in January 1990 to save the IUS, because they

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Letter of invitation to a European Student Round Table Discussion, February 1990, CME, box UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

³⁰ Giuseppe Beccia, 'La naissance d'un réseau européen des lycéens après 1968', in *Étudiant(e)s du monde en mouvement*, 95–104.

³¹ Summary report on the informal consultative meetings of student organizations on 'The Future of the International Union of Students', 3 December 1990, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

were afraid that it would not survive without an outside intervention.³² There was an agreement that the end of the Cold War brought an opportunity to achieve true unity in the student movement again – and since the IUS was quite representative, uniting student unions from more than 110 countries, its structure was worth saving. The demands for reform emphasized that there must be democratic decision-making and pluralism and a synodical, trade-union-like character of the IUS should be achieved. It was nevertheless suggested that the IUS should follow up on its past successes. Some unions suggested that the IUS should only be a ‘platform to merely provide opportunities for exchanges of information and that it should avoid taking political positions, stances or concrete action on political issues’. In this opinion, we can see the return of the debate (which, in fact, never left) on the role of an international student federation – whether it should be based on the idea of ‘students as such’ or whether it should be politically activist. Other member unions, especially from the Global South, on the contrary, emphasized that the IUS should not lose its anti-colonial orientation and other political dimensions. Based on these discussions, a decision was taken to convene an extraordinary Congress in 1991 in Prague.³³

The rise of the Iron Curtain and the opening of borders allowed former IUS officials to come back and express their opinions. Jiří Pelikán, the former president from the times of the Thaw, could visit Prague again from his exile in Rome. Visiting the headquarters, he was interviewed by Michaelides and gave his opinion on the IUS history. That included the assessment of the Soviet influence in the Secretariat; Pelikán admitted that in his time, the Secretariat was pressured to adopt agenda by the USSR, even though it had little to do with student problems. For the future, he expressed his opinion that the IUS should go back to the roots, ‘the original ideas (...), students as a part of the society and duty also towards the society, then the right to participate in the society’.³⁴ Other ‘founding fathers’ who gave their opinion on how the IUS should be reorganized were Tom Madden and Josef Grohman, the first general secretary and president, respectively. They also agreed that the demise of the bipolar world presented an opportunity for what they saw as the original IUS’s mission and proposed that a new World Student Congress be called to Prague just like in 1945 when the big student gathering drew together contours of a new student movement. Madden also spared no criticism of what the IUS had become. During his visit to the headquarters, he was appalled by the pretentious opulence of the ‘palatial stone structure’ and by the ‘liveried servant in a maroon uniform with gilded epaulettes, who served coffee on a silver service’. He assessed that this ‘petit-bourgeois’ style was characteristic of the ‘Soviet-era bureaucracy’ and in sharp contrast to how his generation ran the business.³⁵

From the reform efforts and support of the student unions of the world, the future of the IUS might have looked promising. But Czechoslovakia was changing fast and

³² VSS/UNES and IUS, 14 February 1991, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

³³ Summary Report on the Informal Consultative Meeting of Student Organizations on ‘The Future of the International Union of Students’, 3 December 1990, CME, box UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

³⁴ A discussion with Jiri Pelikan, NACR, f. MSS, box History of the IUS.

³⁵ Unpublished Memoirs on the History of the IUS, written in Chicago, 2004, CME, box Recueils – Tom Madden.

the new society soon showed that there would not be much benevolence for what was seen as the remnant of the communist dictatorship. A young generation of anti-communist journalists soon noticed that the IUS, along with the IOJ and the World Federation of Trade Unions, were still seated in Prague, and started a crusade.³⁶ A series of critical articles were launched already in the spring of 1990; the attacks, however, were often very poorly informed or just based on speculations. An article in *Studentské listy* suggested that the IUS exported weapons and closely cooperated with a school for terrorists – meaning the University of 17th November, educating primarily students from ‘developing countries’ between 1961 and 1974.³⁷ Another appeared in the *Reportér* magazine which asked the rhetorical question if Jan Opletal, the Czech martyr student murdered by the Nazis, would be happy with how the tradition of the 17th November was used.³⁸

In June 1990, the IUS issued a declaration responding to the accusations that appeared in the press, renouncing that it ever was involved in the arms trade, that it had anything to do with the University 17th November, the ‘school for terrorists’, as it was (also incorrectly) called.³⁹ This declaration only sparked further outraged reactions, such as the one by *Občanský deník*, suggesting the IUS should be judged by its utility to the national student movement:

Do we really need an organization here, from which our students never had any benefit? (...) What did the IUS do for hundreds of thousands of our students during the forty years of its existence? How did we profit from the support of student opposition movements somewhere in distant countries? And did it not support also student movements that turned out to be terrorist groups?⁴⁰

The Czechoslovak authorities started scrutinizing the IUS not long after that. In August 1990, the Federal Ministry of the Interior accepted the change in the statutes and acknowledged that the IUS could continue functioning in Czechoslovakia.⁴¹ On 22 November 1990, however, the government issued a decision that the IUS must end its activity on Czechoslovak territory and launched a committee that was to investigate any eventual offences against Czechoslovak law. The fate of the IUS in Czechoslovakia seemed to be determined by a rollercoaster; in April 1991, the government finally

³⁶ For the new journalist environment in 1990s Czechoslovakia see Veronika Pehe, ‘Média: Bez cenzury, ale komerčně’, in *Večná devadesátá: Proměny české společnosti po roce 1989*, ed. Veronika Pehe and Apolena Rychlíková et al. (Brno: CPress, 2023), 59–78.

³⁷ Martin Bartůněk, ‘MSS? Ne děkuji!’ *Studentské listy*, 24 May 1990.

³⁸ Antonín Trš, ‘Pravda o Mezinárodním svazu studentstva, aneb Opletal by se divil’, *Reportér* 5 (1990): 8.

³⁹ Prohlášení (opravená verze), 15 June 1990, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06-2019. Even though it is true that the IUS had little to do with the U17N, the statement that the university was a school for terrorists has to be corrected as well. This assertion was based on claims by defected Czechoslovak secret service officers, most notably Josef Frolík. See Marta Edith Holečková, *Příběh zapomenuté university*, 14–16.

⁴⁰ Opravdu potřebujeme Mezinárodní svaz studentstva? In *Občanský deník*, 21 June 1990.

⁴¹ Upravené stanovy Mezinárodního svazu studentstva – sdělení, 10 August 1990. NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06-2019. The change in the statutes was already confirmed by the 1987 Havana congress.

decided that the IUS could stay. The newspaper *Studentské listy* attacked the decision and asked Czechoslovak ministers of foreign affairs, interior and the deputy prime minister why they acted with such a benevolence towards the organizations whose 'negative role was unequivocal' and asked what would happen if a reformed Ku Klux Klan asked for registration in Czechoslovakia. The answer was – even though the activity of the IUS was immoral, it was not illegal, and if the new democratic Czechoslovakia insists that there is a rule of law, then the law must be obeyed.⁴²

But the rollercoaster was still not finished. On 21 August 1991, Federal Minister of the Interior Ján Langoš withdrew permission from the IUS to function on Czechoslovak soil. The decision came as a shock to the Secretariat. The directive was justified by the argument that the IUS was a collaborating organization that had betrayed its original purpose: 'The IUS, in cooperation with the leading structures of the totalitarian regime, developed activity that conflicted with its mission.'⁴³ The spokesman of the Ministry justified the decision with statements such as that 'the IUS was working for 40 years against the CSFR'; that it 'provided space and help for different security agencies' or that it 'helped train terrorists', repeating the allegations that were little substantiated.⁴⁴

The Secretariat tried to battle the decision, arguing that it was only up to the member unions to decide whether the activity conflicted with the mission. It appealed against the decision and started mobilizing student unions around the world to put in a word for the IUS to the Czechoslovak government. Several student organizations answered the call and sent their protests against the decision, including the European Student Information Bureau (WESIB which dropped the W after the fall of the Iron Curtain, becoming ESIB), the Northern Council Youth, the CENYC, and members unions from Canada, France and Belgium.⁴⁵ Allison Lewis, the representative of the Canadian Federation of Students, even wrote a letter to Czechoslovak President Václav Havel, asking him to reconsider the decision and referring to the democratization reforms within the IUS.⁴⁶ On the other side, another wave of criticism by Czechoslovak media hit the IUS in the autumn of 1991.⁴⁷ Czech liberal weekly *Respekt* published a comment on the IUS and its reform – again, very poorly informed. The author noticed that there was mobility among the socialist INGOs but considered it proof of their perfidiousness.⁴⁸ One of the members of the Secretariat at the time, Stephen Grogan from Ireland, said that the slander did not interest him: 'This was not so important for me – I was working for an international organization – that just happened to be based in Prague.'⁴⁹

⁴² Ivan Brezina a Martin Bartůňek, MSS a MON: Jak dlouho ještě? In *Studentské listy* 10 (May 1991).

⁴³ Federální Ministerstvo vnitra, Rozhodnutí o Mezinárodním svazu studentstva, 21 August 1991, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁴⁴ Press statement of the Secretariat of the International Union of Students, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁴⁵ Letters in NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁴⁶ Allison Lewis to Václav Havel, 6 September 1991, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁴⁷ Ivan Brezina, 'Stop MSS a MON', in *Studentské listy* 9 (1991).

⁴⁸ Jaroslav Spurný, 'Nejsme to, co kdysi', *Respekt*, September 1991, 23–9.

⁴⁹ Interview with Stephen Grogan, 1 November 2023, online interview.

In December, the appeal was renounced. The IUS got one year to leave Prague – until the end of 1992. Again, a wave of letters from student organizations around the world, including Canada, Germany, Norway, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and even the United States, pleaded for the IUS.⁵⁰ When the time was almost up in December 1992, the Minister of the Interior confirmed the decision to evict the headquarters. But at the same time, the decision for the IUS to stop all activity on Czechoslovak soil was reconsidered as unbased – so the IUS could stay, it only could not be officially seated in Prague.⁵¹ Other Prague-based international organizations were also affected by this decision. The IOJ decided to leave Prague for good and relocated entirely to Madrid. It was ultimately dissolved in 2016.⁵² The World Federation of Trade Unions stayed a little longer but ultimately relocated to Athens, where it resides to this day.

In the meantime, the IUS was undergoing substantial changes. In January 1991, an extraordinary congress was summoned to Prague to outline the strategy to adapt to the new world. However, the biggest change was in the organization's functioning. A big news was the reform of the membership rules; the principle that only one national student union from a country can become a member was abandoned. That meant that the IUS was open for student organizations of a regional, political or religious character, or, for example, student unions from individual universities. Students from some countries used the opportunity right away – from India, four organizations applied for membership.⁵³ Another substantial organizational reform lay in the structure. The IUS was to be further regionalized – the already existing regional committees were to set up offices with delegated persons permanently in place – a step that was meant to bring the IUS closer to the students.

Another interesting venture established at the extraordinary congress was the International Student Foundation Ltd (ISF). Walking in the footsteps of the IUS's business activities in the late 1980s, the ISF was an independent legal body where only student organizations could hold shares. It was established by seventeen student organizations, including the IUS, AASU, OCLAE, ISTB, GUAS and others. The idea approved by the extraordinary congress was that the IUS would remain the main shareholder; no individual national union of students would own more than 3 per cent of the stock, and regional INGOs more than 6 per cent. Seated in Guernsey, UK, the activity of the ISF would be to develop projects that would provide student service and generate profit for the shareholders at the same time. In particular, it would concern with tourism, running restaurants, exchange offices or renting buildings. One of the first projects was to build and rent bungalows in Greece. Another goal, in light of the possible eviction of the IUS from Czechoslovakia, was to sell the IUS building

⁵⁰ Letter by representatives of Western student unions to the Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior, 2 October 1992, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁵¹ Minister of the Interior Čermák to the International Union of Students, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06–2019.

⁵² Nordenstreng, *The Rise and Fall*, 194–208.

⁵³ Interview with Siddalinga Swamy, 26 February 2023, online interview.

to the ISF, which would then rent it, acting as a real estate agent.⁵⁴ The president of the board was Georgios Michaelides, who admitted that it was an attempt to generate money and consolidate the situation after the sources from the Cold War times went dry.⁵⁵ However, the ISF never really took off; the bungalow project in Greece was a huge loss of money. By 1994, the whole business was practically dead.⁵⁶

The reforms continued at the next ordinary Congress that took place in Larnaca in Cyprus in 1992. Some constitutional changes were taking place – while the Congress remained the highest authority, the Council was also reinstated to decide important matters in between Congresses. The Secretariat was renamed Executive Secretariat, replacing the Executive Committee. A new practice was introduced – to implement referenda on important issues to advise the Secretariat. Several other structural changes were implemented, including the official foundation of the IUSESS, the branch union for secondary school students.⁵⁷ Some of the specialized agencies would be taken outside of the headquarters and directly run by member organizations.⁵⁸ A new leadership was elected into the Executive Secretariat, including the General Secretary Moeti Mpuru from South Africa and the President Manish Tewari from India. Other candidates for the two highest positions of the IUS were from Cyprus, Ghana, Palestine, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe – demonstrating a shift in the gravity centre of the IUS from Europe towards the Global South after the end of the Cold War.⁵⁹ However, Tewari never assumed his position in Prague and resigned a couple of months later, in February 1993, after which a call for nominations for the new president was issued.⁶⁰

The changes in the membership were happening gradually. As already stated, many Eastern Europeans dropped out; already the extraordinary congress in 1991 observed that the unity of students which was hitherto seen as an ideal became a symbol of communist oppression in Eastern Europe, with ‘dozens of student organizations mushrooming in the region’ as a consequence.⁶¹ But the end of the Cold War also meant that several Western student unions reaffiliated to the IUS – among them the Canadians, Dutch, Germans, Belgians and New Zealanders.⁶² The focus, however,

⁵⁴ Report of the board of directors of ISF Ltd to the newly elected Executive Secretariat of the IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, box SEC 1994-1995.

⁵⁵ Interview with Georgios Michaelides, 22 February 2025, online interview.

⁵⁶ Paper for the Board of Directors on the Preparation of the ISF Ltd., Accounts for Presentation to the General Meeting. NAČR, f. MSS, box SEC 1994-1995.

⁵⁷ Constitution of the International Union of Secondary School Students (IUSESS), NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Organizační směrnice ředitele aparátu MSS, Spisový řád.

⁵⁸ At the Larnaca Congress, two specialized structures ISCCA and ISPESC were put outside of the IUS and the Polish ZSP was specifically put in charge of them. Report from Giorgos Michaelides (outgoing IUS Secretary General) to the newly elected executive secretariat (ES) of the IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06-2019.

⁵⁹ IUS Constitutional Committee. List of candidatures submitted for positions electable at the 16th IUS Congress, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Organizační směrnice ředitele aparátu MSS, Spisový řád.

⁶⁰ The Case of the IUS President, in IUS Update, May 1993. Tewari would later assume positions in Indian parliament and government.

⁶¹ Report of the IUS Secretariat to the EC Meeting and the IUS Extraordinary Congress, February 1991. CME, box UIE Congrès extraordinaire 7-10/4/1991.

⁶² Second Report on the IUS Membership Review and Requests for New Affiliations. NAČR, f. MSS, box 16. Congress IUS Larnaca 1992.

clearly shifted to the countries of the Global South where the bulk of the member organizations rested.

Before the new Executive Secretariat arrived in Prague, Michaelides wrote a report in which he informed them how the organization worked in the last years. Three floors of the building were vacated and to be used for other purposes. Juventus hotel was handed over to restituted owners who agreed to buy the IUS equipment. The new Executive was to confirm Mohamed Fall in the role of the representative at UNESCO which he did for free. Most importantly, they would have to deal with the eviction attempt by the Czechoslovak government. Michaelides recommended that the issue be brought to the European Court for Human Rights, as Czechoslovakia had been bound by its decisions since its admission to the Council of Europe.⁶³

A growing problem of the incoming Executive Secretariat was the budget. A financial audit was carried out in 1991 and it concluded that there was an urgent need to cut expenses, as the incomes were running dry.⁶⁴ A year later at the beginning of 1992, another auditor asserted that 'what is striking is the necessity to drastically reduce expenditures as the union continues to spend more than it has as income'.⁶⁵ What further added to the problem was that the member unions largely did not pay the membership fees which were supposed to be the main source of income. The International Student Travel Bureau, one of the IUS's specialized agencies, was losing money at had to be shut down for good. The property that the IUS was leasing generated much less income than it had been projected. And the costs rose dramatically in the Czech Republic. As shown in the previous chapter, the profit from the sales of the ISIC was taken over by the International Student Travel Confederation, but after 1989, this organization stopped paying the IUS the agreed amount.⁶⁶ This situation led to staff reduction – most of the Czech apparatus was fired and the International Student Research Center was reduced to three people only.⁶⁷

As it was summed up by the Irish delegate Stephen Grogan: 'November 1989 worked to both speed up the (political) reform and reorganization process but removed the organizational stability and eroded the financial and human resources which [the IUS] had built up as a legal entity in Czechoslovakia.' One of the problems was that with the loss of a substantial part of the old leadership, the ability of the IUS to 'train in new people and enable them to gain the skills, knowledge and global view' diminished.⁶⁸

⁶³ Report from Giorgos Michaelides (outgoing IUS Secretary General) to the newly elected executive secretariat (ES) of the IUS, NAČR, f. MSS, box NA 1499/06-2019.

⁶⁴ Report of the auditor, 29 March 1991, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

⁶⁵ Report of the auditor, NAČR, f. MSS, box Balance sheet 1991.

⁶⁶ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiant-e-s, CME, box UIE 137.

⁶⁷ The IUS and Its Current Activities. About the ISRC. NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Stanovy, organizační záležitosti, 1979–1993.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stephen Grogan, 1 November 2023, online interview.

Decay

Despite the financial problems and complicated reorganizations, the IUS continued to function as a student INGO in the first half of the 1990s. There were visible changes in the activities; for example, Congress in Larnaca adopted measures in 1992 to encourage women to run for positions in the IUS Executive Secretariat.⁶⁹ Allison Lewis, the representative of the newly reaffiliated Canadian Federation of Students, took the position of secretary for Equality and Women's Rights. She took her job seriously. From the headquarters, she started a new periodical entitled *IUS Women's Newsletter*, which was published in English, Spanish, French and Arabic. She was a part of the international 'No Means No' campaign, presented worldwide. But even though the IUS started addressing the problem of women's rights, it still has a lot of deficiencies in this regard. Despite the encouragement, she was one of only two women in the new leadership that arose from the Larnaca Congress.⁷⁰ 'Most of the men on the Secretariat', she remembered, 'did not see the need for talk of women's issues – we were all equal already. I found it echoed typical communist thought that everyone was already equal.'⁷¹

Most of the topics that the IUS promoted in the 1990s were not new; it was rather a continuous evolution from the 1980s rather than a leapfrog change. The 1992 Congress also thematized the problems of AIDS or drug abuse among the youth.⁷² The IUS also continued in pursuing the environmental issues. The Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 that pushed the international debate on climate change was preceded by the Brundtland Report,⁷³ elaborated by the team of the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The IUS Secretariat was collaborating with the team as well as in preparation of the Earth Summit. The summit itself was a high moment for the NGOs – more than 1,400 were accredited.⁷⁴ According to the Indian member of the Secretariat, Siddalinga Swamy, the IUS also took part in the preparation of the summit.⁷⁵ The Executive Secretariat was also continuing in its cooperation with international NGOs and intergovernmental organizations on the ECOSOC platform.⁷⁶ Another platform that continued was the Framework of AEYSC – since its main purpose was to facilitate cooperation between Eastern and Western European youth, there was a question of whether it would continue to exist after the end of the Cold War. The first Framework meeting after 1989 took place in the autumn of 1990 and did not discuss

⁶⁹ Issues of constitutional development, NAČR f. MSS, box 16. Congress IUS Larnaca 1992.

⁷⁰ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiant-e-s, CME, box UIE 137.

⁷¹ Interview with Allison Lewis, 24 April 2024, interview via e-mail.

⁷² 1st Draft document on the work of the IUS on the issues of AIDS, drug abuse, family planning and student health, NAČR, f. MSS, box 16. Congress IUS Larnaca 1992.

⁷³ Daniel Laqua, *Activism across Borders*, 302.

⁷⁴ Davies, NGOs, 154.

⁷⁵ Interview with Siddalinga Swamy, 26 February 2023, online interview.

⁷⁶ Report of the meeting of the conference of non-governmental organizations (Congo) and the Geneva Informal Meeting (GIM), 30 August 1993, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS 1992–1995.

the problem yet.⁷⁷ The next took place in Brussels in 1992 and the further existence became the main point of discussion. At that meeting, it was stated that the Framework was already obsolete and the cooperation could continue within the structure of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The IUS delegate admitted that the AEYSC was a product of its time and space and under the circumstances, it was a success. He argued that there is a need for coordination on the European level and dissolution of AEYSC would create a gap.⁷⁸ The conviction of obsolescence, however, prevailed and the Framework was thereby dissolved.⁷⁹

Politically, there was a visible shift in the IUS line, but the main focus remained in the Global South. The 1991 Executive Committee meeting criticized the US military interventions in Panama and Iraq but also denounced the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.⁸⁰ It also adopted a resolution condemning the massacre of Chinese students at Tiananmen Square to amend the silence that previously prevailed. The end of apartheid and democratization of South Africa and the decolonization in Namibia were considered great victories. The IUS also continued to support Palestinian self-determination and welcomed the Oslo Agreements in 1993, building hopes for the future.⁸¹ Georgios Michaelides gave a report to the 1991 Extraordinary Congress, outlining his view of the new realities. He appreciated the new initiatives increasing student mobility but at the same time stressed negative effects, such as cuts in scholarship schemes which caused many Global South students to interrupt their studies and return home. The cuts in spending on education to achieve prosperity were in fact a fallacy, he thought. He further criticized that the post-Cold War focus was on the reconstruction of the East 'as if the problems of the South did not exist', and the end of the East–West conflict widened the gap between the North and the South. Hopes for the future, he continued, were undermined by continuing exercises of power – such as interventions in Panama and violent suppression in Lithuania. The invasion of Kuwait was rightly condemned, but the international community was not able to do the same in the case of Israel. All in all, he concluded, the IUS must keep on pursuing ideals of justice, freedom, democracy and non-violence.⁸²

For the new Executive Secretariat, this agenda proved very difficult to pursue with the uncertain position of the IUS in the Czech Republic. To secure the future, the Secretariat started to scout for possible locations which could become a new home to the organization's headquarters. In cooperation with its member organizations, the IUS looked for a place in a city and a country that would both be cooperative – meaning that they would not obstruct the visa, would provide a suitable legal framework, and

⁷⁷ AEYSC Framework – VII Consultative Meeting, Malta, 30 November – 2 December 1990, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 110.

⁷⁸ Comments on the Future of the Framework for All-European Youth and Student Cooperation, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 110.

⁷⁹ Draft minutes of the IX consultative meeting of AEYSC, Brussels, 19 September 1992, HAEU, f. CENYC, box 110.

⁸⁰ Document on the Work of the IUS in the Asian and Pacific Region, CME, box UIE Congrès extraordinaire 7–10/4/1991.

⁸¹ Statement on the Palestinian-Israeli Agreement, 30 September 1993, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992.

⁸² Report of the IUS Secretariat to the EC Meeting and the IUS Extraordinary Congress. CME, box UIE Congrès extraordinaire 7–10/4/1991.

ideally also offer accommodation possibilities, cheap rent or tax reductions. At the same time, the city needed to be well-connected with the world. Several countries were considered, including Greece, India and Belgium. The German member union offered the city of Bonn for headquarters, suggesting to use of the former federal buildings vacated after the transfer of the capital back to Berlin. Three options were finally found the most suitable – Paris, Madrid and The Hague – and the IUS sent out delegations to visit the possible locations.⁸³

In the end, it was decided that the IUS headquarters would move to the Netherlands where the Dutch student union managed to secure the best environment. The city of The Hague offered a building of a school which was moving to a newer facility. The municipality was also willing to renovate the building, prepare the offices for use and adapt it to the needs of an international NGO. The IUS could stay in the building rent-free for two years after which there was an option for the IUS to purchase it. Moreover, the Dutch Ministry of Education gave about 100,000 USD (200,000 guildens) for the relocation of furniture, equipment and other accessories from Prague to The Hague.⁸⁴ The city even published a booklet entitled *The Hague: Headquarters of the International Union of Students* with the introduction and words of welcome by the city mayor and the president of the Dutch student union, presenting information on the city and the country and including pictures of the IUS General Secretary Moeti Mpuru's visit.⁸⁵

In 1993, practical preparations for the transfer were already underway. Several Secretariat members including the General Secretary Mpuru moved partially or fully to The Hague to oversee the relocation.⁸⁶ The Secretariat started packing and transferring the furniture, computers and other equipment to the new headquarters, as well as most of the archive. The Secretariat was also preparing for the sales or liquidation of the remaining assets in Prague – such as a printing house – and for the discharging of the remaining Czechoslovak staff who were not expected to relocate along with the headquarters.⁸⁷ The official transfer of the headquarters was supposed to happen in early 1994.

However, there were procedural obstacles. The transfer of the headquarters had to be sanctioned by the IUS Congress, as it required a change in the Constitution, which declared that Prague was the seat of the organization already since 1946. With an official Congress not planned any time soon and the organization unable to convene at least the Council, the question was put to a referendum; all member unions were supposed to approve the relocation by mail. Even though the deadline was twice prolonged, the two-thirds of votes from member organizations necessary to amend the Constitution were never secured, as most of the members simply did not respond. The Secretariat warned that 'if we do a U-turn, the Dutch will want their money back

⁸³ Statut légal de l'UIE en République tchèque, 11 November 1993, CME, box UIE 137; IUS Change of Residence / Location, NAČR, f. MSS, box Náplň práce.

⁸⁴ The relocation of the IUS HQ to The Hague, 31 October 1994, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Building Matters 1994.

⁸⁵ The Hague: Headquarters of the International Union of Students, NAČR, f. MSS, box Náplň práce.

⁸⁶ CENAC circular information letter, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992 16/92.

⁸⁷ A study on what should happen to Roto Foto within the framework of the relocation of the IUS headquarters to the city of The Hague, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Building Matters 1994.

and the credibility of the IUS will be so damaged that no one will consider hosting it again' – but to no avail.⁸⁸ In October 1994 it was acknowledged that the whole relocation project was a failure. In consequence, all the work put into the transfer was in vain and the IUS archive had to be brought back to Prague, at the cost of the German member organization.

And the problems kept piling up. By 1994, the financial situation that was hoped to be resolved by the relocation and sales of the Prague headquarters building became untenable. Two members of the Secretariat stated that the building had to be sold immediately otherwise the IUS would not have money to go on working; the cars had to be sold as well and staff drastically reduced. They warned that if the situation was not resolved by the end of January 1995, then there would have to be a state of emergency declared, in which only a treasurer and two secretaries with legal signature rights would remain, all others would have to go home or be funded by their organizations.⁸⁹ All missions abroad had to be put on hold for financial reasons, even though it would cause political damage.⁹⁰ For not being able to pay the taxes, the IUS was distrained.⁹¹

Moreover, the campaign of Czech authorities to evict the IUS which was delayed because of the breakup of Czechoslovakia was renewed. Minister of the Interior Jan Ruml rejected the appeal of the IUS and confirmed the decision to deprive the IUS of the seat in Prague in 1995. The reason was that the IUS was 'connected with the former state and political power of the totalitarian regime of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic'.⁹² the IUS also sued the Czech Ministry of the Interior for confirming the decision from 1991/2. The basis of the suit was that there was a procedural mistake – the ministry could only revoke a permit from an international organization to have a seat in Czechoslovakia/Czechia if the statutes were not in contradiction with Czech legal order – which they were not, as it was argued.⁹³

With the failed relocation and disastrous financial situation, the Secretariat itself started to break apart. The Ghanaian delegate complained already in 1993 that there was a 'culture of apathy in the Executive Secretariat' and that people were not attending its meetings.⁹⁴ This got even worse with the imminent crisis and at the beginning of 1995 the IUS did not have the necessary funds to run the operation anymore. Most members of the Executive Secretariat elected at the Larnaca Congress in 1992 resigned or abandoned their posts and returned to their home countries. One of them was the General Secretary Moeti Mpuru who resigned for personal reasons and for having to tend to his business in South Africa, leaving already in August 1994. The problem was,

⁸⁸ The relocation of the IUS to The Hague, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Building Matters 1994.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Statement by Rainer Gehnen on the decisions of the Executive Secretariat regarding suspension of IUS missions due to financial constraints, NAČR, f. MSS, Minutes of Secretariat 1993–1995.

⁹¹ Finanční úřad pro Prahu 1, Exekuční příkaz, 16 December 1992.

⁹² Minister of the Interior of the Czech Republic to the International Union of Students, 8 March 1995, NAČR, f. MSS, Minutes of Secretariat 1993–1995.

⁹³ Žaloba proti rozhodnutí žalovaného ze dne 8–3.1995 č. J. LK-4748/93, 16 May 1995, NAČR, f. MSS, Minutes of Secretariat 1993–1995.

⁹⁴ Minutes of the Executive Secretariat Meeting No. 46, 17 August 1993, NAČR, f. MSS, Minutes of Secretariat 1993–1995.

as discussed at a Secretariat meeting, that he also owed a substantial amount of money to the IUS.⁹⁵ Another defected delegate was accused of having kept an IUS car.⁹⁶

The IUS entered the stage of decay. In 1996, only three members of the Secretariat remained: Leslie Rivas of Nicaragua, Samwin Banienuba of Ghana and Zakaria Abdourahamane of Niger. Rivas held the position of treasurer; Banienuba and Abdourahamane assumed posts of interim general secretary and president, respectively. Under such circumstances, it was not possible to organize the Congress. The remaining Secretariat members invited the member organizations elected in the Secretariat to Prague in 1996 to discuss the critical situation and also to celebrate the half-centenary since the foundation of the IUS at the first World Student Congress. Despite this significant occasion, only the National Union of Students of Syria responded to the invitation. In 1997, the Germans and Canadians nominated new representatives in the Secretariat. After the Nicaraguan treasurer resigned in 1998, the Secretariat consisted of Banienuba, Abdourahamane, Ingo Jäger from Germany, and Elizabeth Carlyle from Canada.⁹⁷ The membership fees, paid only by the Germans, Canadians and Libyans, were used mostly for judicial expenses and paying off the most vindictive creditors.

Under the circumstances, the key problem was to convene a Congress or at least a Council that would have a mandate to set the further course. A Council was supposed to be held in Brazil in 1993; after the planned relocation, one was envisaged to take place in the Netherlands. In 1995, the constitutional meeting was supposed to be organized by in South Africa and Algerian students were also interested in hosting such an event.⁹⁸ But none of these plans materialized. It seemed that the IUS was not able to hold such an event on its own anymore and had to rely on meetings during events convened by others.

An informal meeting of the IUS member organizations took place in Havana in 1997 during the World Festival of Youth and Students. The Festivals were a part of the transnational socialist network and their preparation was heavily disrupted by the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. It took eight years since the last Festival in Pyongyang in 1989, but the movement survived, and with the Havana Festival, the movement started its new post-Cold War history centred in the Global South and articulating policies critical to capitalist globalization. The IUS was no longer active in its preparation but at least could use its venue for its own gathering. In Havana, the remaining members of the Secretariat informed the student representatives of the dismal situation in Prague – the financial situation was not getting any better, with ongoing daily expenses but little income. The building was a valuable asset – there was an attempt to lease it but problems with the tenant caused that there was no income from

⁹⁵ Minutes of IUS Executive Secretariat meeting no. 89. Tuesday, 10 January 1995. NAČR, f. MSS, Minutes of Secretariat 1993–1995.

⁹⁶ The relocation of the IUS to The Hague, NAČR, f. MSS, box MSS, Building Matters 1994.

⁹⁷ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiante-s, CME, box UIE 137.

⁹⁸ Rapport du Secrétariat exécutif au conseil et au 17^e Congrès de l'Union internationale des étudiante-s, CME, box UIE 137; Circular letter to all member unions, April 1999, CME, UIE 16 Congrès 1992 16/92.

the rent and the IUS created a substantial debt. In consequence, there were no events organized and even communication was difficult because the Secretariat diminished. There were many offers to hold events but always failed for financial reasons. On the bright side, the Secretariat was able to attend at least the UNESCO events and this way stay in touch with its member organizations. And another communication channel appeared for mass use in the late 1990s – the internet. The IUS created its website where it published information and started communicating via e-mail, reducing the costs of the post. The webpage was provided by the University of Hanover. In their report at Havana, the Secretariat said that the ‘remaining members of the ES have been doing whatever they could to help. However, as human beings, they have their limits beyond which they may not be able to go any further.’⁹⁹

The member organizations did not find the IUS dead yet. The problem was the money. They kept meeting at other events – at the United Nations Forum for the Youth in Vienna in 1996, at the World Festival of Youth in Costa Caparica in Portugal in 1998, at the OCLAE Congress in Brasilia in 1998, and at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in October 1998.¹⁰⁰ The expenses of the Executive Secretariat to travel to these events were covered by the Germans, Canadians, Quebecois or Libyans. There were also many offers to host the next Congress – by the Canadians, Indians, Macedonians, Algerians, Libyans, Colombians and the French.¹⁰¹ The German delegate even considered organizing a Congress in Hanover on the occasion of the Expo in 2000.¹⁰²

The Executive Secretariat determined in the end that the seventeenth Congress would take place in March 2000 in Tripoli, the capital of Libya. The main reason was that Libyans promised to pay for both the Council and Congress, contribute to travel expenses, and assist financially with the preparations. Not everybody was comfortable with this choice because of the human rights violations in Libya and decided not to go – among others the French or the Dutch.¹⁰³ The goal for the Council and the Congress was clear – to revive the IUS and secure it for the future. The Congress indeed took place – eight years after the last one in Larnaca in 1992. The attendance was not bad, with delegates from fifty-eight countries and observers from nine international organizations gathered.¹⁰⁴ The participants were received by Muammar Qaddafi himself. The Congress elected a Libyan, Frage Sherif, as the new general secretary, and the Canadian Elizabeth Carlyle as treasurer.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Paper on the Informal Meeting on the International Union of Students, CME, UIE 16 Congres 1992 16/92.

¹⁰⁰ Rapport du S cretariat ex cutif au conseil et au 17  Congr s de l’Union internationale des  tudiant-e-s, CME, box UIE 137.

¹⁰¹ Rapport du S cretariat ex cutif au conseil et au 17  Congr s de l’Union internationale des  tudiant-e-s, CME, box UIE 137; Circular letter to all member unions, April 1999, CME, UIE 16 Congres 1992 16/92.

¹⁰² Interview with Ingo J ger, 10 May 2024, online interview.

¹⁰³ Interview with Ingo J ger, 10 May 2024, online interview.

¹⁰⁴ IUS 17th Congress – Participants fees paid, 31 March 2000, CME, box UIE 137.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Ingo J ger, 10 May 2024, online interview.

Even though the Congress could seem like a success, this impression did not last. It is very difficult to track the IUS activity after 2000 – there is no documentation and only sporadic pieces of information. On the website, there was a call to celebrate the International Students' Day.¹⁰⁶ The IUS representatives formally took part in conferences that followed up on the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in Geneva in 2000 and Accra in 2002. In 2003, the IUS was able to organize its last event, a Council Meeting in Montreal, attended by the regional organizations AASU, ASA, ESIB, GUAS and OCLAE.¹⁰⁷ The last reported activity was another conference in Ghana in 2003, after which the IUS apparently became entirely dormant.¹⁰⁸ But there was no exact date by which the IUS officially stopped functioning.

Legacies

The era after 1989 signified a definite demise of the old student internationalism; one that was shaken by the 1968 process but that was kept alive by the Cold War. The 1990s accelerated Europeanization, with Western networks spreading to the East. In the rest of the world, the end of the Cold War also strengthened regionalization. In Europe, the new internationalism was characterized by the most successful student mobility programme ever – the Erasmus. The so-called Bologna Process, launched in 1999, was meant to create the European Higher Education Area, harmonizing the national educational systems and further facilitating the exchange. It was an inter-governmental project but the students were also sitting at the table – by a decision taken at an intergovernmental meeting in Prague in 2001.¹⁰⁹

The ESIB did survive and took part in these processes. In April 1990 ESIB already suggested the creation of a single organization on the blueprint of the European Meetings, which were to be abandoned.¹¹⁰ This did not materialize but instead, it became pan-European. In 2007, it was transformed into the European Student Union (ESU). To some extent, it remained political, advocating for human rights in Europe (such as in Belarus) and liberal democracy. At the end of the 1990s, it also finally

¹⁰⁶ IUS calls on governments to defend public education, build peace. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070607030713/http://www.stud.uni-hannover.de/gruppen/ius/index.html> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹⁰⁷ Julie Ness, 'Geo-politics and Student Unionism. A History of International Student Organization', in *No Student Left Out: The Do's & Don'ts of Student Participation in Higher Education Decision-Making*, ed. Karina Ufert (Brussels: ESU, 2011), 19–31.

¹⁰⁸ Luke Shore and Viktor Grøne, 'Between Tokenism and Inclusion: The Student Movement in the Post-2015 Process', in *Grading Goal Four-Tensions, Threats, and Opportunities in the Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education*, ed. Antonia Wulff (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2020), 339–64.

¹⁰⁹ Päll and Ufert, 'Introduction: Enhancing the Students' Contribution to the Bologna Process', in *No Student Left Out*, 10–14.

¹¹⁰ Report on the SWG and Prepcom of the EM of NUSes and WESIB Seminar, 19 April 1990, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen, Archivnummer: DY 24/21873.

settled down and found a permanent seat, first in Vienna and then in Brussels.¹¹¹ There were, however, also critics, such as the European Education Forum, contesting the ESU's representativity and its elitism, as well as its role in the Bologna Process, seen as a neoliberal endeavour commodifying education.¹¹² As per Julie Ness, however, the ESIB was trying to promote the idea that education should be a right and not a tool of economic growth, as institutions such as the World Trade Organization or the World Bank saw it. Acknowledging the inheritance of the IUS in this regard, the ESIB even tried to revive the IUS in the late 1990s and 2000s – after the World Conference on Higher Education by UNESCO in 1998 and the IUS Congress in 2000.¹¹³ Outside of Europe, other regional organizations also remained active, particularly the AASU and the OCLAE. Both organizations retained some revolutionary tendencies (e.g. protesting the blockade of Cuba), recognizing the heritage of the IUS.

In 2016, representatives of national student unions met in Norway at a Global Student Voice seminar. The outcome of the event was the Bergen Declaration, proclaiming the 'desire for universal cooperation in the defense of student rights, public tertiary education, and access to education for all'. Further discussions with regional partners led to the foundation of the Global Student Forum in 2020. The Secretariat has been hosted by Education International, the umbrella organization for workers in the field of education, in Brussels since 2021. Cooperation on developmental projects, with UNESCO, World Bank, OECD, Open Society Foundation, Education International, International Association of Universities and others.¹¹⁴ Once again was thus established an umbrella platform that sought to represent the students of the world. The Global Student Forum also subscribed to the legacy of the IUS, albeit acknowledging its deficiencies.¹¹⁵

The International Students' Day is perhaps the most visible legacy of the IUS. The ESU and OBESSU jointly recognized the tradition of the 17th November at the World Social Forum in Mumbai in 2004. With explicit reference to the 17 November 1939 and 1989 in Prague and in Athens in 1973, the renewed commemoration was synthesizing the IUS tradition with the student protest of the long sixties and the struggle for civil rights in socialist countries.¹¹⁶ Likewise, the day became acknowledged by the new Global Student Forum. In the Czech Republic, the tradition was overshadowed by

¹¹¹ Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson-Pallo and Matteo Vespa, 'The European Students' Union: The Adaptive Nature of a European Interest Organization', in *Bloomsbury Handbook on Higher Education*, 65–82.

¹¹² Ibid., 75. See also Geneviève Genicot, 'À l'école buissonnière du lobbying. L'élite étudiante de l'ESIB', in *Lobbyistes et lobbying de l'Union européenne: Trajectories, formations et pratiques des représentants d'intérêts*, ed. Hélène Michel (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2005), 113–41.

¹¹³ Ness, 'Geo-politics and Student Unionism', 19–31.

¹¹⁴ Sebastian Berger, Giuseppe Lipari, Georgia Potton and Carmen Romero, 'The Emergence of the Global Student Forum and Prospects for Increased Student Participation within the International Education Polity', in *Bloomsbury Handbook on Higher Education*, 83–102.

¹¹⁵ History of the Student Movement. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/tag/history-of-the-student-movement/> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹¹⁶ *International Students' Day: focus on #StudentWelfare!* – <https://www.obessu.org/resources/news/international-students-day-focus-on-studentwelfare/> [cit. 15 May 2025]; The History of November 17th – <https://www.esu-online.org/?news=the-history-of-november-17th> [cit. 15 May 2025].

the new 17th November – the memory of the day that started the Velvet Revolution. The International Students' Day became the Day of the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy and the founding legend of the new post-socialist regime. In 2019, however, International Students' Day was officially reinstated as a part of the national holiday. As an important day for the Czech political identity, the celebration of the holiday takes different forms – from protests against immigration to Europe to climatic strikes.¹¹⁷

At the same time, new forms of activism emerged after the end of the Cold War – the new social movements that were opposed to capitalist globalization led by the West.¹¹⁸ After the turn of the millennium, this strand of activism most notably materialized in the World Social Forum and 'the spirit of Porto Alegre', as Immanuel Wallerstein called it.¹¹⁹ It is perhaps no accident that the tradition of International Students' Day was revived at the World Social Forum in Mumbai. While the momentum of the WSF somewhat faded away, transnational movements arose – students were formulating new forms of action against neoliberal policies after the 2008 financial crisis.¹²⁰ Another widespread action has been the climate movement, in which students play a prominent role. In Fridays for Future, we can see how the new generation of student activists is approaching the common threat of climate change on a transnational level.¹²¹ The student movement in Serbia that sparked in 2024 showed a new form of student political activism.¹²² But only time will tell if it becomes a model for the international studentship.

The World Festivals of Youth and Students also survived the Cold War, which is still organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth. As mentioned above, the first Festival in the new era took place in Havana, followed by the Festival in Algeria (Algiers) in 2001, Venezuela (Caracas) in 2005, South Africa (Tshwane) in 2010, and Ecuador (Quito) in 2013.¹²³ So far, as of 2025, the last Festival took place in Sochi, Russia, in 2017. Historian Pia Koivunen thought Russia hijacked the movement for its own purposes: 'Instead of bringing the traditional World Youth Festival, the Russian organizers reappropriated the event for their current needs. Therefore, central in the festival program was not anti-imperialism or the fight against capitalist exploitation, but the celebration of Russian popular culture, commercial activities, and Russian

¹¹⁷ Mikuláš Pešta, 'Polozapomenutý listopad', 90–100. See also Jakub Jareš, 'Výročí 17. listopadu 1989: Den boje studentů za svobodu a demokracii z pohledu roku 2004, aneb kolik máme listopadů?' *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 46, no. 1–2 (2006): 220–3.

¹¹⁸ Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹¹⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Structural Crisis in the World-System: Where Do We Go from Here?' *Monthly Review* 62, no. 10 (2011); Teivo Teivainen, 'The World Social Forum and global democratisation: Learning from Porto Alegre', *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2002): 621–32.

¹²⁰ Donatella della Porta, Lorenzo Cini and César Guzmán-Concha, *Contesting Higher Education Student Movements against Neoliberal Universities* (Bristol: University Press, 2020).

¹²¹ M. Sommer and S. Haunss (eds.), *Fridays for Future – Die Jugend gegen den Klimawandel: Konturen der weltweiten Protestbewegung* (Bielefeld: About Bielefeld University Press, 2020); Daniel Laqua and Nikolaos Papadogiannis, 'Youth and Internationalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction', *Social History* 48, no. 1 (2023): 1–16.

¹²² Filip Balunović, 'Serbia's Student Movement Offers Hope in Dark Times', in *Jacobin*, 20 March 2025, <https://jacobin.com/2025/03/serbia-student-movement-authoritarianism-protest> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹²³ Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship*, 2.

business.¹²⁴ According to the Russian state press agency, there was even an attempt to revive the IUS at the Festival in Sochi.¹²⁵ The next Festival was supposed to take place in Mexico in 2024, but it did not; instead, Russia organized the World Festival of Youth in Sirius – it had no connection to the official Festival movement but was clearly parasitic on the tradition. Another event whose history goes back to the IUS is the World University Games, which have been organized by the FISU biannually. Only twice have they been cancelled so far – the 2021 Winter Games in Lucerne were cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, and the 2023, the FISU suspended the hosting rights of the Summer Games, which were supposed to be held in Yekaterinburg, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.¹²⁶

As for Prague as the international space, its memory has largely been displaced; the fact that it once was a host to several international organizations is more of a historical curiosity. Its position as a hub of anti-imperialist networks was lost. In 2001, many protesters from all over the world came to Prague to protest the summit of the International Monetary Fund; it was one of the high points of the alter-globalization movement at the turn of the century.¹²⁷ Even though global justice was the main theme of the protest, the Czech public largely did not see the protests with sympathy.

The last material remainder of the IUS in Prague was its headquarters. Its location in the city centre made it very interesting during the times of the transformation. The IUS representatives, Samwin Banienuba and Zakaria Abdourahamane, noted that they were approached by scammers posing to be the Czech police and offering them 100,000 dollars each and Dutch citizenship if they transfer the building to them. The IUS tried to lease or sell the building to solve its financial crisis but the efforts were unsuccessful; it had to go to court with a company that did not pay the rent. The IUS won in 1999 but lost a lot of money at the most critical time. Another problem was that the building was constructed on two lots which were to be restituted.¹²⁸ When the IUS became a dormant structure, the building also fell into disrepair. Legally still an entity, the IUS was declared bankrupt by the court in 2007.¹²⁹ The last trace of the once-vibrant organization at the banks of Vltava came in 2014; the archivists from the Czech National Archives were given one day to take whatever documentation they wanted, before the new proprietor started renovations, turning the headquarters into a shopping mall.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Pia Koivunen, 'International Events in the Service of Cultural Statecraft: The Sochi Olympics and the World Festival of Youth and Students', in *Russia's Cultural Statecraft*, ed. Tuomas Forsberg and Sirke Mäkinen (London: Routledge, 2022), 184–205.

¹²⁵ Organizatory XIX Festivala molodezhi khotyat vozrodit Mezhdunarodnyi soyuz studentov, <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/3704949> [cit. 15 May 2025].

¹²⁶ FISU suspends Yekaterinburg hosting rights for 2023 World University Games. <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1122506/world-university-games-yekaterinburg>.

¹²⁷ Jiří Navrátil, 'Between the Spillover and the Spillout: Tracing the Evolution of the Czech Global Justice Movement', *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 46, no. 6 (2010): 913–44.

¹²⁸ A Letter to the IUS regarding the decision on a cancellation of the temporary usage of the lots no. 61 and 62, 15 July 1992, NAČR, f. MSS, box Building Matters 1994.

¹²⁹ Pavel Cechl, 'Spor o komunistické miliony', *Týden* 23, no. 35 (2016): 10–11.

¹³⁰ Lenka Kločková, Roman Štér and Jakub Šlouf, 'Archivy mezinárodních organizací sídlících před rokem 1989 v Praze v péči Národního archivu', *Paginae Historiae* 32, no. 2 (2024): 326–38.

Conclusions

After the end of the Cold War, European students became more internationalized than ever before in modern history. The ‘Erasmus Generation’ became a symbol of international studentship – and we are already talking about two generations. Still, it has been a very different kind of internationalism – one not stemming from the student movement but rather from the integration at the level of universities and governments, one that has been apolitical on the outside. ‘It was not about fighting political battles together. It was about having fun together,’ as Michael Geiger, the former IUS official, commented on the Erasmus mobility.¹

The story of the International Union of Students reflects this shift. The organization, founded in 1946, was very different from the one that fell into decay half a century later. The main reason for its demise was the end of the Cold War and the loss of patronage from the European socialist countries. If the Secretariat had been able to sell the headquarters and make the relocation to the Netherlands happen, maybe it might have survived – like its counterparts from the cluster of ‘international democratic organizations,’ the World Federation of Democratic Youth or the World Federation of Trade Unions. However, even if it had survived and found a different source of funding, it is unlikely that it would have remained globally significant. The forms and practices of student international politics have changed too much, and ‘organized’ student unionism is no longer trendy.

The IUS was a product of its time. Traditional, organized student internationalism was born at the dawn of the twentieth century, during the first wave of massive internationalization. During the interwar period, two most significant currents appeared: the liberal and the socialist/communist. During the Grand Alliance era, which spanned the Second World War and its aftermath, these two currents merged into one – an anti-fascist internationalism. This unique historical moment – the concurrence of the zenith of the ‘organized modernity’ with the international anti-fascist paradigm – created the International Union of Students. Although political unity did not last long, as the Cold War took hold, the Golden Age continued. Only anti-fascism was replaced by anti-colonialism; student activists from the East, West, and South jumped on that train.

¹ Interview with Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin.

The Golden Age ended with the rise of the student protest movement. Even though the protestors aligned with the IUS consensual line on some topics, the disorganized, anarchist-leaning rebellion was everything the 'student United Nations' was not. The demise of the ISC rid the IUS of its only serious competitor in the field of universal student representation, leading to the IUS's acquisition of new members. However, this could not hide the fact that interest in student politics and activism was decreasing, and membership in traditional student organizations was dwindling. After 1989, the trend of individualization accelerated and permeated Eastern Europe as well.

Another process that shaped student internationalism and activism in the post-war era was regionalization. Geopolitical changes brought about by decolonization and détente facilitated regional cooperation. Europe, a continent split in two by the Cold War, took longer to establish functioning regional structures. Careful steps towards the Europeanization of studentship across the Iron Curtain were taken during the 1970s, but real cooperation did not happen until after the Cold War was over and the East was invited to participate in the Western European integration project.

The IUS's history is full of contradictions. The Cold War gave prominence to the organization; it is hard to imagine international student politics being so high-profile without the superpowers' stakes in it. At the same time, however, the conflict subverted the IUS's universal acknowledgement and created the narrative of a Soviet front organization. The IUS should not be perceived only in the context of the long history of student activism, but also, and perhaps even mainly, as a Cold War creation. The IUS indeed tried to prevent the split and preserve the unity of the student movement, but not at any cost. The *conditio sine qua non* was that the unity was achieved under its auspices. This became apparent in the tiresome debates in the early 1960s, when both the IUS and the ISC declared their will to put aside their pride and work on student reunification, all while making excuses and undermining specific initiatives at every turn.

The most visible contradiction of the IUS's existence, and the one most criticized, was at the very core of the organization's activity. The IUS promoted human and social rights, most notably the right to education, and engaged in developmental projects and alphabetization campaigns in the Global South. Meanwhile, the Secretariat turned a blind eye to flagrant violations of human rights in socialist countries, including its host, Czechoslovakia. Most striking was the conspicuous silence on the persecution of students and the restrictions on access to tertiary education conditioned by political reliability or class origin. In the 1980s, the IUS was transforming into a more open, inclusive and democratic structure, while at the same time, the apparatus engaged in international business with the elected delegates knowing very little about it.

Another contradiction lay in the organization's relationship with students. The IUS was a federation of national student organizations, and many unions indeed were represented by genuine student activists. Others, however, nominated some forty-year-old professional party bureaucrats and career functionaries. The IUS-organized events often brought students together to discuss the pressing matters of student life. Frequently, they were accommodated in cheap hostels and volunteered at work camps and solidarity campaigns all over the world. On the other hand, there was the pomposity of the headquarters, with its chauffeured cars and serviced restaurant, contrasting with

what one imagines as student life. What also contrasted was the arrogant behaviour of some of the IUS Secretariat officials from socialist countries. Michal Benda, the Juventus hotel manager, remembered that some of the Soviet delegates from the pre-perestroika era behaved very badly. Many of them, being heavy drinkers, sometimes went to the hotel to get free drinks. Benda told the story of how they left their cars in front of the hotel on the streetcar tracks and did not care. Because the trams were piling up, the management had to steal the car keys from the Soviets' pockets to move their vehicles from the track.²

Student international politics often served as pioneers in official interstate politics in the Cold War. Student unions were not bound by the same strict diplomatic rules and could test the boundaries of the possible, as seen during the Thaw or Détente. But here is another thing: the more open hands also meant that the student internationalists could be more radical than states. In numerous cases, it was demonstrated that where states had to consider international business and interstate diplomatic relations, students could afford an uncompromising position, particularly in relation to the postcolonial world.

The IUS's relationship with and dependence on state socialist countries, most notably the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, are important parts of the organization's history; without them, it would be impossible to understand the Cold War context that defined it. However, as I tried to capture in this book, this dimension was far from the only one. The IUS was a global organization with networks spanning the East, West, and especially South. It deserves to be looked at from a global perspective.

The IUS was many things. It was a Cold War structure. It was an international organization that had its rules and procedures. It was imagined as the 'student United Nations' – a federation of national student bodies. Another image was the 'student trade union' – not only an umbrella structure, but also with an agenda of addressing student problems and needs worldwide. Conceptually, we can see the IUS as an actor with concrete voices and agendas. This view naturally tends to emphasize the organization's cultural and propagandistic role in the Cold War, as the dominant voice in the IUS was standardly pro-communist, rarely significantly diverting from the officially Soviet line. But we can also see the IUS as a platform – a space where national student representatives would meet, discuss, learn about each other and find solutions to common problems. Indeed, the IUS can be viewed as a zone of contact – after all, its events were regularly attended by members and non-members from the whole world, and many arguments and dissenting voices were heard there. Neither view is wrong but neither is also complete. I myself chose to show the IUS as a network – an approach more likely to acknowledge the variety of actors and a polycentric character while keeping in mind the Secretariat's direction and dependability.

It should not be forgotten, however, that even with global networks, it was still anchored in Europe. It drew principally from European traditions of activism and unionism, as well as a European model of university education. Its socialist inclination was also, to a large extent, rooted in European intellectual tradition.

² Interview with Michal Benda, 20 September 2023, Prague.

But the IUS was also rooted in Europe in a very material way. Its headquarters lay in the capital of Czechoslovakia, and the organization itself was existentially linked with its host state and host member organization. The Czechoslovaks provided the IUS with the offices, flats, cars and recreational facilities. The host also staffed the organization with interpreters, accountants and secretaries. Traditionally, the Czechoslovak member organization manned the position of IUS president, as well as the influential director of the staff. Within the legal framework of the host country, the IUS also conducted its commercial activities; this business boomed in the late 1980s, but since the 1970s, the organization had been profiting from student tourism. And last but not least, the Czechoslovaks (along with member organizations from other European socialist countries) also provided the IUS with a substantial portion of its budget.

I tried to portray Prague as a Cold War city, as a hub of anti-colonialism and internationalism. Drawing from its interwar position, the Czechoslovak capital was in a good starting point to take on this role in the Cold War. The IUS found its sanctuary in Prague in 1946 due to this reputation stemming from the interwar period, as well as the activities of exiled students and the government in London. When the Cold War broke out, Prague's international role became even more prominent – it hosted international organizations expelled from the West, such as the World Peace Council or the World Federation of Trade Unions. The city also provided refuge to communist exiles from Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and other countries. With the intensifying decolonization, it also extended its hospitality to students, workers, refugees and delegates from the Global South. The International Union of Students thus cannot be seen as an isolated structure but rather as a part of Prague's transnational space.

This transnational dimension of Prague is not necessarily unique. There are many cities that have served as hosts to international organizations. In cases such as Geneva, Brussels or Addis Ababa, it has even become part of their urban identity. Various cities have been known to be a destination for refugees, such as Paris, London and New York. Some cities have also played a role in the conceptualization of anti-colonial thought; apart from colonial metropolises, for example, Cairo, Accra and Dar es Salaam.³ Many problems and situations these cities and actors in them had to face were similar to those in Prague. However, the transnational spaces of the Eastern Bloc metropolises – including Prague – remain understudied.

I did not intend to write an institutional history of the IUS. This aspect is present, to some extent, in this narrative, but it is by no means complete. Informing the reader of all the congresses, Executive Committee meetings, campaigns and ad hoc events, as well as the member organizations and Secretariat members, would be too extensive a task. A glimpse at the institutional history is provided in the appendices for a better orientation. Instead, I chose to follow topics that I found essential or have explanatory power for framing the narrative presented in the introduction. Even though this

³ Eric Burton, 'Hubs of Decolonization. African Liberation Movements and Eastern Connections in Cairo, Accra and Dar es Salaam', in *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'. Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, ed. L. Dallywater, H. A. Fonseca and C. Saunders (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 25–56.

history of the IUS is not exhaustive and there are still many more themes and aspects to be studied, I believe the painted picture is a complex one that can give the reader a multitude of perspectives and a sense of the IUS's journey through the twentieth century.

Naturally, this book is by no means a definitive history; no book ever is. Various topics touched on here would deserve further examination, with more detail, a different perspective, a different context, and the use of different methods or sources.

Here is to the hope that this book will inspire someone to do so.

Appendices

World Festivals of Youth and Students

1947	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1949	Budapest	Hungary
1951	Berlin	German Democratic Republic
1953	Bucharest	Romania
1955	Warsaw	Poland
1957	Moscow	Soviet Union
1959	Vienna	Austria
1962	Helsinki	Finland
1968	Sofia	Bulgaria
1973	Berlin	German Democratic Republic
1978	Havana	Cuba
1985	Moscow	Soviet Union
1989	Pyongyang	North Korea
1997	Havana	Cuba
2001	Algiers	Algeria
2005	Caracas	Venezuela
2010	Tshwane	South Africa
2013	Quito	Ecuador
2017	Sochi	Russia

World Student Congresses

1946	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1950	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1953	Warsaw	Poland
1956	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1958	Beijing	China
1960	Baghdad	Iraq
1962	Leningrad	Soviet Union
1964	Sofia	Bulgaria

1966	Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia
1971	Bratislava	Czechoslovakia
1974	Budapest	Hungary
1977	Sofia	Bulgaria
1980	Berlin	German Democratic Republic
1984	Sofia	Bulgaria
1987	Havana	Cuba
1991	Prague (extraordinary)	Czechoslovakia
1992	Larnaca	Cyprus
2000	Tripoli	Libya

IUS Councils

1946	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1947	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1947	Paris	France
1948	Paris	France
1949	Sofia	Bulgaria
1951	Warsaw	Poland
1952	Bucharest	Romania
1954	Moscow	Soviet Union
1955	Sofia	Bulgaria

IUS Executive Committees

1946	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1947	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1948	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1948	Bucharest	Romania
1949	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1949	Bologna	Italy
1950	London	United Kingdom
1950	Moscow	Soviet Union
1951	Berlin	German Democratic Republic
1951	Beijing	China
1952	Budapest	Hungary
1953	Berlin	German Democratic Republic

1954	Vienna	Austria
1955	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1956	Bucharest	Romania
1957	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1958	Leipzig	German Democratic Republic
1958	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1959	Łódź	Poland
1959	Gödöllő	Hungary
1960	Tunis	Tunisia
1960	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1961	Havana	Cuba
1961	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1962	Jakarta	Indonesia
1963	Algiers	Algeria
1964	Budapest	Hungary
1964	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1965	Karlovy Vary	Czechoslovakia
1966	Cairo	Egypt
196	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1968	Berlin	German Democratic Republic
1969	Varna	Bulgaria
1972	Warsaw	Poland
1973	Sofia	Bulgaria
1975	Accra	Ghana
1978	Nicosia	Cyprus
1979	Prague	Czechoslovakia
1981	Aden	South Yemen
1983	Athens	Greece
1986	Pyongyang	North Korea
1987	Addis Ababa	Ethiopia
1989	Nicosia	Cyprus

IUS Presidents and General Secretaries

Presidents		General Secretaries	
Josef Grohman	1946–52	Tom Madden	1946–49
		Giovanni Berlinguer	1949–52
Giovanni Berlinguer	1952–53	Bernard Bereanu	1952–53
		Jiří Pelikán	1953–55
Jiří Pelikán	1955–63	Noori Abdel Razzak Hussein	1960–69
Zbyněk Vokrouhlický	1963–69	Mehdi Al Hafid	1969–71
Dušan Ulčák	1971–77	Fathi El Fadl	1971–81
Miroslav Štěpán	1977–86	Srinivasan Kunalan	1981–84
Josef Skála	1986–90	Georgios Michaelides	1984–92
Manish Tewari	1992	Moeti Mpuru	1992–94
		Frage Sherif	2000

Abbreviations

AAPSO – Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation

AASU – All-African Student Union

AEYSC – All-European Youth and Student Cooperation

ANC – African National Congress

BNUS – British National Union of Students

CENYC – Council of European National Youth Committees

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CIE – *Confédération internationale des étudiants* (International Confederation of Students)

COSEC – Coordinating Secretariat

CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

ČSM – *Československý svaz mládeže* (Czechoslovak Union of Youth)

ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council

ESIB – European Student Information Bureau

ESN – Erasmus Student Network

ESU – European Student Union

EYCD – European Young Christian Democrats

FDJ – *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth / GDR)

FISU – *Fédération internationale du sport universitaire* (International University Sports Federation)

GDR – German Democratic Republic

GONGO – Government-organized Non-governmental Organization

GUAS – General Union of Arab Students

ICS – International Council of Students

IGD – *İlerici Gençler Derneği* (Progressive Youth Association / Turkey)

IISH – International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam

INGO – International Non-governmental Organization

IOJ – International Organization of Journalists

IPC – International Preparatory Committee

ISC – International Student Conference

ISF – International Student Foundation

ISIC – International Student Identity Card

ISRC – International Student Research Center

ISS – International Student Service

ISTB – International Student Travel Bureau

ISTC – International Student Travel Confederation

IUS – International Union of Students

IUESS – International Union of Secondary School Students

IUSY – International Union of Socialist Youth

KGB – *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security)

KIM – *Kommunisticheskiy internatsional molodezhi* (Young Communist International)

KSČ – *Komunistická strana Československa* (Czechoslovak Communist Party)

KUSU – Khartoum University Student Union

LAI – League against Imperialism

MEFESZ – *Magyar Egyetemisták és Főiskolások Szövetsége* (Hungarian Association of University and College Students)

NAČR – *Národní archiv České republiky* (National Archives of the Czech Republic)

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

NSA (US NSA) – (United States) National Student Association

NZS – *Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów* (Independent Students' Association)

OBESSU – Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions

OCLAE – *Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes* (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization)

POFNE – *Pankypria Omospondia Phoitētōn kai Neōn Epistēmōnōn* (Pancyprian Federation of student unions)

QUANGO – Quasi-Autonomous Non-governmental Organization

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

SDS – Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Socialist German Students' Union)

SSM – *Svaz socialistické mládeže* (Union of Socialist Youth)

StB – *Státní bezpečnost* (State Security/Czechoslovakia)

SVS – *Svaz vysokoškolského studentstva* (Union of University Students / Czechoslovakia)

SWAPO – South West Africa People's Organisation

SYL – Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liitto (National Union of University Students in Finland)

UNEF – *Union nationale des étudiants français* (National Union of French Students)

UNEF-ID – *Union nationale des étudiants français - indépendante et démocratique* (National Union of French Students – Independent and Democratic)

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNURI – *Unione nazionale universitaria rappresentativa italiana* (Italian national representative university union)

ÚSČS – *Ústřední svaz československého studentstva* (Central Union of Czechoslovak Students)

USI – Union of Students of Ireland

VSS – *Verein der Schweizerischen Studenten* (Union of Swiss Students)

WESIB – Western European Student Information Bureau

WFDY – World Federation of Democratic Youth

WFTU – World Federation of Trade Unions

WIDF – Women's International Democratic Federation

WPC – World Peace Council

WSCF – World Student Christian Federation

WSR – World Student Relief

WUS – World University Service

YMCA – The World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association

ZSP – *Zrzeszenie Studentów Polskich*
(Polish Students' Association)

Sources

Note on sources

The bulk of the archival sources for this work lies in the National Archives of the Czech Republic (NAČR), which holds the collection of documents of the International Union of Students. This collection amounts to more than six hundred boxes and is still unprocessed. Unfortunately, the archive is incomplete; the documentation lay in the former IUS headquarters for many years and was damaged by mould. Archivists saved a part of the collection in 2008 and 2014, but many documents were shredded or damaged beyond saving. The archive contains records, resolutions, publications, correspondence and other official productions. It is not so rich in the documentation on everyday operation, including minutes – which makes it more difficult to reconstruct the internal debates. And it has almost no personal or financial records beyond the official budgets. In the footnotes, I refer to the documents' location in boxes where they were during my research; they will likely be reindexed during processing. Another useful institution was the archive of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (IISH), housing a collection of documents on the IUS and especially its congresses and executive committee meetings. The documentation was gathered by the International Student Conference and extended, therefore, only until 1967, when the organization practically collapsed.

Archives

Austria

- Österreichischer Staatsarchiv – Archiv der Republik
- Bundesministerium für Inneres Sektion II, 1959

Czechia

- Národní archiv České republiky
- Mezinárodní svaz studentstva
 - Socialistický svaz mládeže – ústřední výbor Praha

Archiv bezpečnostních složek

- Správa vyšetřování StB – vyšetřovací spisy
- Hlavní správa rozvědky SNB – svazky (I. S – svazky)
- Svazky kontrarozvědného zpracování

Ústav dějin Univerzity Karlovy a archiv Univerzity Karlovy (UDAUK)

- Všestudentský archiv
- Sbírka materiálů k 17. Listopadu 1989
- Mezinárodní svaz studentstva

France

UNESCO

- Bureau of External Relations – Organisations non-gouvernementales

Cité des mémoires étudiantes

- L'Union internationale des étudiants
- Recueil – Tom Madden

Germany

Bundesarchiv

- Zentralrat der Freien Deutschen Jugend

Italy

Archivio della Camera dei deputati

- Jiří Pelikán

Archivio Fondazione Gramsci

- Giovanni Berlinguer

Historical Archive of the European Union in Fiesole

- Council of European National Youth Committees
- European University Institute

Netherlands

International Institute for Social History

- International Union of Students

Russia

Rossiyskiy gosudartvenniy arkhiv sotsialno-politicheskoi istorii

- Otdel mezhdunarodnoi informatsii

Rossiyskiy gosudartvenniy arkhiv noveyshey istorii

- Redaktsia zhurnala 'Problemi mira i sotsializma' (1958–90)

Switzerland

Schweizerische Bundesarchiv

- IUS – diverse Dokumente, Declarations
- IUS – Mitteilungen, Korrespondenz
- Declarations des IUS
- IUS - Korrespondenz

United States of America

United Nations Archives

- United Nations Registry Section (1946–79)

Interviews

Interviews conducted by the author

1. Félix Andriantsoavina, June 2021, Dresden
2. Naim Ashhab, 17 July 2019 and 14 July 2020, Prague
3. Michal Benda, September 2023, Prague
4. Frieder Bubl, 18 August 2023, Berlin
5. Sergei Chelnokov, 21 May 2021, Geneva
6. Greg Elmer, 19 May 2023, online interview
7. Fathi El Fadl, 7 February 2023, online interview
8. Mohammed Fall, 19 April 2021, online interview
9. John Gallagher, 1 November 2021, online interview
10. Michael Geiger, 17 August 2023, Berlin
11. Brendan Glynn, 26 November 2021, Prague
12. Stephen Grogan, 22 October 2023, interview via e-mail and 1 November 2023, online interview
13. Károly György, online interview
14. Károly György and László Labody, 26 February 2022, Budapest
15. Mazen Husseini, 4 August 2020, Prague
16. Ingo Jäger, 10 May 2024, online interview
17. Mairi Johnson, online interview
18. Josef Komárek, 17 January 2023, Prague
19. Allison Lewis, 24 April 2024, interview via e-mail
20. Thomas Madden, 9 December 2021, online interview
21. Georgios Michaelides, 14 March 2021 and 22 February 2025, online interview
22. Lubomír Molnár, 14 June 2019, Prague
23. Sergiusz Najar, 6 January 2022, online interview
24. Vladimir Ponomaryov, 11 December 2021, online interview
25. Franklin Gaston Santibanez, 6 March 2021, online interview
26. Josef Skála, 12 March 2020, Prague
27. Siddalinga Swamy, 26 February 2023, online interview
28. Christina Valanidou, 19 September 2023, interview via e-mail
29. Vesselin Valchev, 26 May 2023, online interview
30. Josef Vochozka, 23 October 2023, Prague
31. Ahmed Al Wahishi, 21 December 2022, interview via e-mail
32. Sadettin Yumuşak, 31 January 2023, interview via e-mail

Interviews conducted by others

1. Zbyněk Vokrouhlický, interview by Petr Zídek, 17 August 2001 and 31 August 2005, used with the kind permission of the author of the interview
2. Jan Vítek, interview for the Paměť národa project, available at: <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs/vitek-jan-1948>

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Index

- Abbas, Ferhat 107
Abdourahamane, Zakaria 214, 219
Abolo, Gabriel 86
academic pilgrimage 23
Acebez, Arturo 54
AEYSC. *See* Framework for All-European Youth and Student Cooperation (AEYSC)
Afghanistan 176
 Afghani revolution 149, 171
 intervention in 11, 149, 203
 IUS Executive Committee meeting 163
 Soviet invasion of 151
Africa 20, 77, 104, 111
 Festival in 108
 student protests 135
African Americans 6
 civil rights for 135
African National Congress (ANC)
 149, 160
Afro-Asian People's Solidarity
 Organisation (AAPSO) 22, 106,
 149, 182
Alfonsin, Raul 175
All-African Student Union (AASU) 150,
 154, 187, 217
All-China Student Federation 118–21
All-Indian Student Federation 76, 147
Altbach, Philip 2 n.1, 15, 101
alternative globalization 5, 8, 18, 182
Amado, Jorge 77
American Student Union 53
Amnesty International 11
Andriantsoavina, Félix 174, 186
Anglo-Soviet Youth Alliance (1941) 37
anti-capitalism 56
anti-colonialism 1, 5, 31–2, 56, 77, 88,
 105–6, 112, 126, 136, 201, 221, 224
anti-fascism 1, 29, 36–7, 39, 41, 44–5, 56,
 72, 164, 221
anti-imperialism 110–12, 120, 126
Appadurai, Arjun, *Ideoscape* 19
Arafat, Yasser 168
Arbatov, Georgy 128
Arbenz, Jacobo 106
Arias, Oscar 168
Ashhab, Naim 183
Asia 77, 87, 107, 111, 120, 144, 160
Asian Student Conference, New Delhi
 (1946) 68
Asian Students' Association, Kuala
 Lumpur (1969) 150
Association of Interns and Medical
 Students 64, 76
Association of South East Asian Nations
 (1967) 149
Atlantic Charter 78
Au Sik Ling 53, 55, 64

Ba'athist revolution, Iraq 106
bacteriological warfare 73
Baghdad Congress (1960) 101, 106–7
Bakaya, Vimla 57
Bakunin, Mikhail 138 n.292
Bandung Conference (1955) 111
Banienuba, Samwin 214, 219
Bartošek, Karel
 Communist Geneva 21
 Les Aveux des archives 17
Beijing Congress (1958) 86, 93, 101, 107,
 118, 165
Bell, Daniel 12
Ben Bella, Ahmed 108
Benda, Michal 178–9, 223
Beneš, Edvard 33, 35, 42, 45, 67–9
Bereanu, Bernard 82, 84
Bergen Declaration 217
Berlin Festival (1951) 58–9, 102, 146, 153
Berlinguer, Enrico 17, 65
Berlinguer, Giovanni 17, 65, 75–6, 82, 84,
 84 n.10, 89, 99
Berlin Wall, fall of 199

- Bevin, Ernest 74
 Bielenberg, Tore-Jarl 86
 Bill for Academic Freedom and the Rights of Academic Communities 198
 Black African Students Federation, France 53
 Bloch, Ernst 129
 Blume, Isabelle 130
 Bologna Process 15, 216–17
 Bouchet, Paul 62, 82
 Bouhired, Djamilia 86
 Boumedienne, Houari 108
 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Homo Academicus* 13
 Boutros Ghali, Boutros 185
 Brătescu, Gheorghe 65
 Bratislava Congress (1971) 146, 191
 Brazil, student protest 135
 Bretton Woods conference (1944) 39
 Brezhnev, Leonid 113, 131, 168
 Brickman, Carmel 57, 62
 British National Union of Students (BNUS) 36–40, 71, 75, 79, 96, 115
 British Union of Students 142
 Brundtland, Gro Harlem 191, 210
 Brundtland Report 210
 Bryant, Chad 21
 Brydan, David 27
 Bubl, Frieder 147, 183
 Buchholz, Adolf 34
 Budapest Festival (1949) 58–9, 81, 102
 Budiardjo, Suwondo 62
Bulletin of the Bureau Against Colonialism (periodical) 105
 Bureau of Students Fighting against Colonialism 57, 62, 105
Burschenschaften 25
 Burton, Eric 104
- Caccamo, Francesco 163
 Canadian student union 92
 Carlyle, Elizabeth 214–15
 Casanova, Pascale 19
 Castells, Manuel 18
 Castro, Fidel 168, 172
 Catholic Pax Romana 26, 55, 100
 Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University 201
 Ceaușescu, Nicolae 168
 Central Committee of the SSM 163
 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 6, 72, 74, 79–80, 84, 98
 funding scandal 123–4, 126–7, 151
 and US NSA 124–6
 Central Students Action Committee 69–71
 Central Union of Czechoslovak Students (*Ústřední svaz československého studentstva*, ÚSČS) 35–6
 Ceylon
 ISC in 88
 ‘Role of students in independent Asia,’ seminar 112
 Chandra, Romesh 130
 Charles University 1, 35, 54, 186, 197, 201
 Charter 77 192
 Charter of the United Nations 49
 Chelnokov, Sergei 148–9, 158, 160, 168, 173, 176, 183
 Chen, Peter 64–5
 Chernaiev, Anatoly 128
 China 23, 25, 32, 36, 64, 89, 112, 118, 134, 139, 141, 171
 demanding democratization, protest 189
 dogmatism and sectarianism, accused of 119
 IUS and 117
 liberated territories 53
 pro-Kuomintang students 114
 sanatorium for students 101
 trade with South Africa 113
 Christian Peace Conference (CPC, 1958) 21, 45, 129, 182, 201
 Civic Forum (Občanské forum), Czechia 200
 Clementis, Vladimír 35
 Clifford, Rebecca 134
 Cold War 2–3, 7, 22, 29, 39, 47, 53, 55, 58, 66, 77, 83, 92, 111, 114, 125, 166, 223
 cooperation despite 98–104
 de-escalation of 142
 growing tensions of 66–72
 history 18, 20
 internationalism of 143
 and international organizations 4–11
 non-alignment in 4 n.10, 124
 scholarship programmes 14–15 (see also scholarships/scholarship programmes)

- Western 3
- youth and student activism 6 (*see also* student activism)
- colonialism 25, 28, 57, 77, 96, 104, 159, 203
- Comette 194
- Cominform 66
- Comintern (Communist International)
 - 5 n.12, 18, 28, 32–3, 142
 - Congress of the Comintern 29
 - League against Imperialism (LAI) 31
- Commission on Security and Cooperation, Europe 211
- Committee for International Student Cooperation 76
- Committee for State Security (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*, KGB) 63, 166
- Committee of Seven 38, 40–1
- Committee of Three 94
- Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 63, 178
- Confédération générale du travail* 137
- Conference of European Rectors, Bologna (1974) 193
- Congress for Cultural Freedom 72, 124, 127
- Congress of the Intellectuals, Wrocław (1948) 56
- Congress of the Peoples of the East, Baku (1920) 33
- Congress of the Polish Students' Association (ZSP), Warsaw (1960) 94
- Contemporary European History* (journal) 16
- convergence of internationalisms 16, 29, 153
- Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC) 80, 86–7, 91, 93–6, 98, 100
- Corda Fratres* (Heart Brothers) 26–7
- Cossé, Pierre-Yves 90
- Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC) 153, 187–9, 206
- Council of European Young Christian Democrats 177
- Covid pandemic 219
- Credentials Committee 52
- Cripps, Stafford 37
- crises and reforms 69, 213
 - economic crisis 143, 171, 218–19
 - IUS in changing world 172–7
 - oil crisis 171
- Cuba (Cuban) 112, 134, 139, 190
 - Congress (1987) 172
 - Hanoi 108–9
 - missile crisis (1963) 121
 - Revolution 150
- Cultural Revolution 65
- Czech National Library 1
- Czechoslovak Center of University Students (*Československé ústředí vysokoškoláků*) 131, 163
- Czechoslovak Central Council of Higher School Students 131
- Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) 34, 45, 119, 129, 146, 163, 168
- Czechoslovakia 33–4, 44–7, 58, 105, 109, 127, 139, 142, 156, 164, 197, 223–4
 - Charter 77 192
 - cultural diplomacy 165
 - democratization of universities 200
 - Festival 58
 - foreign students in 201
 - hostility 201–9
 - invasion 1, 11, 18, 83, 123, 131, 135, 161, 203
 - IUS and 165
 - reform movement 127–8, 131, 138
 - sanatorium for students 59, 71, 101
 - socialism 165
 - socio-economic system 68
 - Students' Guild Union 202
 - students, heroism and martyrdom 62
- Czechoslovak Union of Socialist Youth 201
- Czechoslovak Union of University Students (*Svaz vysokoškolského studentstva*, SVS) 42, 67, 69, 83, 131, 146
- Czechoslovak Union of Youth (*Československý svaz mládeže*, ČSM) 9, 71, 83, 128, 163, 165
- de Azcárate, Luis 86
- de Blonay, André 54

- decolonization 2, 4–5, 9, 39, 67, 88, 106, 110, 115, 119, 142, 149, 222
 - geopolitical changes 222
 - international organizations 7
 - in Namibia 211
 - regionalization 149–50
 - and students of Global South 104–13, 117
 - Thaw and 181
 - of Zimbabwe 176
- de la Madrid, Miguel 175
- Delhi Declaration 175–6
- democracy 1, 4, 10, 32, 71
 - liberal 216
 - peace and 56
- democratic education on Ostend 98
- democratic international organizations 18, 22, 72, 80, 161
- Democratic Syndicate of the Students of Spain 116
- democratization 2, 13, 129, 134, 172, 189, 192, 197, 200–1, 203, 206, 211
- Department of Cooperation with International Organizations 181
- détente 2, 22, 126, 142–9, 151–4, 161, 171, 222–3
- Devinatz, Victor 20
- Di Meana, Carlo Ripa 86
- Dimitrov Mausoleum, Georgi 138–9
- dissolution of the ISC 83, 123
- Djagalov, Rossen, *Republic of Letters* 19
- Dogliani, Patrizia 28
- Drucker, Peter 12
- Dubček, Alexander 129, 200
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 78
- Dutch Union of Students 51, 77, 212
- Dutschke, Rudi 129, 134, 137
- Dylan, Bob 187
- Earth Summit, Rio (1992) 210
- Eastern Bloc 18–19, 60, 66, 73–4, 89, 101, 105, 145, 188, 224
- Eastern Europe (Eastern Europeans) 8, 65, 106–7, 110, 114, 136, 148, 160, 164, 171, 189, 195, 201, 203, 222
 - communist oppression in 208
 - development in 81, 199
 - education discriminatory 89
 - Festivals 107, 109
 - socialisms 19
 - Soviet power in 66, 188
 - student union 152
 - universities 14, 144, 193
- East German FDJ 94, 105, 173, 202
- East-West conflict 211
- East-West cooperation 102, 143, 151
- Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 55, 210
- economic exchange 143
- 'Education: A right, not a privilege' (campaign) 145, 147, 154
- Education International 217
- education in twentieth century 11–12, 25
 - democratization of 2, 13, 93, 98, 133
 - economization of universities 13–14
 - history of 14
 - individualization 13–14
 - massification of tertiary education 2, 12–13, 25, 104, 133, 171, 222
 - scholarship programmes 14–15
 - and social mobility 32
- Egypt 25, 90, 132
 - Israeli invasion of 111
- Ellis, Bill 53, 64, 67, 69–71
- Ellis, William 53
- Elmer, Greg 200
- Emergency Laws 136
- empty chair policy (UN Security Council) 72
- The Encounter* (magazine) 124
- Enlightenment 19, 23–4
- environmentalism 175
- Erasmus Bureau, Ghent 194
- Erasmus Generation 221
- Erasmus programme, Europe 15, 172, 193–4, 216
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN) 194
- Eurocommunism 65
- European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students 193
- European Broadcasting Union 201
- European Court for Human Rights 209
- European Economic Community 193
- European Education Forum 217
- European Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth 153
- European Higher Education Area 216
- European integration project 171, 195, 222

- European internationalisms 153
 Europeanization 22, 149–55, 216
 of studentship 222
 European Meeting of National Unions of
 Students 192
 European Meetings 95–6, 151–2, 192, 216
 European Student Conference 79, 194
 European Student Information Bureau
 (ESIB) 206, 216–17
 European Student Meeting, Bologna
 (1989) 194
 mobility agreement 194–5
 European Student Relief. *See* International
 Student Service (ISS)
 European Student Union (ESU) 105, 152,
 216–17
 European Union of Young Christian
 Democrats 153
 European University Institute,
 Florence 195
 European Young Christian Democrats
 (EYCD) 192
 Evangelista, Matthew 11
 Executive Committee meetings, IUS 52,
 57, 75, 78, 81, 85, 90–1, 93, 106–7,
 109, 117, 121, 123, 163, 172, 174,
 184, 192, 208, 211, 224, 227–8
 El Fadl, Fathi 2, 106, 132, 147–51, 157,
 162–3, 183
 Fall, Mohammed 17, 160, 176, 209
 fascism 27, 29, 32, 36–7, 42, 199
 and imperialism 56–7, 164
 Fatherland Front 9
 Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade 179
 Federal Ministry of the Interior 205
 Federal Union of Spanish Students 114
 Federation of Chilean University Students
 122
 Federation of Progressive Student Unions
 76
 Festival International Preparatory
 Committee 183
 Festival movement 58, 146, 188, 199, 219
 Fierlinger, Zdeněk 42, 76
 financial crisis (2008) 143, 171, 180,
 218–19
 First Czechoslovak Republic 35
 First World War 8, 26–8, 30–1, 34, 100
 Food and Agriculture Organization 39
 Foreign Commission of the Polish
 Students' Association (ZSP) 116
 foreign trade activities 179–80
 Foundation for Youth and Students
 Affairs, New York 123
 Founding Fathers 61
 the founding IUS congress (1946) 29, 49,
 51, 55–6, 61–2, 100, 114. *See also*
 International Union of Students
 (IUS)
 Framework for All-European Youth and
 Student Cooperation (AEYSC)
 152–4, 183, 191–2, 210–11
 France 4 n.10, 25 n.14, 43, 73, 90, 111,
 137, 141
 Czechoslovak alignment with 34
 Federation of Students from Black
 Africa 120–1
 foreign policy 33
 French model (Napoleonic regime) 24
 May movement in 133
 National Union of French Students
 (*Union nationale des étudiants*
 français, UNEF) 26, 37–8, 44, 46,
 62, 75, 85, 90, 95, 112, 115, 133,
 142, 155
 sanatorium for students 59
 Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche*
 Jugend, FDJ) 9, 34, 173
 French Communist Party (PCF) 86
 French Indochina war 57
 Gallagher, John 147–9, 157
 Gandhi, Rajiv 175
 Geiger, Michael 147, 157–8, 173, 221
 Geminder, Bedřich 81
 General German Burschenschaft
 (*Allgemeine Deutsche*
 Burschenschaft) 25
 Generalissimo Peace 56
 General Union of Arab Students (GUAS)
 150, 187
 General Union of Palestine Students 116,
 148
 General Union of the Students of Quebec
 116
 Geneva Protocol 33
 Georgieva, Raina 158

- Germany 25, 27, 30, 34, 134
 fascism 29
 and Hungarian revisionism 29
 Gilcher-Holtey, Ingrid 133
 Gildea, Robert 134
 Gilroy, Paul, *Black Atlantic* 19
 Ginsberg, Allen 128
 global civil society 8
 global economic crisis 143, 171
 Global North 113
 Global South 4 n.10, 5, 10, 12–13, 19, 57,
 115–16, 121, 133, 164, 211
 budget 107
 decolonization
 and national liberation 117, 148
 and students of 104–13
 democratic journalism 144
 democratization in 203
 European cooperation 142
 neocolonial influences on educational
 systems 135
 student movement 112, 136
 student unions 156
 Global Student Forum 217
 Glynn, Brendan 147–8, 156, 167
 Goebbels, Josef 139
 Golden Age 14, 83, 222
 conflict and coexistence in West 83
 of student unionism 141
 Goldstücker, Eduard 35–6, 40, 62–3
 Gorbachev, Mikhail 128, 171–2, 175, 187–8
 Gorbachev's revolution 174
 Gottwald, Klement 45, 49, 68
 government-organized NGO (GONGO)
 10–11
 Grand Alliance era 221
 Great Depression 43
 Grenoble Charter 46
 Grogan, Stephen 179, 206, 209
 Grohman, Josef 3, 43–4, 52, 63, 67, 69–71,
 75, 81–2, 84, 204
 Guevara, Che 130, 135
 György, Károly 151, 156, 161, 164,
 167, 172

 Al Hafid, Mehdi 106, 147
*The Hague: Headquarters of the
 International Union of Students* 212
 Hájek, Jiří 35, 63, 81

 Hanoi 108–9
 Harisch, Immanuel 144
 Havana Congress (1987) 172–3, 186, 193
 Havana Festival (1978 & 1997) 146, 153,
 214, 218
 Havel, Václav 177, 200–1, 206
 'Health for All till 2000' (campaign) 182
 Heilmann, Peter 65
 Helsinki Youth Conference on European
 Security (1972) 152–3
 Herren, Madeleine 32
Higher Education in Europe (journal) 190
 Hill, Denis 86
 Hitler, Adolf 34, 43
 Pact of Amity 97
 Hobsbawm, Eric 83
 Ho Chi Minh 120, 135
 Holečková, Marta Edith 21
 Holman, Halsted 64, 76, 78
 Holy Alliance 142–3
 Hookham, Kuttly 37, 40
 Hornsby, Robert 114
 Hromádka, Josef Lukl 129
 Hubička, Stanislav 168
 human intelligence 167
 human rights violations 62, 215, 222
 Humboldtian university 24–5, 27
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von 24
 Hungarian Association of University
 and College Students (*Magyar
 Egyetemisták és Főiskolások
 Szövetsége*, MEFESZ) 91
 Hungary
 International Monetary Fund 143
 invasion 11, 89–92, 117, 161
 Hu Qili 119, 189 n.112
 Husák, Gustáv 168
 Husseini, Mazen 2, 52, 77, 106, 132, 158,
 183
 Hussein, Noori Abdel Razzak 85, 96, 106,
 130, 183

 Iliescu, Ion 16, 85
 imperial globalization 27
 imperialism 28, 55–7, 109, 111–12,
 119–20, 164, 176
 Independent Student Association
 (*Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów*,
 NZS) 177

- individualization 2, 12–14, 141–2, 171, 222
- Indonesian liberation movement 51
- Informburo of Communist Parties.
 - See Cominform
- intergovernmental organizations 9, 22, 39, 150, 181, 184, 210
- International Alliance of Women 74
- International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Brussels 22, 56, 73–4
- International Atomic Energy Agency 45
- International Center for Trade Union Rights 183
- International Commission of Jurists 74
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions 73, 124, 127
- International Council of Students (ICS) 36, 38
- International Council of Women 74
- international democratic organizations 156, 181–2, 221
- International Federation of Journalists 73–4
- International Federation of Students (*Fédération internationale des étudiants*) 26, 42, 46
- International Federation of University Women 32, 34
- International Friendly Youth Games 59, 102
- internationalism. *See* student internationalism
- internationalization 8, 30, 37, 141
 - of studentship 26
- International Labour Organization 33
- International Literacy Year of UNESCO (1990) 185
- International Monetary Fund 39, 143, 171, 176, 219
- international non-governmental
 - organization (INGO) 7–10, 15, 18, 20–1, 39, 45, 56, 58, 72, 98, 143, 153, 168–9, 175, 182, 210
 - democratic 22, 72
 - economization of 180
 - education-oriented 22
 - regional 207
 - socialist 22, 56, 58, 60, 72–3, 107, 129, 143–4, 156, 181, 206
- International Olympic Committee 8
- International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) 21, 45, 73, 144, 156, 178, 183, 201, 205, 207
- international organizations 157, 169, 203, 224. *See also specific organizations*
 - Cold War and 4–11
 - decolonization 7
 - world of 181–6
- International Preparatory Committee (IPC) 43–4, 46, 49–50, 55, 57, 61–2, 74, 95–6, 109, 153, 188–90
 - Festival 58, 108, 183
 - principle of consensus 188
- International Radio and Television
 - Organization 21, 201
- International Red Cross 8
- International Socialist Students Federation 32
- International Student Assembly, Washington (1942) 37
- International Student Association (ISA) 154–5
- International Student Confederation (*Confédération internationale des étudiants*, CIE) 28–31, 34, 43, 74, 77, 103
 - Gruppi universitari fascisti* 31
 - interwar 38, 44, 46, 55, 59, 79
- International Student Conference (ISC) 2–4, 15, 66, 80, 86, 88, 106, 127, 149, 154, 184
 - CIA funding for 123–4, 126
 - dissolution 83, 123
 - and IUS 87–9, 92, 95, 98, 100–1, 112, 123, 151, 190
 - Leiden-based 84
 - in Lima 91, 93, 112
 - in London 76
 - in Nairobi 97–8, 122
 - in Quebec 122
 - Roundtable Meeting in Switzerland 93
 - Secretariat 88, 125
 - Supervision Committee 127
- international student federation 39, 204
- International Student Foundation Ltd (ISF) 207–8
- International Student Identity Card (ISIC) 15, 30, 59–60, 100, 127, 177, 190–1

- international student movement 37–8, 58, 66, 95, 120, 126, 187
- International Student Organisation 15, 27, 39–40, 54, 94, 96, 184, 191, 194
- International Student Research Center (ISRC) 187, 190, 194, 209
- International Students' Day 36–7, 40, 42–3, 131, 164, 186, 216–18
 - anniversary of 197–8
 - publication on 174
- International Student Service (ISS) 32, 37, 55, 99, 99 n.91
- International Student Theatre Union (ISTU) 104
- International Student Travel Bureau (ISTB) 161, 177–8, 187, 209
- International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC) 100, 127, 190–1, 209
- International Union of Secondary School Students (IUSESS) 203, 208
- International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) 26, 28, 98, 100, 124, 153
 - socialism and anti-communism 100
- International Union of Students (IUS)
 - 1–2, 6, 8–9, 15–22, 28–30, 33, 35, 46–7, 49, 69, 108, 138, 172, 192, 221, 225. *See also* IUS Congress
 - anti-colonial aspect 7, 77
 - Basel Roundtable Meeting 94
 - business as usual 177–81
 - in changing world 172–7
 - Cold War and 3
 - as communist front organization 2, 4
 - constitution and functioning 11, 49–60, 65, 212
 - Coordinating Committee 65, 76
 - Council 52, 227
 - decay 210–16
 - defence of 4
 - design of 46
 - discord among revolutionaries 116–23
 - founding fathers 3, 60–6, 204
 - 'Hands off Korea!' (slogan) 73
 - history of 2–4, 10, 43
 - ideology 18
 - as INGO 11
 - institution of associate membership 87, 92
 - and ISC 87–9, 92, 95, 98, 100–1, 112, 123, 151, 190
 - IUS-WUS relations 99
 - Juventus hotel 177–8, 202, 209
 - legacies 197, 216–19
 - membership 115, 186, 208
 - moving of the headquarters 70, 131, 168, 212
 - power relations 161–2
 - Prague, people of 155–61
 - presidents and general secretaries 229
 - pro-Soviet leadership 121
 - publications 150, 160
 - representation problem 113–16
 - resolutions 110
 - sanatorium in Beijing 99
 - scholarship scheme 101, 144–5
 - Secretariat and departments 52, 93–4, 97, 99–100, 104, 106, 111–12, 115, 126, 131, 135, 146, 150, 155–6, 177, 191
 - state and union 161–9
 - student movement, split of 72–82
 - as student UN 53
 - tensions of 66–72
- International University Exchange Fund 127
- International University Games 33, 103
- International University Sports Federation (*Fédération internationale du sport universitaire*, FISU) 102–3, 219
 - University Games to 103
- International Youth Year (1985) 185
- Inter-Parliamentary Union 27
- invasion 63, 84, 130, 132
 - of Afghanistan 151
 - of Cyprus, Turkish 148
 - of Czechoslovakia 1, 11, 18, 83, 123, 131, 135, 161, 203
 - of Egypt, Israeli 111
 - of Hungary 11, 115, 117, 161
 - of Kuwait, Iraqi 211
 - of Ukraine, Russian 219
 - Warsaw Pact 129
- Irish Union of School Students 152
- Iron Curtain 7, 14, 45, 58, 95, 101, 151, 204, 222
- Israeli invasion of Egypt 111
- Israeli-Palestinian conflict 148

- Italian Communist Party 129
- Italian national representative university
union (*Unione nazionale
universitaria rappresentativa
italiana*, UNURI) 94, 142
- Italy 27, 37, 65, 66, 82
negative university 134
student mobility 134–5
- IUS Congress
Baghdad (1960) 101, 106–7
Beijing (1958) 86, 93, 101, 107, 118,
165
Berlin (1980) 149
Bratislava (1971) 146, 191
Budapest (1974) 153
Havana (1987) 172–3, 186, 193
Larnaca (1992) 208, 208 n.58, 210, 213,
215
Leningrad (1962) 101, 117, 119, 137
Prague (1946, 1950, 1956 & 1991) 40,
43, 51, 61, 79, 93, 101, 204
Sofia (1964, 1977 & 1984) 101, 120,
123, 145–6, 186
Tripoli (2000) 215
Ulaanbaatar (1967) 101, 116, 121, 142
Warsaw (1953) 58, 84, 87, 89, 92, 101,
115
- IUS Women's Newsletter* (periodical) 210
- Jakeš, Miloš, Jr. 160, 168, 178–9, 198,
200–1
- Jakeš, Miloš, Sr. 160
- Japan 12, 25, 32, 37, 41, 64
pro-Chinese alliance 120
Zengakuren 117, 120, 137
- Jarvis, Fred 89
- Jenkins, Stanley 75, 76 n.125, 78–9
- Jobs, Richard Ivan 101
- Johnson, Mairi 159, 189
- Joliot-Curie, Frédéric 72
- Journal of Global History* (journal) 7
- katastroika process 174
- Keller, Jan 11–13
- Kent University, Ohio 137
- Keynesianism 171
- Khan, Ayub 135
- Khartoum University Student Union
(KUSU) 147
- Khrushchev, Nikita 5, 63, 85, 104–5, 107,
118, 187
fall of 120
policy of peaceful coexistence 117
secret speech 11
- King, Martin Luther, assassination 135
- Kingsbury, Norman 95
- Kissinger, Henry 143
- Klemenčič, Manja 14
- Kmentová, Eva 168
- knowledge society 12–13
- Koivunen, Pia 58–9, 102, 218
- Komárek, Josef 161, 178
- Komsomol for the Soviet Union 9, 41, 63,
105, 108, 114, 166, 180, 202
- Komsomol Student Council 163
- Kone, Ravane 185
- Koniecki, Dieter 166
- Kopecký, Václav 76
- Korean War 72–3, 76
- Kotek, Joël 32, 40, 44, 50, 58, 61, 63, 81,
84, 98, 123
Students and the Cold War 3, 6
- Kott, Sandrine 16, 29, 33, 61
- Kovács, László 17, 85
- Koźmiński, Jerzy 17
- Kriegel, Annie 17
- Ku Klux Klan 206
- Kunalan, Srinivasan 106, 147, 155
- Kuomintang 64
- Kurdish Students' Society 122
- Kurds 149
- Kuwait, Iraqi invasion of 211
- Labody, Lázsló 136, 156, 158, 164, 167
- Lakhina, Ram 126
- Langoš, Ján 206
- Laqua, Daniel 20, 30
- Larnaca Congress (1992) 208, 208 n.58,
210, 213, 215
- Latin America 20, 25, 31, 101, 107,
111–12, 122, 136, 144
ISC 87
Organization of Latin American
Solidarity 150
- Latin American and Caribbean
Continental Organization of
Students (*Organización
Continental Latinoamericana y*

- Caribeña de Estudiantes, OCLAE*
 150, 187, 217
 Latour, Bruno 18
 League against Imperialism (LAI) 29, 31
 League of Nations 8, 28–31, 33, 39
 Lebedev, Alexander 85
 Ledl, Lubomír 177
 Leikert, Jozef 36
 Leningrad Congress (1962) 101, 117,
 119, 137
 Lesnykh, Lidia 102
 Lewis, Allison 206, 210
 liberal revolution (1848 & 1989) 1, 11
 Lindenberger, Thomas 6
 Löhr, Isabella 28
 London, Artur 81
 Lowenstein, Allard 79
 Lown, Bernard 50, 64, 70
 Lukin, Vladimir 128
 Lumumba, Patrice, murder of 111

 Mácha, Karel Hynek 199
 Madden, Tom 3–4, 40, 42, 44, 46, 49–55,
 57, 61–2, 69–72, 75, 81, 204
 Mahi, Ahmed 108, 167
 Mandela, Nelson 168, 176
 Mann, Thomas 34
 Mao Zedong 53
 Marcuse, Herbert, *One-Dimensional
 Man* 143
 Mark, James 134
 Márquez, Gabriel García 172
 Maršálková, Jarmila 63, 81
 Marshall Plan 66, 72, 74
 martial law 11, 155, 177, 189 n.112
 Marung, Steffi 19
 Marxism 129
 Marxist socialism 21
 Masaryk, Jan 35, 42, 42 n.101, 45, 68, 70
 Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue 34–5
 Maury, Philippe 99
 Mazower, Mark 39
 McCarthyism 64, 69, 123, 125
 medieval European university 23
 Meerts, Louis 52
 Mekdad, Faisal 16
 Metternich, Klemens 143
 Michaelides, Georgios 106, 151, 159,
 173–4, 177, 200, 202–4, 208–9, 211
 modern university (European institution)
 25
 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 33
 Morder, Robi 134
 Moscow 18, 22
 Festival (1957 & 1985) 58, 102, 107,
 138, 172, 186, 193
 Moses, Nigel 80
 Mott, John 26
 Mpuru, Moeti 208, 212–13
 Müller, Uwe 19
 Münzenberg, Willi 28–9
 Muradeli, Vano 174–5
 Muschik, Eva Maria 7

 Naďová, Danica 158
 Nagy, Ferenc 66
 Naím, Mosiés 10
 Najar, Sergiusz 151, 159, 173, 177, 182,
 185, 188
 Napoleonic wars 24
 National Committee of Hungarian
 Student Organizations 91
 National Federation of Canadian
 University Students 74
 National Front 9, 66, 163
 alliance 67–8
 National Liberation Front 122, 125
 national liberation movements 29, 149
 National Student Association (NSA) 53,
 69, 78, 94, 124–6, 154
 National Student Coordinating
 Committee 61
 national student movement 37–8, 58, 66,
 95, 120, 126, 205
 National Supervisory Board 125
 National Union of Australian University
 Students 118
 National Union of Israeli Students 116
 National Union of Kenyan Students 131
 National Union of Students of Syria 214
 National Union of University Students in
 Finland (*Suomen ylioppilaskuntien
 liitto*, SYL) 186
 national unions of students 26, 31, 53, 60,
 95–7, 150–1, 157, 186
 nation-state 24–5
 Nazi(s) 1, 38, 169, 199, 205
 occupation 33, 35, 43, 63

- war crimes 35
- Nehru, Jawaharlal 34
- Nejedlý, Zdeněk 76
- neoliberalism 13, 141, 143
- Ness, Julie 217
- Netherlands 51, 76, 212, 214
- network society 18
- New International Economic Order 143, 153, 176
- Nkrumah, Kwame 109, 150
- 'No Means No' campaign 210
- Non-Aligned Movement 105–6, 117, 182
- non-state actors 7
- non-Western internationalism 28
- Nordenstreng, Kaarle 178
- North African Student Confederation 120
- Northern Council Youth 206
- Northern Ireland, National Union of Students of 61
- Novotný, Antonín 107, 163
- Nuclear War, Students for Peace 176
- Nyerere, Julius 175
- Občanský deník* 205
- OCLAE Congress, Brasilia (1998) 215
- Ohnesorg, Benno, murder of 135, 137
- Olszowski, Stefan 85
- Olympic Games, Mexico City 135
- Opletal, Jan 1, 35, 199, 205
- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) 152, 187, 203, 217
- Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE) 150, 217
- Organization of African Unity 113, 121, 149
- Oslo Agreements 211
- Paget, Karen 40, 50, 51, 96, 124
 - Patriotic Betrayal* 3–4, 6, 50 n.5
- Palach, Jan 1
- Paleček, Václav 36–7
- Palestinian national liberation 111
- Palme, Olof 16, 65, 77, 79–80, 175
- Pan-African movement 150
- Pancyprian Federation of student unions (*Pankypria Omospondia Phoitētōn kai Neōn Epistēmonōn*, POFNE) 147
- pan-European Student Information Bureau 151
- Papandreou, Andreas 175
- Paris Nanterre (revolt) 133
- Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University 105
- Pauker, Ana 65
- Pax Romana 26, 55, 95, 98, 100, 124
- Payn, Marcus 6
- peace 56–7, 64, 72, 77, 99, 118, 168, 175
- peaceful coexistence 87, 117–20, 161
- Pelikán, Jiří 3, 17, 52, 82–6, 88–9, 90, 93–4, 96–7, 106–7, 110, 118–20, 123, 127, 130–1, 163, 165–7, 204
- People's Democracy Front 9
- perestroika 11, 154, 171–2, 174, 180
 - international studentship in 186–95
- Pérez de Cuellar, Javier 185–6, 197
- Perraton, Hilary 27
- Pesliak, Mikhail 64
- Petitjean, Jean 103
- Pinelli, Giuseppe, death of 135
- Pink Floyd 175
- Poland 95
 - Festival 188
 - International Monetary Fund 143
 - martial law in 11, 155
 - student movement in 177
- Polish Independent Students' Association (*Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów*, NZS) 154–5
- Ponomarev, Vladimir 136, 183
- Popular Front 5 n.12, 32
- post-Soviet Russian oligarchy 181
- post-war world 2, 7, 9, 22, 36, 43–4, 83, 141, 184, 188, 211, 222
 - anti-fascist internationalism 72, 221
 - culture 6
 - IUS 32–3 (*see also* International Union of Students (IUS))
 - liberal international economic system 39
 - national front consensus 66
 - reconstruction, Soviet vision 6
 - socialist internationalism 58
 - World University Games 59, 102
- Povejšil, Martin 169

- Prague 2, 4, 20, 33–5, 45–6, 49, 53, 156, 165, 173, 201, 212, 224
 AEYSC meeting 192
 anti-colonial international organizations 164
 center of socialist internationalism 21
 as Cold War city 224
 as Communist Geneva 17–18, 21
 as democratic socialism 129
 Festival (1947) 58, 68, 107
 international organizations and communities 18
 IUS Congress in 40, 43, 51, 61, 79, 93, 101, 204
 people of IUS in 155–61
 studentship 1
 U Fleků 157
 Prague 25. *See* World Student Congress (1946)
 Prague Spring (1968) 17, 63, 127–8, 146
Problems of Peace and Socialism (journal) 21, 45, 128, 156, 183, 201
 Public against Violence 200
 Pyongyang Festival (1989) 186, 188, 193, 199, 214
- Qaddafi, Muammar 215
 Qassim, Abdul Karim 107
 quasi-autonomous-NGO (QUANGO) 10
- racism 112, 125, 159–60
 and colonialism 159
 racial discrimination 55, 57
- Ramirez, Ricardo 106
Ramparts (magazine) 123, 126
 Red Cross 11
 ‘Red Woodstock’ (Festival) 146
 regionalization 2, 8, 22, 149–50, 216, 222
 Reich, Jakov 34
 Reinisch, Jessica 16, 27
Reportér (magazine) 205
Respekt (magazine) 206
 Reunion of Allied Students (*Réunion des étudiants alliés*) 30
 Richta, Radovan 12
 right to education 222
 Robeson, Paul 60
 Rodney, Walter 104
- Romania, International Monetary Fund 143
 Roosevelt, Eleanor 37
 Roosevelt, Franklin D. 36–7, 78
 Rostini, Pierre 38, 43, 46, 62, 82
 Rubin, Jerry 133
 Rüegg, Walter 23, 171
 Russell, Bertrand 120
 Rust, Bill 71, 75
 Rutter, Nick 139
- Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp 35
 Sader, Ahmed 55
 sanatorium for students 59, 99, 101, 120
 Sandinista revolution 145
 San Francisco Conference (1945) 39
 Santibañez, Franklin Gaston 160, 174, 198, 200, 202
 Sauvy, Alfred 4 n.10
 Schäbler, Birgit, *Relations in the Ideoscape* 19
 Schenck, Marcia, *Black East* 19
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich 24
 scholarships/scholarship programmes 4, 14–15, 83, 101, 105, 127, 144–5, 161–2, 198, 201, 211
 Czech universities 47
 Eastern European universities 5
 ‘Freedom Fighter’ scholarship scheme 150
- Schweitzer, Albert 120
 scientific-technical revolution 12
 Scottish Union of Students 75
 Scott, James C. 97
 Second World War 1, 8, 14, 16, 27, 35, 38–9, 55–6, 59, 78, 99, 133, 181, 221
 Czechoslovak students role 46
 student internationalism before 24–33
 Security Service Archive 165, 167
 Selassie, Haile 110
 Semichastny, Vladimir 63, 166
 Sengupta, Pallab 17, 167, 183
 Shakhnazarov, Georgy 128
 Sharif, Mohammad 185, 197
 Shelepin, Alexander 17, 53, 63, 78, 81, 166
shetidesiatniki 102
 Shevtsov, Orest 51
 Siegfried, Detlef 133

- Sihanuk, Norodom 120
 Silvan, Kristiina 180
 Sino-Soviet split 117, 161
 Situationist International 132
 Six-Day War (1967) 111
 Skála, Josef 3, 17, 44, 163, 172–4, 176, 186, 197–8, 202
 Slánský, Rudolf 81
 Slánský process 81
 Šling, Ota 35
 Sluga, Glenda 16, 26
 Slušovice 180
 Smith, Jim 64, 67, 69–71
 socialism 5, 16, 19, 45, 70, 100, 102–3, 109
 to capitalism 180
 civil liberties and reformist 129
 Czechoslovakia 165
 democratic 129–30, 189
 ideal 129
 Marxist 21
 in one country 5 n.12
 Soviet model of 136
Socialism Goes Global (project) 5
 socialist ideoscape 19
 socialist internationalism 5, 8, 16, 19, 21, 28–9, 58, 146
 socialist-oriented organizations 9–10, 18, 20, 22, 56, 60, 72–3, 107, 129, 143–4, 156, 181, 206
 Socialist Youth International 26, 29
 society of knowledge. *See* knowledge society
 Sofia Congress (1964, 1977 & 1984) 101, 120, 123, 145–6, 186
 Sofia Festival (1968) 109, 138–9, 146
 Sokol 77
 South-East Asia Youth Conference for Peace and Independence, Calcutta (1947) 58
 South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) 149, 160
 Soviet-backed International Union of Students 124
 Soviet-Chinese conflict 148
 Soviet-Cuban conflict 148
 Soviet global Defenders of Peace campaign 56
 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia 1, 11, 18, 83, 123, 131, 135, 161, 203
 Soviet Union 4–6, 18, 30, 32, 38–9, 41, 43, 45, 55, 63, 72, 105, 108, 111, 124, 204, 223
 dogmatism and sectarianism, accused Chinese 119
 and Eastern European allies 10
 foreign policy 116–17
 German attack on 36
 interventions 89–90
 invasion 1, 11, 63, 83–4, 115, 117, 132, 132, 146, 151, 161, 203
 socialism 136
 totalitarianism and Western liberal democracy 4
 won at Olympic Games, Melbourne 103
 Soviet-Yugoslav split 65, 74, 161
 Spain 53
 Šrámek, Jan 35
 Stalin, Joseph 5, 17–18, 41, 51, 72, 74, 82, 188
 death 11, 39, 82, 85, 98, 101
 dogmatism 77, 106
 Pact of Amity 97
 Stalinism 66, 83, 166
 Stalinist revolution 84
 Steinhardt, Laurence 50, 50 n.5
 Štěpán, Miroslav 17, 147, 158, 164, 167, 172–3, 199
 Stockholm Appeal 56, 73
 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) 153–4
 Štrougal, Lubomír 168, 178
 student(s)
 Catholic 50, 100
 history of 23, 128
 mobility 4, 15, 27, 30, 101, 126, 141, 177, 190, 193, 211
 passport 30
 sanatorium for 59, 69, 71, 99, 101, 120
 as social group 14, 29, 39, 46, 114, 190
 sport 4, 15, 27, 30, 58–60, 102–4, 104 n.115, 120, 157, 203
 student-related problems 55
 unionization of 25–6, 61, 152
 student activism 36, 62, 197, 222
 channelled 4
 history and traditions 22, 62, 105, 223

- and internationalism (*see* student internationalism)
- traditional international 2
- transnational 1, 7
- youth and 6, 32, 60, 166, 188
- Student Commission of the International Youth Conference (1942) 37
- student internationalism 2, 4, 36, 47, 106, 122, 135, 172, 193, 216, 221–2, 224
- of Cold War 143
- convergence of internationalisms 16, 29
- history of 4, 24
- liberal youth and 29, 32
- political dependence 15
- publication on 174
- before Second World War 24–33
- student activism and 2, 4, 6, 11–17
- ‘students as such’ 25, 31, 41, 55, 80, 124, 152, 204
- tradition of 46, 133, 193
- wartime period 37
- Student Life* (magazine) 175
- student movement 190
 - Global South 112
 - Poland 177
 - protest 123, 132
 - split of 72–82
- student politics 14–16, 65–6, 98, 124, 127, 142, 146, 155, 221–3
 - accelerating globalization 142, 149
 - era of détente 142–9
 - ‘grown-up’ relations 153
 - new international order 142
- student revolt 132–9
 - Dakar 136
 - generational feeling 133
 - negative feelings 136
- Students for Democratic Society (USA) 111
- Students’ Health Home, Calcutta 59
- studentship 28–9, 71, 74, 80, 85, 96, 113–14, 123, 154, 218, 221
 - Europeanization of 222
 - foreign 173
 - internationalization 26, 218, 221
 - perestroika, international 186–95
- Studentské listy* (newspaper) 205–6
- Suez Crisis, Anglo-French interventions 90
- Sukarno, fall of 62
- Sum, Antonín 70
- Sundström, Björn 152
- Svoboda, Ludvík 76
- Swamy, Siddalinga 210
- Swedish National Club 189
- Switzerland
 - Holy See, the 100
 - sanatorium for students 59, 69
 - student unions 154
 - Zimmerwald conference (1915) 28
- Tate, James 189
- Tewari, Manish 208
- Thaw 85, 98, 102, 118, 204, 223
 - and decolonization 181
- Third International. *See* Comintern (Communist International)
- Third World (Third-Worldism) 4, 4 n.10, 106, 108, 110, 111–12, 118, 136
 - anti-colonial movement 5
 - Marxism and radical revolution 129
- Thirty Years War 1
- Tito, Josip Broz 17, 74, 119
- Tomek, Prokop 166
- Tomović, Rajko 17, 65
- tourism, student 15, 55, 101, 153, 161, 177–8, 191, 224
- Tranaeus, Jarl 80
- transnationalism (transnational) 6, 101, 114, 218
 - socialist network 4, 17–22, 111, 143–4, 168, 201, 214
 - student activism 1, 111
 - and trans-bloc circulation (cultural production) 6
 - unionism and activism 28
- Treasurer 161–2
- Tricontinental Conference, Havana 111
- Troebst, Stefan 19
- Trouvat, Pierre 46, 52, 57, 62, 69, 82
- Tumanova, Zoya 158
- Tunisian students 95–6
- Turkish invasion of Cyprus 148
- Tvrđý, Lubor 11–13

- Ulaanbaatar Congress (1967) 101, 116, 121, 142
 Ulčák, Dušan 146–7, 163, 166, 181
 Ulčák, Martin 181
 Un-American Activities Committee 64, 78
 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education
 Geneva (2000) 216
 Paris (1998) 215
 UN Industrial Development Organization 39
 UN International Literacy Year 182
Union générale des étudiants tunisiens 94
 unionization of students 25–6, 61, 152
 Union of Czech Youth 58
 Union of International Associations 8, 26
 Union of Irish Students 147
 Union of Socialist Youth (*Svaz socialistické mládeže*, SSM) 131, 146, 163, 199, 202
 Union of Students from West Africa 120
 Union of Students of Ireland (USI) 116, 154, 186
 Union of Swiss Students (*Verein der Schweizerischen Studenten*, VSS) 51–2, 93, 125, 203
 Union of University Students of Bohemia and Moravia 129, 131
 Union of University Students of Slovakia 129, 131
 ‘United Friends of Europe’ (camp) 191
 United Kingdom 24, 38, 43, 61, 111, 114, 146, 185
 National Union of Students of England 61
 student unions 154
 United Nations (UN) 10, 11, 15–16, 38, 46, 72, 125
 United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO)
 11, 16, 22, 39, 54–5, 72, 95, 125, 132, 147, 155, 175, 182, 209, 215
 categories of partnership 184
 European Center for Higher Education 190
 Executive Council 54, 81, 184
 40th anniversary of 185
 initiatives of 185
 International Literacy Year 185
 in Paris 190
 withdrawal of US and UK 185
 World Conference on Higher Education 215–17
 United Nations Forum for the Youth, Vienna (1996) 215
 United States 4, 12, 24, 38–9, 49, 64, 72, 86, 107, 110, 117, 122, 134–5, 185
 Civil Rights Movement 6
 hysterical anti-communism 124
 imperialism 120, 122
 Independent Research Service Bulletin 97
 invasion of the Dominican Republic 111, 125
 Peace Council 145
 Students Association 123, 145, 155
 students of 53, 71, 155
 Universal Declaration of Human Rights 125
 universal human rights 11, 201
 universities 55, 70, 84, 88, 104, 114, 134, 141, 144, 171, 193
 autonomy 24, 127, 145
 decolonizing 105
 democratization 200
 economization of 13
 education 23, 223
 to foreign students 27
 French model 24
 functions 14
 history of 23
 management 13, 171
 medieval 23, 30
 negative 134
 in society, role 99
 University of Hanover 215
 University of Zurich 27
 USSR. *See* Soviet Union
 Valanidou, Christina 147–8, 158, 159 n.102
 van Maanen, Gert 44
 Velíšek, Zdeněk 168
 Velvet Revolution (1989) 1, 17, 173, 181, 186, 190, 218
 navigating 197–201
Verein Deutscher Studenten 142
 Vergès, Jacques 17, 78, 85

- 'Victorious February' 68–9, 84
 Vietnam Congress, Freie Universität (1968) 134
 Vietnam War 134–6
 Villedieu, Emmanuel 38, 44
 Vitek, Jan 169
 Vochozka, Josef 169
 Voda-Pexa, Bedřich 81
 Vokrouhlický, Zbyněk 111, 123, 128, 130, 146, 165–6, 168, 197
 Vowinckel, Annette 6
 Al-Wahishi, Ahmed 17
- Wales, National Union of Students of 61
 Wallerstein, Immanuel 218
 war and resistance 34–8. *See also* Cold War
 Warsaw Congress (1953) 58, 84, 87, 89, 92, 101, 115
 Warsaw Council (1951) 79
 Warsaw Pact 95, 121, 123, 127, 129, 131, 139
 wartime Alliance 39–40
 Washington Consensus 176
 Waterman, Peter 86
 Wernicke, Günther 56
 Westad, Odd Arne, *The Global Cold War* 4
 West African Student Union 53
 Western Cold War 3
 Western colonialism and imperialism 28, 77
 Western Congress for Cultural Freedom 6
 Western Europe 76, 79, 83, 145, 152, 171, 186, 192
 conflict and coexistence 86–98
 integration project 222
 knowledge production 23
 post-war history 83
 student protest movement 132
 Western European Student Information Bureau (WESIB) 152, 155, 192
 European Student Conference on EC Policy in Higher Education, Ghent 194
 'Students as a pressure group' 192
 West Indian Students Union 53
 West, Robert L. 78
 Williamson, Craig 127
 Winter Games, Lucerne (2021) 219
- Wolff, Karl Dietrich 136, 138–9
 Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) 8, 22, 40, 46, 55–6, 73–4
 World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) 26, 33
 World Assembly of Youth 73–4, 124
 World Bank 39, 171, 217
 World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, Wroclaw (1948) 72
 World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) 3, 8, 22, 40–1, 44, 46, 50–1, 55–6, 58, 63, 68, 73, 108, 138, 153, 183, 218, 221
 World Federation of Scientific Workers, London 22, 73
 World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) 8, 20–1, 40, 45–6, 55, 73, 129, 144, 156, 182–3, 201, 205, 207, 221, 224
 World Festivals of Youth and Students 6, 22, 58–60, 58 n.44, 63, 101, 106, 107–8, 138, 146, 153, 172, 183, 186, 189, 214, 218, 226
 Algiers (2001) 108, 218
 Berlin (1951 & 1973) 58–9, 102, 146, 153
 Bucharest (1953) 58, 102
 Budapest (1949) 58–9, 81, 102
 Caracas (2005) 218
 Costa Caparica (1998) 215
 Havana (1978 & 1997) 146, 153, 214, 218
 Helsinki (1962) 108, 138
 Moscow (1957 & 1985) 58, 102, 107, 138, 172, 186, 193
 Prague (1947) 58, 68, 107
 Pyongyang (1989) 186, 188, 193, 199, 214
 Quito (2013) 218
 Sochi (2017) 218–19
 Sofia (1968) 109, 138–9, 146
 Tshwane (2010) 218
 Vienna (1959) 108
 Warsaw (1955) 58
World Marxist Review (journal).
 See Problems of Peace and Socialism (journal)

- World Peace Council (WPC) 21–2, 45, 56, 72–3, 167, 182, 224
- World Social Forum, Mumbai (2004) 217–18
- World Student Association
(*Rassemblement mondial des étudiants*) 32
- World Student Chess Championship 119
- World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) 26, 32–3, 55, 64, 95, 98, 99, 187
- World Student Congresses 52–3, 64, 214, 226–7. *See also* IUS Congress Baghdad (1960) 107
in Prague (1945) 6, 42–3, 49, 61–3, 204
- World Student Forum 197–9
- World Student News* (WSN) (journal) 55, 60, 86, 113, 130, 136–7, 160, 162, 177
- World Student Relief (WSR) 55, 99
- World Trade Organization 217
- World Union of Jewish Students 26, 55
- World University Games 30, 59, 62, 68, 102–3, 219
- World University Service (WUS) 55, 95, 98, 198
Assembly 99
Lima Declaration 198
- Worldwide Federation of Ethiopian Students 110
- World Youth Conference 40
- World Youth Congress, Geneva (1936) 32
- Xi Jinping 177
- Young Christian Democrats 32
- Young Communist International
(*Kommunisticheskiy internatsional molodezhi*, KIM) 28–9, 31–3, 40
- Young Democrats of America 172
- youth and student activism 6, 32, 60, 166, 188
- youth movement 37, 43, 67, 91, 166, 198
- Yugoslavia 117, 119, 132
- Yugoslav Student Union 75, 92, 116
- Yumuşak, Sadettin 148, 186
- Zátopek, Emil 77
- Zharikov, Alexander 183
- Zhivkov, Todor 168
- Zhuravleva, Mariia 158
- Zich, Jaroslav 67
- Zimmerwald conference, Switzerland
(1915) 28
- Zoubek, Olbram 168
- Zysiak, Agata 13

