6 Supporting the Democratisation of Education and Anti-Colonialism in the Global South

The *World Student News* and Soviet Bloc Media Tactics in the 1970s

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> The world progressive and democratic student movement played an important role in the peoples' struggle in the 70s. It consistently supported all developments towards peace, detente and disarmament, and is now resisting any moves aimed at the renewal of the Cold War. The international solidarity rendered by students has always been an important contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle.[1]

In 1980, on the eve of the so-called Second Cold War, an editorial in the journal *World Student News* (*WSN*) looked back to the preceding decade and summarised the role that the Soviet bloc student movement had played in global societal and political changes. The editorial emphasised the significance of students taking part in world politics by supporting peace, international solidarity and disarmament. It also signalled that these students were not only being active members of the global society but were fulfilling the broader aims of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc.

The beacon of the student movement – progressive and democratic by its own definition – was the International Union of Students (IUS). The IUS was founded in Prague in 1946 and it was part of a cluster of Soviet-sponsored transnational organisations, such as the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU, 1945), the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF, 1945), the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY, 1945), the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW, 1946), the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ, 1946) and the World Peace Council (WPC, 1949). During the Cold War years, these organisations were viewed primarily as communist fronts and Soviet propaganda vehicles.[2] Recent scholarship has provided a more nuanced interpretation and argued that these organisations were more complex than mere mouthpieces of the socialist countries, especially among Global South countries.[3]

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These works – most notably on the WIDF – have challenged the traditional Cold War binary categories and argued that these organisations formed a transnational, multicultural space, where political topics, ideologies, theories and concepts were discussed and negotiated by people working for the executive bodies and journals, for example *World Youth* (WFDY), *Women of the Whole World* (WIDF), *Peace Courier* (WPC) and *Democratic Journalist* (IOJ).[4]

Despite the growing interest in the topic, there is still a gap in our understanding about the broader impact of these organisations, especially in the Global South countries, and the legacies that might still have relevance in contemporary times, for example with regard to China and Russia's relations with Africa, Latin America and Asia. Moreover, while there is some sort of understanding of what these organisations and their agendas were like, there are neither works on their journals, nor a clear picture of what kind of media infrastructure they utilised in their work.

This chapter focuses on the journal of the IUS, *WSN*. *WSN* was an important paper as it was the largest and the longest operating international student organisation journal during the Cold War years. Recently, Mikuláš Pešta and Matthieu Gillabert have argued that although the IUS was a Soviet-backed organisation, *WSN* did not fully repeat the Soviet line but rather focused on issues specific to students.[5] By drawing on *WSN* from the 1970s, this chapter continues Pešta and Gillabert's work and examines how the contents of the journal reflected the interests of the IUS as a student body and the political goals of the Soviet Union and the socialist system that they were part of and dependent on. The 1970s was a time of détente in both world politics and the international student world. It was a few years after student rebellion in many Western countries, the war in Vietnam was still ongoing and a number of new countries had emerged on the world map as a result of the decolonisation process. The most significant shift in terms of the international student movement was that by the 1970s, the IUS had become the only international student organisation, its Western rival the International Student Conference (ISC) having ceased to exist. The ISC, which had promoted itself as a free and independent organisation in contrast to the IUS, had attempted to counterbalance communist dominance in the student world. Both the IUS and the ISC became more neutral and less political towards the end of the 1960s, but neither of them could win broad support from students, especially in the West.[6] The ISC operated until 1969. The reason behind its termination of the organisation was the revelations made by an American leftist magazine *Ramparts* about the CIA's financial assistance to the ISC and a few other international organisations to fight international communism.[7]

This chapter explores how the strategies of Soviet foreign policy were integrated into a student journal and what kind of tactics the editorial

board used in implementing these aims. By strategies I mean the broader objectives and plans set for the media in the socialist world and by tactics the everyday practices and choices taken by the editors of the journal. The analysis focuses on the choices of topics, the rhetoric and key concepts employed, significant gaps (what was not discussed) as well as the authors of published articles. Above all, to whom did *WSN* give voice?

As primary source material, I use the English edition of *WSN* between 6/1970 and 1/1980. It is an almost complete collection of the journal, with only a few issues missing here and there. Despite this incompleteness, the data is representative enough. For analysing the broader contents and themes, I have used both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, I browsed through the issues to get a sense of the content, structure and visual design of the journal. After that I used AntConc and Voyant Tools software programmes to trace the most frequent words and word collocations in order to see what the key topics and words in *WSN* were and whether there were any changes during the period under investigation.[8] For this, I used the editorial pages of *WSN*, which include the content of the issue, allowing one to get an overview of the discussed topics. Last, I chose a couple of articles on one of the most frequent topics in *WSN*, the democratisation of education, to illustrate the tactics used in the journal. The democratisation of education is a topic that is directly linked to student life, and thus, an analysis of this theme allows us to see the ways in which students as a social group were targeted. Analysing articles written by students from different parts of the world also allows us to make comparisons of how this topic was related to different types of countries and which other issues as well as broader Soviet goals were connected to it.

World Student News as a Journal

WSN, published from 1947 to 1991, was based in Prague, the hub of communist internationalism, where the IUS and many other Soviet-backed organisations had their headquarters.[9] It started as a small-scale bulletin, which initially served the needs of the student congress that preceded the IUS and after that became a "militant, responsible and graphically attractive" organ of the union.[10] *WSN* was published ten times a year and, in the 1970s and 1980s, it appeared in English, French, German and Spanish, with Arabic added from 1982. A Russian language edition was published for a shorter period (apparently between 1947–1951 and 1962), but it ceased to exist for an unknown reason.[11] The circulation was around 50,000 and it was printed in Dresden in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) by Grafischer Grossbetrieb Volkerfreundschaft. The subscription fee for the whole year varied between one and five dollars or equivalent in other currencies, and many of the student leaders received it free of charge.[12] In 1970, there

were subscription agents in 24 countries, mostly in Europe but also in Australia, Canada, India, Japan and Mexico. One could also order the paper directly from the *WSN* office.[13] According to a contemporary student activist, *WSN* was mainly distributed for free in student seminars, annual meetings, conferences and other events, such as demonstrations.[14]

The editorial board included between five and seven people at the time, representing different member organisations. In the 1970s, Palestinian Mazen Husseini and East Germans Hartmut König and Frieder Bubl worked as editors-in-chief.[15] Because of the lack of the archives of the journal, it is difficult to evaluate what the editing process was like, whether the editorial board received direct instructions from the IUS (or elsewhere) and how much room there was for individual choices in terms of topics, discourses and rhetoric. There are, however, a few memoirs and autobiographies that shed some light on the paper. Peter Waterman (1936–2017), a British communist who worked for the English edition of *WSN* between 1955 and 1958 (and later for the WFTU), briefly described the atmosphere in the journal in his memoirs. According to Waterman, it was almost impossible to change the way the journal was edited since they had to follow the same old formulations and "pathetic slogans of peace and friendship".[16] Swedish communist Jan Myrdal (1927–2020) pens similar experiences of his work for the French edition of *World Youth* (*Jeunesse de monde*) (the journal of the WFDY) in the early 1950s. Myrdal writes that the language used in the journal was troublesome as it did not appeal to Swedish youth, but because all the language versions had to be the same, there was nothing he could do to change it.[17]

East German Hartmut König (1947–) worked as editor-in-chief of *WSN* during the turbulent times of overthrowing Salvador Allende's government in Chile and the carnation revolution in Portugal (1973–1976). In an autobiography, he emphasises the importance of the anti-colonial struggle that *WSN* widely covered on its pages.[18] König's autobiography does not directly touch upon the editorial process of the journal, but he does describe his route to the journal, which followed the ordinary pattern of the socialist system, where everything was planned and controlled. In short: the central committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) more or less ordered the post of editor-in-chief into being, without asking him first.[19]

Another East German, a Freie Deutsche Jugend worker and the editor-in-chief of *WSN* in 1976–1980, Friedrich Bubl, considered *WSN* more of a voice of the progressive student movement than an organ of the IUS. In an article published in a student magazine *Forum* in 1976, he explained that the journal gives room for divergent opinions from all willing associations, even those whose views on individual issues stood in contrast to those of the IUS. According to him, the idea of the magazine was to provide

in-depth articles on topical issues concerning students in different parts of the world.[20] The idea that *WSN* was not directly linked to the IUS was also underlined by the journal itself, and every issue had the standard phrase noting that "unless otherwise stated", the material published in the paper did not represent the views of the editorial board or of the IUS.[21]

In the 1970s, the editorial board published several articles on what the student press should be like and what kind of editorial work they were doing. For example, the editorial of the issue 11–12/1970 comments on readers' feedback and underlines the effort they have made to send their workers to do first-hand reporting on the spot in different parts of the world. "We have tried to introduce, as far as our possibilities allow us, an authentic picture of happenings throughout the student world and in the world in general".[22] Another editorial about the nature, methods and thinking of the editorial board and the journal was published in the issue 5–6/1974. The text reported and commented on an international student press seminar held in Ireland. Summarising the key points of the seminar, *WSN* also outlined its view on what the student press should be like. The editorial emphasised the social and transformative role of the student press in defending student rights, and as an important instrument for students in Global South countries in their fight against colonialism, neo-colonialism, national liberation and democracy. "The formation of progressive consciousness" was mentioned as an important task of the student press. Moreover, student journals should be non-profit, operating outside commercial media, and should act as the organiser, mobiliser and agitator of the student movement. Finally, the seminar stressed that the student press should strengthen international solidarity and help create "an atmosphere of mutual understanding, friendship, international cooperation and security".[23]

Compared to the *WSN* of the 1940s and 1950s, the magazine of the 1970s was less ideological and less propagandist, and more diverse in terms of topics and voices. While the papers of the late 1940s and 1950s were full of political sloganeering and aggressive campaigns,[24] the journal of the 1970s was more analytical, calm and journalistic, albeit including rather strong material on racism, torture of political dissidents and the fights of national liberation movements in Global South countries, showing photographs of brutally tortured people as well as young soldiers posing with machine guns.[25] *WSN* in the 1970s was also less polarised in terms of Cold War confrontation in comparison with the 1940s and 1950s. The reason for this might be that the contemporaries felt they had moved from the Cold War to détente and instead of military confrontation they were living in a period of cooperation at the time. This was explicitly mentioned in the journal a few times.[26] This view also fits very well with the institutional situation of the early 1970s when the IUS had

survived as the only large international student organisation, as the ISC had been closed due to its connections with the CIA. Another difference between these two periods was a clear shift from Eurocentrism to a much greater focus on Third World countries and topics from the 1970s onwards. The editor-in-chief Hartmut König writes in his autobiography that some Western workers within the IUS preferred to focus solely on student matters, but the brutal wars waged by the colonial powers in the Global South changed their minds.[27]

The main rival for *WSN* was the ISC's journal *The Student*, which was published between 1956 and 1968 with a circulation of around 25,000 copies. It appeared in three languages: English, French and Spanish (some issues also in Arabic).[28] Both *WSN* and *The Student* were distributed to university students and leaders of student organisations and political groups in numerous countries. In an article published in 1970, Philip Altbach suggested that the affiliated members (of the IUS and the ISC) were mostly interested in the activities and events, rather than their publications, which he thought were of relevance mainly to student leaders. He also pointed out that only a handful of university students at that time even knew about these organisations.[29] Due to the scarce sources and research discussing *WSN* and *The Student*, however, it is difficult to evaluate how much these papers were actually read and what their impact was.

Targets and Discursive Tactics

It was not explicitly mentioned on the pages of *WSN*, but one can read between the lines that the primary target audience for the paper was outside the socialist world. *WSN* was mainly written for and by students in the West and the Global South, or in Soviet rhetoric, the peace-loving and anti-imperialist forces in the capitalist countries and students participating in the national liberation movements in the Third World.[30] The publication languages also reflect this. In the 1970s, *WSN* came out in English (the primary working language), French, Spanish and German – all languages that enabled it to reach students and especially student leaders in Western countries but also in most of the Latin American, African and Asian countries. The fact that the lingua franca of the socialist bloc in Europe, Russian, is missing from the list of languages emphasises that *WSN* did not focus on students of the socialist countries and was not a major student paper there. Instead, its main goal was to win over supporters of pro-Soviet politics outside the socialist bloc.

Still, *WSN* largely operated within the Soviet bloc discursive landscape. It leaned on the Soviet view of the world, where the struggle between socialism and capitalism was the fundamental element in all spheres of life, and it followed the rhetoric familiar from Soviet foreign policy statements.

The corpus linguistic analysis of *WSN* shows that the typical vocabulary of Soviet foreign policy, including concepts like "democracy", "progress", "solidarity", "anti-Fascism", "anti-imperialism" and "anti-colonialism", was employed in the editorials of the journal. Anti-fascism was one of the key concepts in the first decades of the postwar period within the IUS and the whole Soviet-backed organisation cluster. The analysis of *WSN* editorials in the period 1970–1980 shows that anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism gradually replaced anti-fascism. This terminological change also reflects a geographical shift from Europe to Africa, Latin America and Asia. Anti-fascism still appeared in the paper, but it was most often mentioned in the context of World War II and the fight against Nazi Germany, like in this quote discussing the history of International Students' Day, "November 17 went down in the history of the international student movement as International Students' Day – commemorating the heroic resistance and anti-fascist struggle of the Czech students in those November days of 1939".[31]

The analysis also demonstrates how rarely concepts that were more closely linked to the Soviet system, such as "socialism"/"socialist", "communism"/"communist" and the names of political leaders of the European socialist countries, appear. For example, the terms "socialism" and "communism" do not appear at all on the list of the 500 most frequent words in the corpus. This was an old tactic. Avoiding too politically oriented discourse to obscure the links between the organisations and the Soviet Union had been typical for the Soviet-sponsored international organisations already within the popular front in the 1930s.[32] *WSN* employed this same tactic when trying to make the journal appeal to students who were not communist or socialist but could potentially become more pro-Soviet in their thinking.

The articles in *WSN* covered widely different parts of the world, which spoke to the global nature of the journal. The way the articles were framed, however, demonstrates that the Soviet categorisation of the globe into the First (capitalist), Second (socialist) and Third Worlds shaped the narration. The articles discussing the socialist countries followed an uncritical approach, avoiding any negative aspects. These articles hardly ever mentioned any difficulties or problems, but rather showcased the society, education and student life in a given socialist country as progressive and admirable, something that both the West and the Global South could learn from. This resembles the way the WIDF's journal *Women of the Whole World* was made. According to Yulia Gradskova, *Women of the Whole World* published overwhelmingly positive commentaries on the socialist countries, showing smiling women enjoying equal positions with men, as well as stories about socialist achievements written by visitors outside the Soviet bloc countries.[33]

Criticism towards the socialist system was not completely avoided; however, it was often belittled or answered in such a way that it looked beneficial for the system. A good example is an article written by *WSN* editor, Krzysztof Opalski. The article recounts a visit by an IUS delegation to Czechoslovakian universities and higher education institutions on the invitation of the Czechoslovakian Student Centre. Most of the article covers descriptions of the visit and the active role local students have played in university administration and in reforming their country. The last section of the article tackles political issues that the IUS delegation asked local students about. One of the issues was Czechoslovak students' passivity and apathy after the Soviet invasion of 1968 which, according to the article, had earlier been raised by some Western European experts. The local students admitted that "a certain group of students, after their experiences in 1968, realised that it was exploited and misused by various reactionary elements", but that "the normalisation of political life in the country, and above all the intensive ideological activity of student organisations has enabled the majority of the students to understand the political causes of the crisis" and thus find a place in their student community.[34] This represents a typical pattern of responding to critical questions on sensitive political issues or difficult social problems that existed in the socialist system. Instead of fully ignoring these questions, Soviet and pro-Soviet media offered their explanation, often belittling the problem by stating that it concerned only a small group of people and referring to the problem with minimal information, like in the case of Czechoslovakian students, where the Prague spring was referred to as "experiences of 1968".

The articles on students and education in capitalist countries, on the other hand, emphasise problems: power hierarchies, the un-democratic nature of higher education, difficulties in financing studies, unemployment and stress caused by the studies. For example, an article published in *WSN* November 1971 paints a picture of students in the US in the 1950s as passive, helpless and without any hope for the future. The article argues that because of the bourgeois state, monopolies and the McCarthy Terror, middle-class youth have no chance to plan for their future. Thanks to the peaceful co-existence policy, the author argues, American students had become more active in the ideological battle and the progressive student movement was mobilising in the country.[35] Another article discusses the use of "doping" (for example stimulants) among students in the US to survive the mental burden of studying. An expert from the research institute of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Health was interviewed for the article and he comments about the usefulness of drugs, offering alternative ways to cope with difficulties in student life.[36]

The coverage of the Global South students and countries was perhaps the most diverse in *WSN*. This is understandable, as the Global South

included a great variety of countries and regions, which were in different stages in terms of state formation. A common denominator was, however, the ongoing struggle either against fascist governments (for example Chile) or former/current colonial powers and colonial structures in given societies. Therefore, the articles on African, Latin American and Asian students often focused on national liberation movements, decolonisation, neo-colonialism, the fight against fascist regimes and students' roles in these struggles. Usually, these articles were written from the point of view of students, but sometimes the angle of Global South students fighting for the independence of their country or against military dictatorship was quite far removed from students living in different types of circumstances. Interestingly, Global South students are illustrated both as fighters against and victims of the former or still existing colonial powers, which have exported their malfunctioning and unequal educational system that needs to be reformed.[37]

The *WSN* of the 1970s revolved around three leading topics: the fight for national independence, the democratisation of education and organisational matters of the IUS. These topics were detected both by browsing the journal and through corpus linguistic analysis. The fight for national independence in Global South countries was linked to such words as "imperialist", "solidarity", "military", "liberation", "colonialist" and "fascism". Africa is the most frequently appearing continent, and Chile the country that appears most often. Education appears most often with the words "reform", "democratisation" and "financing", and the IUS and its activities are connected with the words "congress", "union", "festival" and "meeting".

The second prominent theme was education and student life, which meant in this journal studying, education and students as a social force in society. Under this category, there were articles for example on the democratisation of education in different types of societies, brain drain from the Third World countries to the West, values and worldviews, as well as the wellbeing of students. Relatively little space was devoted to leisure activities, culture and sports. Most of the issues had one or two pages of cartoons and half a page of personal ads for those seeking pen friends. In 1970–1973, every issue included at least one article focusing on culture, for example a report from film festivals, reviews on new films and books, or a reportage of theatre productions. Interestingly, the coverage of culture most often focused on socialist Eastern Europe.

The third major theme consisted of the organisational matters of the IUS. These included reports on congresses and seminars of the IUS, the events and activities it organised alone or together with other Soviet-backed organisations, as well as international events organised or hosted by socialist countries or associations. *WSN* reported on specific student

events, such as International Students' Day on 17 November,[38] the World University Theatre Festival, the International Student Forum on Cooperation in 1975, and congresses and seminars held by the IUS and national regional organisations, as well as devoting special issues to the World Festivals of Youth and Students that the IUS organised together with the WFDY. Moreover, *WSN* wrote a great deal about the activities of other Soviet-sponsored international organisations, such as World Peace Congresses arranged by the WPC. Cross-referencing each other's events and writing to each other's journals made the whole network known beyond one organisation. Publishing articles and special issues on international events hosted by socialist countries, but ignoring such events when they took place in capitalist countries, underlines the pro-Soviet ethos of the journal. While the Moscow 1980 Summer Olympics were discussed in a special issue, the other Olympic Games or any other significant international events were barely mentioned.

Controlled Diversity of Voices

WSN and its writers often underlined that the journal did not only focus on disseminating the IUS' views but also allowed divergent opinions on its pages. What did this mean in practice? What kind of difference in opinion was allowed and how diverse was *WSN* as a student journal? A close reading of *WSN* shows that diversity mainly applied to the articles that were written by guest authors, people who were not part of the editorial board or members of the IUS bodies. These authors included student leaders and activists, well-known figures from other Soviet-sponsored organisations and politicians. In the 1970s, *WSN* published articles, for example, by the likes of Soviet sociologist Igor Kon, Hungarian sociologist Károly Varga, Finnish student leader and chair of the Finnish Student Union Jorma Ollila (later the CEO of Nokia Corporation) and Argentinian communist politician and general secretary of the WIDF Fanny Edelman.

The topic of democratisation of education perhaps best shows the diversity of *WSN*, as the topic was discussed in the context of all three worlds: capitalist, socialist and the Third World. The editorials and articles written by the staff of the journal mainly followed the pattern where all these worlds had a different narrative on education, aligned with the stage of the development of statehood in the respective country. The articles discussing the democratisation of education in Western countries approached the topic from the perspective of crises, problems and an implicit need for a change in the educational system, resulting from the contradiction "between the interests of state-monopoly capitalism and those of the people". The texts addressing the topic in the context of Global South countries emphasised the legacies of the former colonial powers in creating educational

systems, which maintained and renewed the class-based hierarchies and power relations. Last, the educational system of the socialist countries was described as the most progressive and democratic in the field of education, "with free access for all, continuity at all levels of education, and the active participation of students and their organisations in the direction and management of university institutions".[39]

A closer look at a couple of articles allows us to see what kind of diversity was allowed and what the limits were within which the authors needed to operate. One of the articles discussing the democratisation of education in capitalist countries is a text written by a secretary of education and science of the Finnish Student Union, Mikko Pyhälä (1945–). His article, published in 1971, addresses the demands for democratisation of the university administration by Finnish students. Unlike most of the articles in *WSN*, Pyhälä's text does not lean on the idea of a battle between societal systems, and it lacks the standard concepts of Soviet international discourse. It focuses on the specific Finnish case and contextualises it by providing a detailed background and comparing the situation with other countries. In short, Finnish students wanted to have a real chance to influence the university administration and demanded universal and equal suffrage in the university elections. In comparison with many other articles in *WSN* discussing the democratisation of education, Pyhälä's article is analytical and thoughtful. It emphasises the role of student activism and does not blame the capitalist system for the problems in education. It is also interesting that the text mentions, in passing, that "the university should be a place of awareness, not of passive knowledge, as it is now". Moreover, Pyhälä points out the importance of critical thinking and objectivity, concepts that were rarely mentioned in other articles discussing education in *WSN*.[40]

In an interview, Pyhälä recalled that the editors of the paper had probably asked him to write for the paper. In the early 1970s, he was already an experienced writer with wide language skills and international network. Later to become a diplomat, serving as Finnish Ambassador to Peru and Venezuela, Pyhälä mentioned that he did not receive any strict guidelines or rules for writing to *WSN*.[41] A comparison of his text with other articles discussing the same topic demonstrates that it did not follow the conventional pattern of writing and that individual writers could get their texts published, thereby illustrating that *WSN* was not solely full of clear-cut praise for the socialist system and straightforward criticism towards capitalism.

The second example is an article by the Youth League of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). It addressed the democratisation of education and anti-colonial struggle in Namibia. Namibia was a former British colony that South Africa had taken under her wing after World War I. Namibia finally gained independence in 1990. The article addresses

the question of education with regard to the colonial structures and different types of education offered to white colonialists and the local people, "African masses", as the article puts it. The discussion on education is closely linked to the colonial present, racism and the national liberation struggle. Therefore, the first step on the path to democratising the educational system in the country was to fight for national independence.[42] In a similar fashion to Pyhälä's article, this text departs from the local students' needs and perspectives. The article is framed in the anti-colonial fight, where students took part in the revolutionary activities and even guerrilla groups of SWAPO. The text does not mention the Soviet Union or the socialist bloc but refers to the Marxist-Leninist vision of a classless society as an inspiration for building education in the country.

In the 1970s, both the GDR and the Soviet Union assisted African liberation movements, including SWAPO, by training and educating Namibian youth. According to Chris Saunders, who has studied South African liberation movements, the help from the socialist countries did not ultimately have much influence on Namibia. Although SWAPO referred to scientific socialism in its political programme, it was more interested in the independence fight and used the ideological rhetoric only as a political tactic.[43] Mikko Pyhälä recalled that the IUS and the WFDY provided Global South students and young people with a channel to meet and interact with students from other parts of the world. Most of them adopted the pro-Soviet rhetoric, but, in his opinion, despite the few true believers, the majority were primarily interested not in communism but in international networking to help their countries.[44] The article by the Youth League of SWAPO can also be seen from this perspective. The main goal was to get Namibian voices heard and their struggle for independence known to the world. A brief mention of Marxist-Leninist inspiration at the end of the article might have been just a tactical move to ensure the publishing of the piece.

These two examples of articles demonstrate what kind of diversity existed in *WSN* in the 1970s. These texts did not radically differ from the Soviet bloc agenda and they were not anti-Soviet or anti-communist. The diversity can be found in the framing, language and contexts. Western and Global South students were in different positions, with regard to their regimes, than students in socialist countries, whose societies did not need such radical changes according to the official rhetoric. Therefore, students outside the socialist bloc were allowed more freedom in terms of writing. Students from the capitalist West could freely criticise their governments and were not obliged to frame their articles in terms of Soviet rhetoric. Students in African countries could use militant and revolutionary terms and rhetoric that would not be allowed for socialist students. As long as they did not criticise the USSR or praise the US or China, they were free to formulate their texts and use whatever discourse they liked.

Conclusion

WSN was a political student journal published by the Soviet-sponsored IUS. In the 1970s, the era of détente and less strained relations between the Soviet Union and the US, *WSN* adopted a new tactic. Especially during the late Stalinist years, it had been straightforwardly propagandist and unisonous. Now it attempted to look more diverse and limitedly tolerant. An openly propagandist style did not work in a world where both the US and the Soviet Union (and their allies) were fighting for the hearts and minds of students in the Global South and in the West.

WSN' tactic was to focus on students and student leaders outside the socialist bloc and support those issues that were important to them. Giving voice to student activists in newly independent countries in Africa or leftist students fighting against extreme right-wing governments in Latin America was a way to strengthen student agency but also their potential pro-Soviet sentiments. Western students, who often preferred to focus on "purely student matters", were encouraged to become more active in demanding social change in their societies. While supporting Global South and Western students in criticising, and even attacking their regimes, socialist students were required to keep silent about any problems and to project a picture of socialist countries as the forerunners of progress.

Soviet-sponsored transnational organisations and their journals have thus far received only marginal attention in scholarship. The obvious pro-Soviet nature might have given the impression that there would be nothing to actually study in their work. Using a media tactics approach, this chapter has demonstrated that the examination of the Soviet bloc organisations can bring new understanding of the mechanisms that the global leftist media used in reaching out to the leftist West and the Global South. In concert with other sources, such as archival materials of national student organisations as well as oral histories of student activists, *WSN* provides a rich base for future research on the long-term impact of the Soviet-sponsored international student movement among Global South students and young people. Do the legacies of *WSN*, the IUS and other Soviet-sponsored organisations still influence the way in which Global South countries think about Russia and its role in world politics?

Notes

1 R. Arzinger, A letter from the editor, *World Student News*, vol. 34, no. 9–10 (1980), 1.

2 Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Cultural Offensive* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); John C. Clews, *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (London: Methuen & Co, 1964); Richard Cornell, *Youth and Communism: An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements*

(New York: Walker and Company, 1965); Radomir Luza, *History of the International Socialist Youth Movement* (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970).

3 Yulia Gradskova, *The Women's International Democratic Federation, the Global South, and the Cold War: Defending the Rights of Women of the 'Whole World'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 1–12.

4 Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)", *Women's History Review*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2010), 547–73; Gradskova, *The Women's International Democratic Federation*; Melanie Ilic, "Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange and the Women's International Democratic Federation', *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, eds. Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (London: Routledge, 2011); Joël Kotek, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996); 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 & Change*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1998), 265–311.

5 Matthieu Gillabert and Mikuláš Pešta, "L'Union internationale des étudiants: Stratégies de légitimation en début de guerre froide mondiale", *Les Cahiers du Germe*, vol. 34 (2022), 81.

6 Philip G. Altbach, "The International Student Movement", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1970), 164–74.

7 Karen Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden: The CIA's Role in the Formation of the International Student Conference", *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945–1960*, eds. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 136–37; Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 134, 136; Altbach, "The International Student Movement", 174.

8 I first digitised the issues of *WSN* between 1970 and 1980, then transformed the editorial pages (one page on each issue) to text-files and formed a corpus of the editorials. For the use of corpus linguistics and AntConc and Voyant Tools in historical research, see, e.g., Eva Andersen, "From search to digital search: An exploration through the transnational history of psychiatry", *Digital History and Hermeneutics: Between Theory and Practice*, eds. Andreas Fickers and Juliane Tatarinov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 131–58.

9 For Prague as a hub of international communism and the transnational space of socialist networks, see Mikuláš Pešta, "A Hub of Anticolonialism. Prague's International Organizations in the Transnational Socialism Network and Global Cold War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 0(0), 2024.

10 *World Student News*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1971), 1.

11 The assumption of the shorter life of the Russian language edition is based on the catalogue information of the Russian national library holdings of WSN's Russian language edition Vsemirnye Studencheskie Novosti and the World Student News from the 1970s onwards, where Russian is not mentioned.

12 *World Student News* 1970–1985; Philip G. Altbach and Norman T. Uphoff, *The Student Internationals* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1973), 40.

13 *World Student News*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1970), 24.

14 Interview with Mikko Pyhälä, 14 August 2023.

15 Other members of the editorial boards in the 1970s: Juan Ernesto Gutiérrez, C. Kiss, Krzysztof Opalski, D. Toulaev, Vilmos Czerveny, Carlos Ordóñez, J. Sayamov; Lajos Demcsak, M. Ilyin, J. Gonzales, S. Nur, Bassie G. Bangura, A. Abu Ghosh, and L. Rivera, A. Al-Wahishi, A. Pardo, C. Valanidou.

16 Peter Waterman, Autobiography (unpublished manuscript in chapter author's possession), Chapter II, 13.
17 Jan Myrdal, *Maj: En kärlek* (Stockholm: En bok för alla, 1999), 107.
18 Hartmut König, *Warten wir die Zukunft ab: Autobiographie* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 2020), 206–7.
19 König, *Warten wir die Zukunft ab*, 199.
20 Peter Richter, *Reisen ins Fremde: Von Spitzbergen bis Kap Hoorn, vom Malecón zum Baikalsee* (Norderstedt: Books on demand, 2020), 148–49 (original references to Friedrich Bubl's views in *Forum*, Heft 21/19).
21 *World Student News*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1970), 1.
22 Mazen Husseini, "A Letter from the Editor", *World Student News*, vol. 24, no. 24 (1970), 1.
23 "A Letter from the Editor", *World Student News*, no. 5–6 (1974), 1.
24 See, e.g., Pia Koivunen, *Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).
25 "Torture in Uruguay", *World Student News*, vol., 30, no. 8 (1976), 22.
26 "A letter from the Editor", *World Student News*, no. 5–6 (1975), 1.
27 König, *Warten wir die Zukunft ab*, 202.
28 Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, 40–41.
29 Altbach, "The International Student Movement", 171.
30 See, e.g., Hartmut König, A letter from the editor, *World Student News*, no. 5–6 (1975), 1.
31 "A Letter from the Editor", *World Student News*, no. 11 (1976), 1.
32 Gerhard Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe: The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939–1953* (Landham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 30–32.
33 Gradskova, *The Women's International Democratic Federation*, 100.
34 "A journey through Czechoslovakia", *World Student News*, vol. 24, no. 9 (1970), 11–12.
35 G. Y., "Students of the USA: Seething, Turbulent, Inquiring", *World Student News*, vol. 25, no. 11 (1971), 11–13.
36 Michal Horáček, "Students and Doping", *World Student News*, vol. 24, no. 7/8 (1970), 29–31.
37 See, e.g., "The New Dynamic Role of Chile's University Students", *World Student News*, vol. 27, no. 9–10 (1973), 9–10.
38 International Students' Day was an integral part of the IUS mythology and a commemoration of Czech students' fight against Nazi occupation in November 1939. After World War II, 17 November was chosen as International Students' Day. See, e.g., "A Letter to the Editor", *World Student News*, vol. 30, no. 11 (1976), 1; Mikuláš Pešta, "Polozapomenutý Listopad. Mezinárodní den studentstva a jeho překrývaná paměť", *Paměť a dějiny*, no. 3 (2021), 90–100.
39 "A Letter from the Editor", *World Student News*, vol. 29, no. 11 (1975), 1.
40 Mikko Pyhälä, "Student Demands in Finland: A Democratic University Aware of Its Social Responsibility", *World Students News*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1971), 12–14.
41 Interview with Mikko Pyhälä, 14 August 2023.
42 "The Democratization of Education and Anti-Colonist Struggle by the Youth League SWAPO", *World Student News*, vol. 28, no. 8 (1974), 16–17.
43 Chris Saunders, "SWAPO's 'Eastern' Connections, 1966–1989", *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'. Transnational Activism 1960–1990*, eds. Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, and Helder Adegar Fonseca (Berlin: De Guyter, 2019), 70–71.
44 Interview with Mikko Pyhälä, 14 August 2023.