Name: Mr Aurélien Zaragori

Institution: University of Lyon III / UMR 5190 LARHRA

Research project: The International Labour Organization and Christian milieux
PhD in History, supervised by Prof. Jean-Dominique Durand

Time frame: 1919–1969

Abstract: This thesis aims to study the relationship between the International Labour Organization, created in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, and Christian “milieus”. In other words, the relationship between the ILO and all the Christian churches, trade unions and associations, from the birth of the ILO to Pope Paul VI’s trip to Geneva on the occasion of the ILO’s fiftieth anniversary in 1969. Since its creation, the ILO has been heavily influenced by socialist trade unions and parties, beginning with Albert Thomas, the first Director-General, who was himself a French socialist. However, since 1921 relationships have also been established with Christian trade unions and other Christian groups which had previously been involved in the first attempts to set up international labour standards before 1914.

An official position was created in 1926 at the International Labour Office when Albert Thomas requested that a Jesuit priest be appointed as “counselor in religious matters”. From 1927 to 1940, the ILO also had a Protestant counselor in charge of the relations with Protestant churches and organizations. The objective of my research is to show, on the one hand, that ILO had an interest in a strong relationship with Christian churches and organizations in order to promote its own objectives – objectives such as establishing internationally binding labour standards, collecting information on labour around the world and, mainly after 1945, developing technical cooperation programmes. The aim here is to analyze the extent to which this relationship played a role in the ILO’s development and survival after the end of the League of Nations.

Conversely, my research also intends to highlight how Christian organizations were impacted as a result of their participation in
activities of international organizations such as the ILO. There are two aspects which are important to explore: first, the role the ILO played in supporting the dissemination of Christian ideas; and second, the ideological confrontation with socialist, communist and – to a lesser extent – fascist ideas and their supporters.

Contact:  
aurelien.zaragori@gmail.com