

PART TWO

A LONG STRUGGLE

Workers from different countries started to co-operate a long time ago. This part of the book shows how international worker organisations were built up over a long time. It looks at this history in four sections:

1

we look at the early history
to 1939

2

we look at bitter Cold War
struggles after the Second
World War ended in 1945

3

we look at competition for
influence in Africa, Asia
and Latin America after 1945

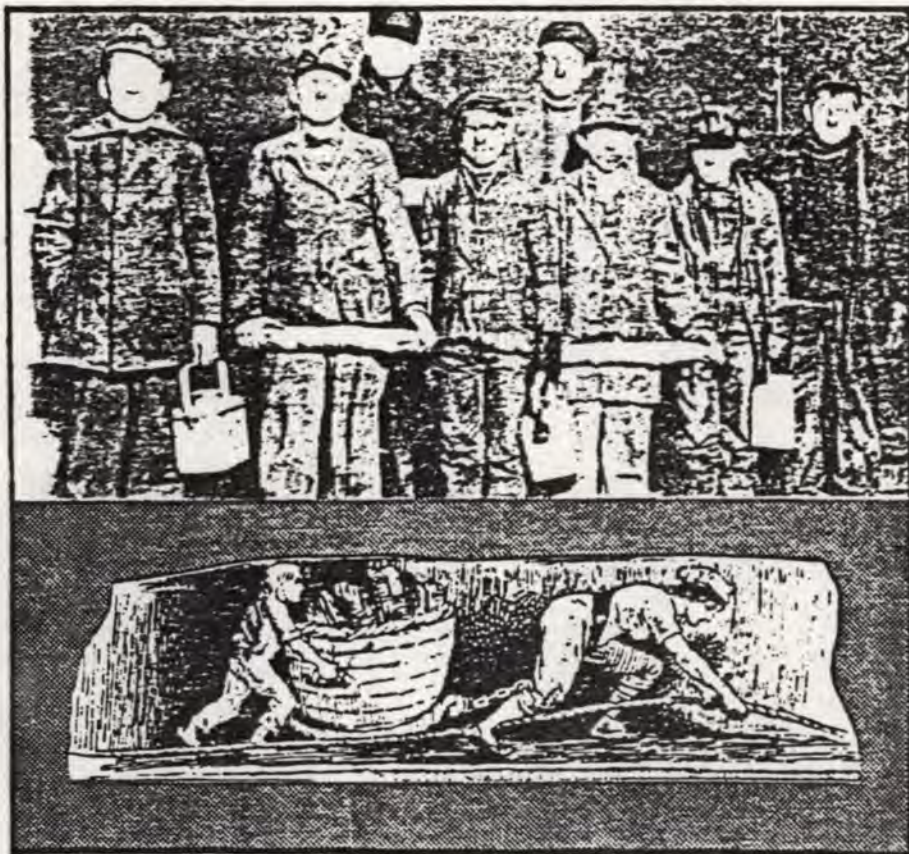
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we look at workers and big
companies around the world
today

1. EARLY YEARS

FIRST LINKS

Workers from different countries in Europe started to co-operate more than 100 years ago. In the 1800s, many mines and factories were built in Europe.



Often children were used as cheap labour

Especially after 1850, workers formed trade unions. Unions came together to form trade union federations in each country.

Early on they found that in order to win demands, it was not enough for workers of one country to unite. Workers from different countries also had to unite and support each other.

For example in 1859, English building workers went on strike. The building employers went to France to look for new workers. So the English trade unionists sent a letter: "To the Workmen of France from the Working Men of England", asking them not to scab.

But at that time there was no organisation which joined workers from the different countries.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

In 1864 a meeting took place in London to work for unity between workers in Europe. It was attended by workers' representatives from England, France, Italy, and Germany.

Karl Marx spoke to the meeting. He believed that workers have no country. He said that in many ways, their struggle is the same everywhere. At this meeting workers formed the International Working Mens' Association, which was also called the First International. This organisation promised to struggle for a better world where workers would be free from exploitation.

In many countries in Europe there were workers' political parties. These were called socialist parties. The First International was made up of trade unions as well as socialist political parties from different countries.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION,

CENTRAL COUNCIL, ... STREET, LONDON, W.

On the 25th of ... following days,

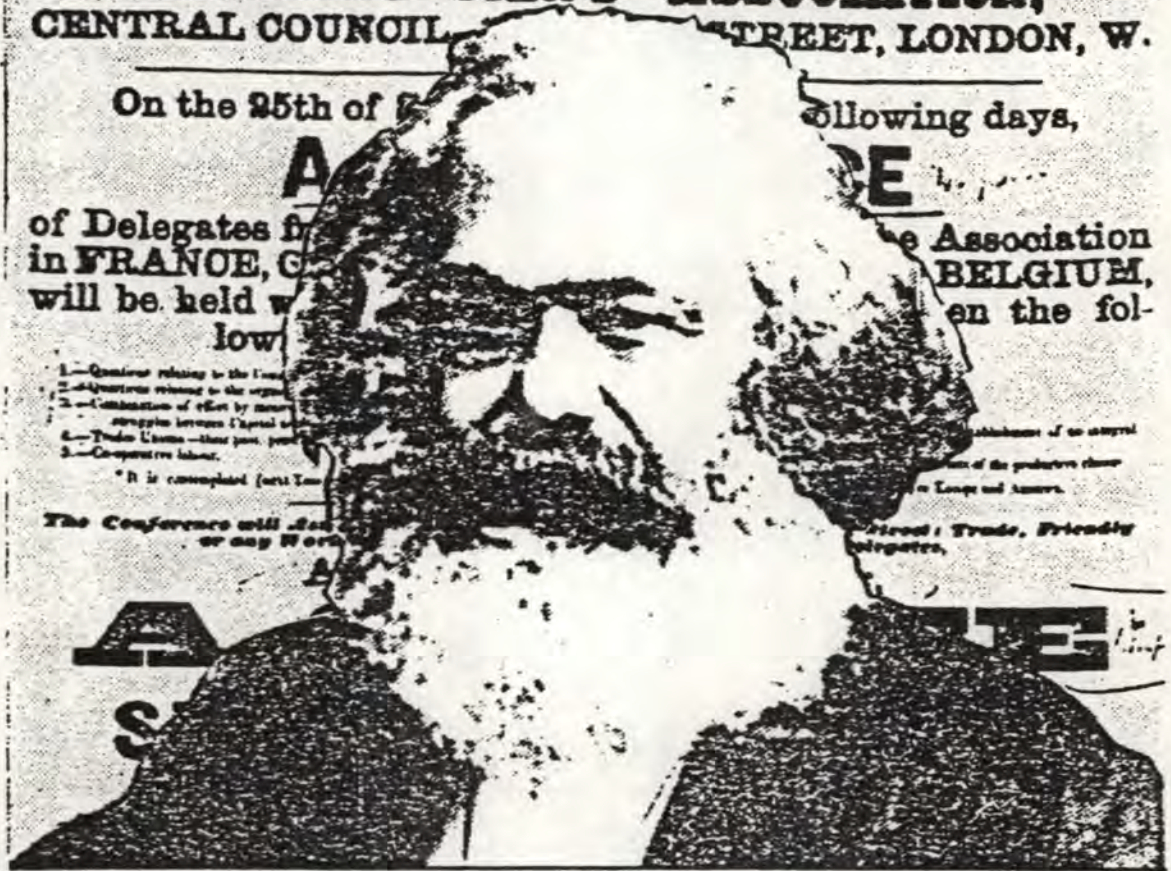
A ... of Delegates from ... in FRANCE, G ... will be held w ... of the Association ... BELGIUM, ... on the fol-
low

- 1.—Questions relating to the ...
- 2.—Questions relating to the ...
- 3.—Combination of ... by ...
- 4.—Trade Unions—their ...
- 5.—Co-operative labour.

* It is contemplated (next year)

The Conference will ... or any Work

... of the producers class ... in Europe and America. ... Trade, Friendly delegates.



This is Karl Marx. He helped organise the conference of the International Working Mens' Association, advertised here

The First International fell apart mainly because of differences between the political organisations. After this workers' political parties and workers' trade unions came together in separate international organisations.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The European socialist parties came together again in 1889 to form the Second International.

In 1914 the First World War began in Europe. Some socialists believed that this war was a competition between the capitalists of different European countries. They said that workers of different countries should not fight against each other.

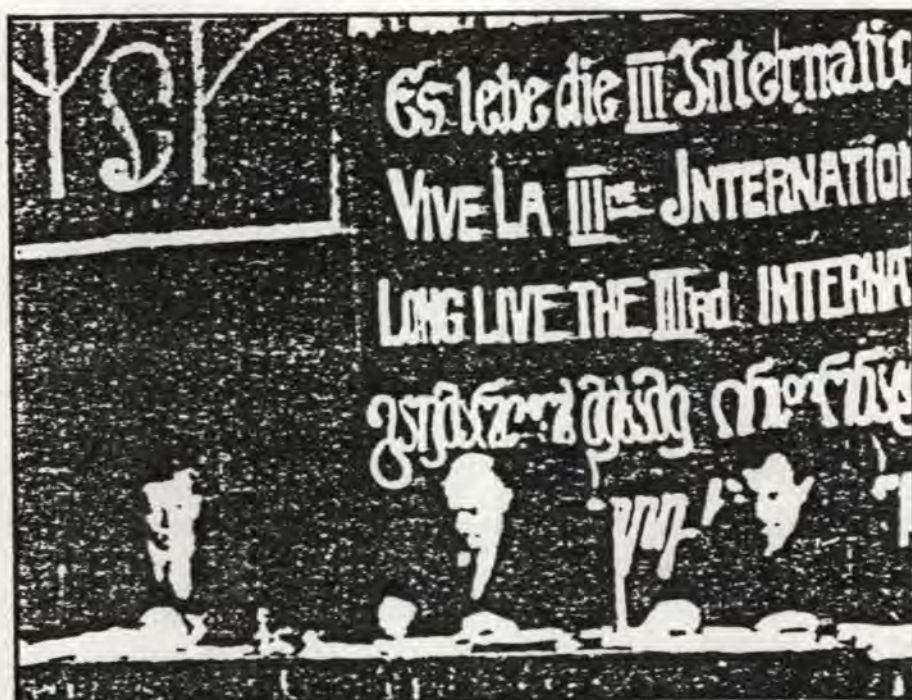
But most socialist parties decided to support the war. Workers in each country joined the war and fought each other. This destroyed the unity between workers in Europe. The Second International collapsed.



British workers join the army

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

In 1917 there was a workers' revolution in Russia. At this time some groups of workers in Europe felt bitter towards the socialist parties which supported the war. These workers held a meeting in the Soviet Union and formed the Third International, or Comintern. This had a trade union section called the Red International.



1919: Lenin (in the middle) speaks at a Comintern meeting

The Third International helped groups of workers in many countries in Europe to break from the socialist parties. They formed new worker parties which had close links with the Soviet Union. These were called communist parties. They joined the Third International.

TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

All these political movements worked closely with different labour movements. They had a strong influence on the international trade union organisations which began to grow.

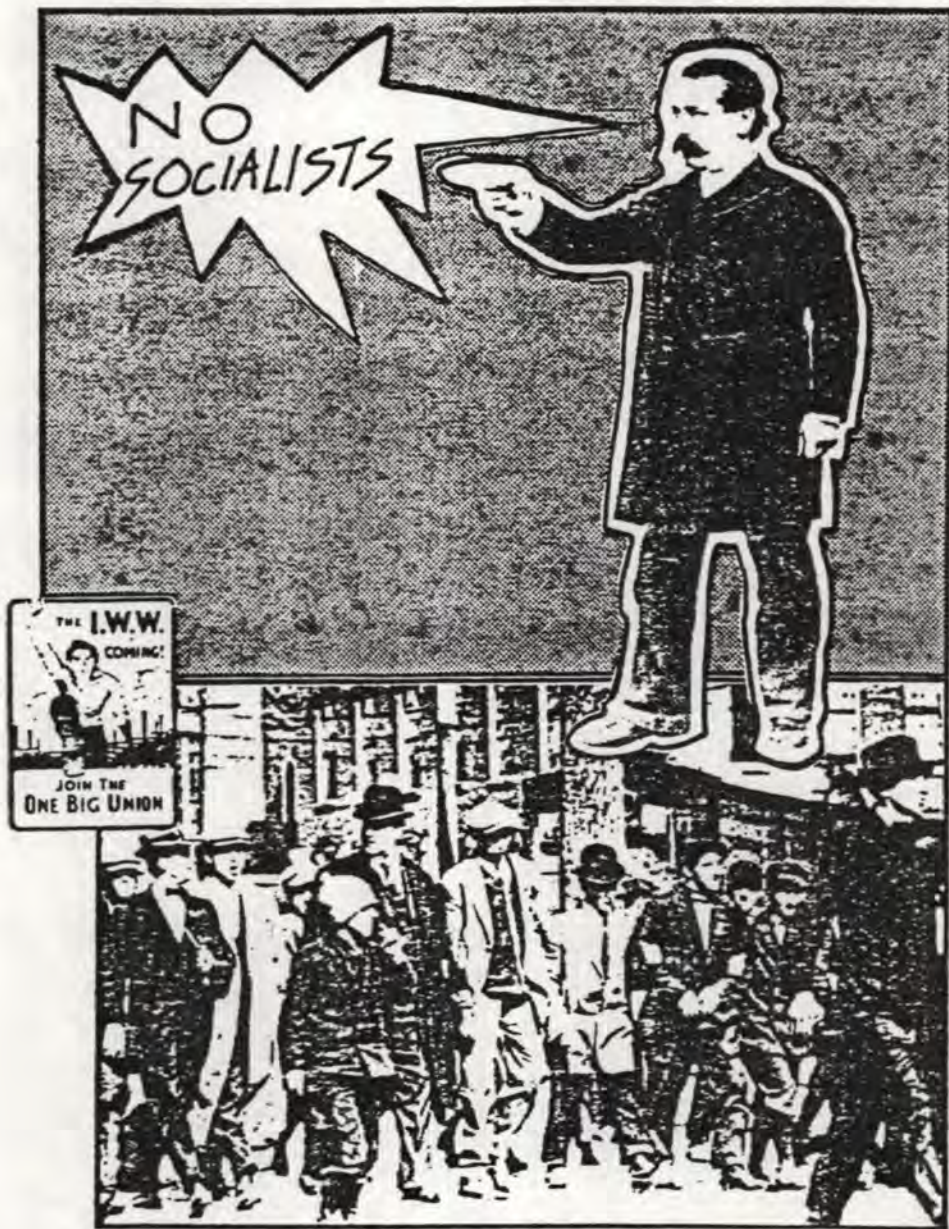
In the 1880s and 1890s the first organisations were formed to join trade unions in different countries. These were the International Trade Secretariats, which joined unions in the same industry from different countries. The first ITSS were for workers in the shoe industry, in the wood industry and for mineworkers. By 1914 there were 33 trade secretariats.

In 1902 workers formed the first confederation, the ITUS (International Trade Union Secretariat). This brought together trade union federations from different countries. It worked closely with the Second International.

At first the American Federation of Labour (AFL) refused to join the new confederation. It was opposed to the way the European trade unions worked closely with socialist political parties in their countries. Why was this?

The AFL was very conservative. The AFL organised mainly skilled workers. It clashed with American socialists who were trying to organise unskilled industrial workers.

In 1911 the AFL joined the ITUS and its name changed to the IFTU (International Federation of Trade Unions). But it left it again ten years later because it disagreed with the European trade unionists.

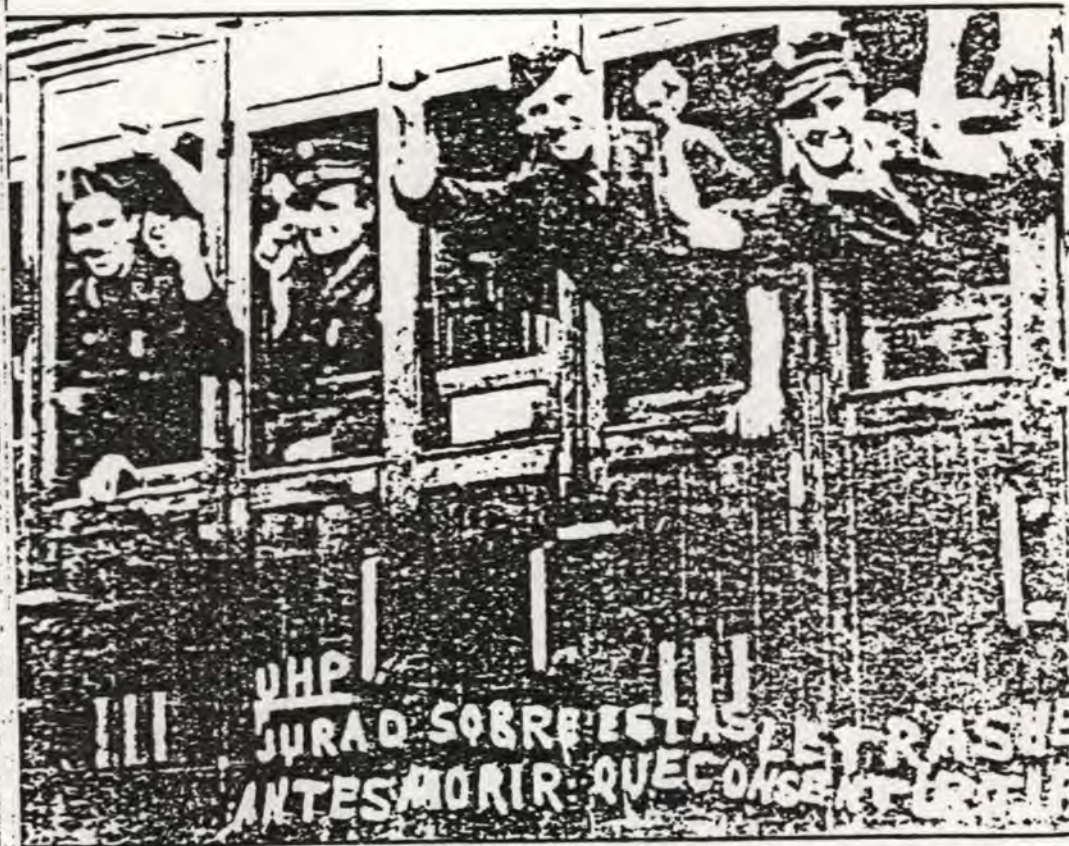


Socialist groups, like the IWW, organised unskilled industrial workers. Gompers, the leader of the AFL, fiercely opposed the Socialists

WORKERS AGAINST FASCISM

In the 1930s right-wing fascist parties grew strong in Europe. They tried to smash workers' organisations, but workers fought back.

For example in Spain, workers' organisations fought a war against the Spanish fascists. Workers from many other countries formed groups called International Brigades, which came to Spain to support the Spanish workers. But the Spanish workers were defeated.



Workers go to join the International Brigades

During the Second World War (1939 to 1945) trade unionists in the United States and some Western European countries worked closely with their governments to defeat the fascists in Germany and Italy. These links between trade unionists and people in government carried on after the war.

THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

The war also brought workers' organisations in different countries closer together. When the Second World War ended in 1945, a trade union unity conference was held in London. Here a new international confederation, the **WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (WFTU)**, was established.

This WFTU was the largest confederation of trade unions ever known. Trade union federations from over 40 countries joined. This included many federations which refused to work together before, like the British, German, Soviet and American federations.

Some trade unionists thought that this would achieve an old dream of workers: the unity of worker organisations all over the world. But this was not to be.



2. THE COLD WAR

WHAT WAS THE COLD WAR?

During the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union worked together. But when the war ended, a new war began between these two powers. This time it was mainly a war of words and not a war of bombs. It was a struggle between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union for influence around the world. It was called the Cold War.



United during the war: (from left to right)

Stalin of the Soviet Union, Roosevelt of the United States, Churchill of Britain. After the war this unity did not last.



Dresden, a German city, suffered some of the worst bombing during the war

In many European countries the economy was destroyed during the war. Factories were bombed, and people had no jobs or money. But the Second World War was not fought in the United States. American factories and towns were not bombed. At the end of the war the American economy was the strongest in the world.



American factories produced many goods for the war

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What did the American leaders want?

American capitalists wanted to take this chance to invest their money and sell their goods in Europe. The American leaders wanted to make sure that socialists did not increase their power in Europe. The United States wanted to use its economic power to increase its influence all over the world.

The Americans made a plan called the Marshall Plan to rebuild the European economy. They started to send millions of dollars, food and machines to Europe.



A demonstration in Austria against the Marshall Plan

On the opposite page:

This poster supported the plan; it says: "Open the way for the Marshall Plan"

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What did the Soviet leaders want?

The leaders of the Soviet Union were afraid of the new power of the American capitalists in Europe. They thought the Americans would use this power to try and interfere with the big changes that had happened in the Soviet Union since the revolution. So they wanted to stop the United States from gaining influence in Europe.

A bitter struggle for power began between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union used its influence to bring communist parties to power in a number of countries on its borders. Both sides sometimes also used their armies and tanks to gain control over different parts of Europe.



In 1945, Russian soldiers raise their flag over the captured German city, Berlin

In the end this Cold War divided Europe. Capitalist countries in Western Europe supported the United States, and socialist countries in the east supported the Soviet Union.

WORKERS DIVIDED

Each side in the Cold War used trade unions in Europe to fight their battles.

Workers who were communists were strong in many trade unions in Europe. These unions helped to bring communist parties to power in a number of countries on the borders of the Soviet Union.

The United States worked through trade unionists in the American federation, the AFL. It tried to weaken the communist unions in Europe, and to build unions which would support its plans in Europe.

The AFL gave money to unions in western Europe and it built new unions to oppose the communist unions. The Americans divided and weakened the union movements in a number of countries, for example in France, Germany, Italy and Greece. On the next page we look at one example of what happened in France.

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