

Working-Class  
Nationalism and  
Internationalism  
until 1945



# Working-Class Nationalism and Internationalism until 1945:

*Essays in Global Labour History*

Edited by

Steven Parfitt, Lorenzo Costaguta,  
Matthew Kidd and John Tiplady

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## INTRODUCTION

# ESTABLISHED STORIES AND NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF WORKING-CLASS NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM UNTIL 1945

LORENZO COSTAGUTA, MATTHEW KIDD,  
STEVEN PARFITT AND JOHN TIPLADY

In August 1914, as the great powers of Europe mobilised for war, the socialist parties of the continent faced a heavy choice. They could uphold the resolutions against war that they had carried, to great acclamation, at several congresses of the Second International. This course would make them open enemies of their respective governments and even, in the patriotic clamour of the time, of some of their own supporters. Or they could support their respective governments and leave the Second International itself in ruins. There was no third choice, no middle-of-the-road compromise that could keep everyone happy and the International intact. The socialists of the belligerent powers soon chose war. French and German socialists voted for war credits in their parliaments. The British Labour Party also joined the Government. The golden age of international socialism, from 1889 to 1914, came to an end. German and Austrian socialists faced their erstwhile British and French comrades from opposing sides of the trenches cut across Belgium and northern France.

The First World War and the fall of the International remains the most famous collision between nationalism and internationalism in the working-class movement. When the anti-war minority from the collapsed International met in 1915 at Zimmerwald, in Switzerland, they came disguised as a party of bird-watchers – and their small numbers led Lenin, one of the delegates, to joke that the internationalists of the world could fit into four stage-coaches. Only two years later, however, he would lead the Bolsheviks to state power in Russia and ultimately to victory in the Civil

War that followed. In 1919, scarcely five years after the collapse of the Second International, the Bolsheviki convened the first congress of the Third. Working-class nationalism was a potent force, especially after the outbreak of war. But working-class internationalism, though often submerged as in 1914, had staying power of its own.

The interaction between these two concepts has always pre-occupied the leaders and members of labour movements across the world. It still does so today. In a world where capital moves freely around the world, shifting production to where labour is cheapest, unions are non-existent and workers are harshly disciplined by their own governments, the idea of working-class internationalism remains more than just an idealistic slogan. It is a necessity. If workers in the rich countries wish to hold on to some of the gains they have made in the past century, let alone win new ones, they need to find some way to link arms with workers in the Global South. If workers in the Global South want to break out of the low wages, union-busting and despotic, often Western-supported governments that characterise much of the world, they will need the support of their better-resourced counterparts in the West. Yet the rise of the populist right has thrust working-class nationalism into the centre of political debate across the developed world as well. Workers whose jobs have migrated to poorer countries are often seduced, at least for a time, by the argument that immigrants in particular, and foreigners generally, are to blame for all their present troubles. At the same time, workers in the rest of the world still live with the legacies – positive and negative – of the nationalist movements that rid them of direct colonial rule.

These are, in other words, issues of more than just historical interest. But like all important movements and events they cannot be understood without first knowing where they came from. The present volume is a small contribution towards that fuller historical understanding of working-class nationalism and internationalism. It is a collection of essays by postgraduate and early-career scholars, based on the proceedings of a conference held on March 7, 2015, at the University of Nottingham, and titled *Workers of All Lands Unite? Working-class Internationalism and Nationalism Until 1945*. The essays in this volume discuss a wide range of historical periods, from the early nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War. They cover many different parts of the globe, from China and Greece to Israel/Palestine and Germany. They also cover a large variety of historical subjects, from the Second and Third Internationals to Labour Zionism and the early history of Chinese socialism. Alongside this great variety of people, places and themes, however, these contributions are all united by their focus on working-class nationalism and

internationalism. A fuller explanation of each of the contributions appears below. First, however, it is worth placing them in their historical context, and sketching the outlines of how the study of nationalism and internationalism in working-class history has developed over the past two centuries.

### **Established Stories**

The history of working-class internationalism began before the development of modern industry. Medieval artisans established the tradition of *compagnage*, where journeymen in a number of trades moved from town to town, often across national borders, to refine their skills and save the necessary capital to settle down as a master craftsman. Sailors and seamen, the most mobile of workers, have navigated across whatever borders existed since the start of written history. But working-class internationalism as we know it really began at the same time as the first flowering of modern nationalism. Tom Paine's defence of the democratic and republican potential of the American Revolution, and his polemics against the established order of church, king and aristocrat, found adherents on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The French Revolution, especially its Jacobin phase, spawned movements of urban labourers in Britain and elsewhere in Europe who sought to emulate the *sans-culottes* of Paris. The development of modern industry in Britain and Belgium in the early nineteenth century, meanwhile, and its slow expansion into the rest of Western Europe, provided working-class internationalism with the necessary material basis. For the first half of that century, however, connections between organised workers from different countries remained sporadic. The activists behind the early unions and working-class political associations had enough to do building up their organisations at a local and national level without bringing all these organisations together at the same time.

Historians might not be able to give a specific date for the appearance of working-class internationalism as a practice. They have generally been much more precise concerning its appearance as a mass phenomenon. On September 28, 1864, a collection of émigré radicals and French and British trade unionists met at St Martin's Hall in London, and ended the meeting by forming the International Workingmen's Association (IMWA, or First International). Historians have usually taken this date, that meeting, and the First International as the starting-point for histories of working-class internationalism in general. Indeed, the study of that subject until 1945 has generally focused on the First International and the three revolutionary

Internationals that followed it.<sup>1</sup> In this introduction we will first provide a narrative of these four organisations and then outline some of the ways in which scholars have moved beyond them and charted new territory in the history of working-class internationalism (and nationalism).

The start of the First International, even more than the collapse of the Second, serves as a warning against any too-neat distinction between nationalism and internationalism in the European labour movement of the time. Its organisers drew on pan-European networks built to support struggles for national independence, Italian and Polish ones in particular, and the stated reason behind the gathering at St Martin's Hall was to demonstrate support for the Polish revolt that had broken out the previous year. National differences, Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky have suggested, also characterised the new International. British trade unionists did not always see eye-to-eye with the French delegation, itself divided between supporters of Napoleon III, the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and the jailed revolutionary Auguste Blanqui. The Italian delegates effectively represented Mazzini and numbered amongst them his secretary, Luigi Wolff. The small German contingent tended instead to support figures such as Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle. Arguments between (and within) these national groupings continued for as long as the International itself, and played some role in its demise.<sup>2</sup>

These national differences should not obscure the remarkable achievements made in the decade after 1864. The International, thanks in large part to the financial resources of the British trade unions, successfully coordinated a number of industrial battles across Western Europe. In 1866 its leaders worked with the London Amalgamated Society of Tailors to prevent employers from replacing their members with lower-paid and non-union labour from abroad, and in the following year the affiliates of the International financed and supported a successful strike by bronze workers in Paris. These victories spread the organisation's fame throughout Europe. The 1868 Congress also welcomed A.C. Cameron, the personal emissary of the leader of the American National Labor Union,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example William Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals: the World Socialist and Communist Movements from 1848 to the Present* (New York: International Publishers, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 39-41.

William Sylvius, and plans were made to unite organised workers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>3</sup>

But the First International soon ran into intractable problems. The supporters of Marx, Bakunin, and other leading figures all sought to capture the organisation for themselves, and British trade unionists soon grew frustrated of this internal conflict and left. The International remained chronically short of cash throughout its existence, and when the relatively wealthy British unions left the organisation starved for lack of funds. The defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, in which the International played a minor (but much-debated) role, left it exposed to repression from European governments worried by the prospect of red revolution at home. The Hague Congress in 1872 moved the general headquarters of the First International from London to New York, and after several years of a more or less token existence it faded away.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional accounts of working-class internationalism tend to see the ensuing two decades – the 1870s and 1880s – as little more than a prelude to the second great expression of that principle, the Socialist or Second International. After a series of inconclusive congresses and meetings in those years, designed to revive the old IWMA or build a new one, the socialists of Europe (along with a small number of delegates from other parts of the world) met at Paris in 1889. They organised two rival congresses in the city, one “Possibilist” and what we might call moderate or reformist, the other “Marxist” and revolutionary, and both opened on July 14, the centenary of the storming of the Bastille. While the Possibilist congress has been largely forgotten the Marxist one entered history as the first meeting of the Second International. The new body brought together a collection of socialist or social-democratic parties that had been formed over the past two decades - in Germany (1869), France (1879 and 1880), Britain (1881), Belgium (1885), Switzerland (1888) and Austria (1889). In time they would be joined by parties representing other European countries as well as those in North and South America, Australasia and even, to a limited extent, in Africa and Asia as well.

Between 1889 and 1914 the Second International demonstrated the great strengths of an international working-class movement. The European socialist parties grew in numbers, directly representing millions of members and indirectly representing millions more who voted for them in elections. Trade unions also developed global networks alongside the new

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<sup>3</sup> Collins, Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, 68-70, 82-83; Joseph Braunthal, *History of the International: 1864-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 120-141, 165-193.

<sup>4</sup> Braunthal, *History of the International*, 142-155.

International, especially the International Trade Secretariats, which represented different national unions in the same trade or industry, and the Amsterdam International, which brought together the different national trade union federations of Europe and America. Truly this period seemed to prefigure the socialist world to come.

But this International also demonstrated the great perils of an international working-class movement. Unlike the First International, which operated more or less as a supra-national organisation, with different local and national sections, the Second never became more than a loose association of national parties and movements. Like the First International, the Second encountered frictions between these national movements. More seriously, it was split along deep ideological lines. The left still looked forward to the overthrow of the existing order, by force if necessary; the right insisted that a parliamentary majority could enact socialism gradually, by legislative means; and there was no shortage of waverers in the centre between these two broad camps.<sup>5</sup> The affiliates of the Second International were also dangerously ambivalent on two crucial, interrelated issues: the national and colonial questions. The German, British, French and Austrian parties, the largest of the International's affiliates, all belonged to governments that ruled over other nationalities at home and colonised peoples abroad.<sup>6</sup> The International wavered on these questions. Even the strongly-worded resolution against imperialism, passed at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress, could not disguise the fact that the International never attracted more than a small number of supporters outside Europe and North America.<sup>7</sup>

This was not the only resolution that remained a dead letter. Congresses from 1904 onwards had passed resolutions against militarism and calling for the parties of the International to take 'every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war'.<sup>8</sup> In August 1914, as we have seen, the parties of all the belligerent countries ignored those words and sided with their own governments. The Second International collapsed. Although it revived again after the war, and retains a nominal existence today as a

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<sup>5</sup> James Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1955), 94-96; George D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought: Volume III, Part II - The Second International 1889-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 941.

<sup>6</sup> Joll, *The Second International*, 115; 120; Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 520-521.

<sup>7</sup> "Resolution adopted at the Seventh International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart," *Marxists.org*. Accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1907/militarism.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> "Resolution adopted at the Seventh International..."

forum for social-democratic parties around the world, it never regained the power and notoriety it enjoyed before the First World War. Until 1917 it seemed as if nothing could fill the vacuum left by its fall. Few people would have picked the replacement for the leaders of the Second International from amongst the small gathering of anti-war and revolutionary socialists, disguised as ornithologists, who met at Zimmerwald in 1915.

The October Revolution changed all that. The Bolsheviks took power on a programme of ending the war and substituting social revolution in its place. Communist Parties, splits from the old socialist parties of the Second International, soon appeared across (and beyond) Europe. Revolutions broke out in Germany and Hungary after the end of the war. Amid this wave of revolutions and the birth of new revolutionary movements, and amid their own civil war against the Whites, the Bolsheviks decided that a new International was needed to coordinate the activities of revolutionaries around the world. The next major chapter in the traditional history of working-class internationalism until 1945 was the Communist or Third International, soon abbreviated as the Comintern.

Its first congress opened in Moscow in March 1919. The new International was very different from body that it supplanted. Milorad Drachkovitch described it as the first organisation in modern history to have both 'world-wide ends, namely world revolution, and the worldwide means to pursue them - a single control center with detachments on five continents'.<sup>9</sup> The geographical reach of the new International, as Drachkovitch suggests, far exceeded its predecessor and extended to the colonial peoples that the Second International failed to reach. The loose, decentralised structure of the Second was also abandoned. At the Second Congress of the Third International, held in 1920, delegates decided to impose 'stringent conditions' on those wishing to join it. These required affiliated parties to remove moderates from their ranks, to adopt 'democratic centralism' as their organisational model and to support all Soviet republics. The Congress also strengthened the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) by making its decisions binding on all national sections, with the intention of creating a centralised and supra-national form of organisation that had the authority to intervene directly in the affairs of movements in different countries.

In principle, at least, this Executive Committee approximated the powers and position of the General Council of the First International rather more than the weak ruling strata of the Second. In practice the Committee

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<sup>9</sup> Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943* (London: Stanford University Press, 1966), 195.

far exceeded both predecessors. Its representatives intervened directly in the internal affairs of the Italian, German, French and Czechoslovak Communist Parties in the mid-1920s, and even set the date for failed uprisings in Germany in 1923 and Estonia in 1924.<sup>10</sup> Comintern representatives in China directed the early development of the Chinese Communist Party, and established close ties with the Guomindang, the nationalist party that sought to reunify the country.

This new supra-national body was, of course, not without national cleavages of its own. The Russian Bolshevik (renamed as Communist) Party dominated the Comintern throughout its history. Its headquarters and Executive Committee remained in Moscow. Most of its leaders were Russians.<sup>11</sup> Nor could it have been otherwise, for the victory of October and the ensuing Civil War – combined with the failures of revolutions everywhere else – left Soviet Russia as the only conceivable host for an international revolutionary organisation. But Russian dominance of the Third International left it highly sensitive to the vicissitudes of Soviet politics. As Stalin took control of the Party in the 1920s – first with Zinoviev and Kamenev, then with Bukharin and Rykov, and always against Trotsky and what became the Left Opposition – the Comintern began to change as well. Stalin, after all, called on Russians to build “socialism in one country,” an idea that could not but affect the workings of an international organisation. The Comintern’s activities abroad, especially the unfolding debacle in China, also fed back into domestic affairs. There, Comintern representatives made sure that Chinese Communists supported the Guomindang’s reunification campaigns in the mid-1920s, only for the Guomindang to turn their Soviet-bought guns on the Communists in 1927.

These events further sharpened the battle between Stalin and the Party apparatus on the one hand, and Trotsky and the Left Opposition on the other. Trotsky lost that battle and went into exile in 1927. As Stalin

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<sup>10</sup> Franz Borkenau, *World Communism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 212-213; Andreas Wirsching, “The Impact of ‘Bolshevization’ and ‘Stalinization’ on French and German Communism: A Comparative View” in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, ed. Norman Laporte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 94; Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 170; 177; H. Gordon Skilling, “The Comintern and Czechoslovak Communism: 1921-1929,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 19:2 (1960): 234.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Huber, “The Central Bodies of the Comintern: Stalinization and Changing Social Composition,” in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern*, 77.



extended his control over the Party at home he also brought the Comintern under even closer Russian control. According to proponents of the “Stalinisation” thesis, foreign communist parties were reduced to acting in the service of Soviet foreign policy and were used merely as propaganda tools for the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, the profound changes taking place within the Russian Communist Party were quickly replicated in communist parties throughout the world. They adopted the bureaucratic structures of the Russian model and promised to follow the official line as laid down in Moscow. In the 1930s this meant first denouncing reformists on the left (not to mention the supporters of Trotsky and his political line) as fascists, and then once this opened the door to National Socialism in Germany, the line now called for a united front of all anti-fascist parties, including liberal ones. Officials of parties affiliated with the Comintern failed to heed instructions from Moscow at their peril. Nearly all national Communist parties suffered during the Soviet ‘Great Terror’ in the mid-1930s, for example, during which thousands of non-Russian communist activists perished.<sup>13</sup>

These changes did not occur without resistance. The last, and the smallest, movement given major weight in historical accounts of working-class internationalism is the Fourth or Trotskyist International. Trotsky had sought to rally forces sympathetic to him and his programme from within the parties of the Third International, even before Stalin exiled him from the Soviet Union. Once outside the USSR, he and his supporters around the world continued to criticise Soviet policy, and what they saw as the subordination of international revolution to Stalin’s supposed determination to build socialism in one country. In the early 1930s he abandoned his hopes that the parties of the Comintern could be recaptured for the programme of the left, especially after its disastrous policy in Germany, and made plans for a new International to replace the now unrecoverable Third. To do this, Trotskyists built the International Left Opposition in 1930, later renaming it as the International Communist League in 1933 and the Movement for the Fourth International in 1936. In 1938 they went ahead and announced the creation of a new, Fourth

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<sup>12</sup> For a critical summary of the “Stalinisation” thesis, see LaPorte, Morgan and Worley, “Introduction: Stalinization and Communist Historiography,” in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern*, 1-21.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 142, 146.

International, headquartered initially in Paris and then, as war approached in 1939, in New York.<sup>14</sup>

The prospects for the Fourth International remained grim throughout our period. Rather than riding a high tide of labour activism – in common with the first three Internationals – the Fourth International was founded, as Isaac Deutscher writes, during ‘a deep depression of the movement.’<sup>15</sup> Trotskyists had to compete with the Third International, still widely seen as synonymous with socialism, and with the revived Second International, also still associated with social-democratic politics. Fascism had also removed many potential sources of European strength from the chessboard, and Stalin continued to purge Trotskyists – and their families – throughout the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> To make matters worse, the various currents and tendencies within the Trotskyist movement argued over many of the fundamental questions that they faced – their understanding of and attitude towards the Soviet Union, whether they should infiltrate or organise independently of the official Communist Parties, and whether they should even create a new International at all. The Communist Left of Spain, the Archeomarxists in Greece, the German Socialist Workers Party and a substantial minority of the American Socialist Workers Party all broke with the international Trotskyist movement in the course of these debates. Despite these setbacks, and the repression that Soviet, fascist and often democratic governments directed against them, the Fourth International won adherents all over the world. Before 1945, however, the Fourth International remained no more than a global movement in embryo.

Working-class internationalism suffered in the Second World War as it had in the first. Again, the parties of the Second International followed their respective governments - with the important exception of those under Axis rule or occupation. The parties of the Third International followed every twist and turn of Soviet diplomacy, from flirting with supporting the German victory over France in 1940 – because of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 – to full-throated support for the Allies once Germany invaded Russia in 1941. In 1943, however, Stalin took the concept of socialism in one country to one possible logical conclusion – in other words he

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<sup>14</sup> For a concise history of Trotskyism, see Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 211.

<sup>16</sup> On repression of Trotskyists by Stalin, see Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*. On repression of Trotskyists during the Second World War, see David North, *The Heritage We Defend: A Contribution to the History of the Fourth International* (Detroit: Labor Publications Inc, 1988), 86-97.

dissolved it to placate his wartime allies. The Second International collapsed in 1914 because it could not contain the nationalist, even jingoistic sentiments unleashed in wartime. The Third International ended as part of a Soviet diplomatic manoeuvre. In both cases working-class nationalism triumphed over internationalism, even if that victory remained provisional. The small parties of the Fourth International – hit by Trotsky's assassination in 1940 – offered the only full-throated defence of internationalism in theory and to some extent in practice by any of the three international groupings. They looked with anticipation to the end of the war when, Trotsky had argued, there was every possibility that revolutionary upheavals would sweep across Europe and then the rest of the world, as they had after the First World War. Needless to say those predictions were not vindicated, at least not straight away.

1945 marks an appropriate chronological end-point for this volume, and for the conference that it was based on. In that year, representatives of trade unions from across the Allied and neutral countries, bringing Soviet delegates face-to-face with British and American ones, met at London to build a new international federation of trade unionists and their organisations. For four years afterwards the World Federation of Trade Unions bridged the widening gap – and heavily fortified borders – between East and West, until the trade unionists of Western Europe left in 1949 to form the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In 1945 the Third International had ended. The Second was large but purged of its original enthusiasm. The Fourth was too small as yet to influence events. Labour in the Western and Soviet blocs had not yet assumed its Cold War shape, and the young labour movements of the colonised world were not, for the most part, yet ready to play decisive roles in the struggles of their own peoples for national self-determination. Those last themes are subjects for other conferences and other volumes.

## **Nationalism and New Directions**

Few would claim that these four Internationals, and their various affiliated bodies, encompass the whole history of working-class internationalism before 1945. Historians have long noted, and detailed, the international federations of unions that had existed long before the World Federation came into existence in that year. The International Trade Secretariats, formed from the early 1890s and linked in various ways to the Second International, have long been the subject of scholarship. So have the federations of national union federations (such as the British Trades Union Congress, the American Federation of Labor, and the French Confédération

générale du travail), from the International Secretariat of Trade Union Centres (1901-1914) to the International Federation of Trade Unions (1919-1945, also known as the Amsterdam International).<sup>17</sup> The International Labour Organization, formed in the aftermath of the First World War as a tripartite body bringing together representatives from governments, business and organised labour, has received the same full scholarly attention.<sup>18</sup> Historians have also explored the global activities of individual trade unions, such as the British Amalgamated Society of Engineers which organised branches throughout (and even beyond) North America and the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The study of working-class internationalism, in other words, has always extended beyond the socialist movements represented in the four great Internationals of our period.

Yet these four bodies have always received the most attention from historians. Partisans of each of them sought to explain their victories, learn from their mistakes, justify their decisions, attack partisans of rival bodies, and use their achievements to promote contemporary causes – and in the process generated whole libraries of historical accounts. Their opponents, especially during the Cold War, generated further libraries of scholarship on the four Internationals to do precisely the opposite, and attack what they saw as unwholesome myths propagated by the socialists. This picture of the history of the Internationals as the Cold War by other means is, of course, unfair to all sides. Thanks to the work of scholars, political activists and other writers we know a great deal about all four movements and the events, ideological battles, victories and defeats that characterised all of them. Given the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the continued relevance of these movements' ideas today it is unsurprising, even necessary, that they remain at the centre of the history of working-class internationalism.

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<sup>17</sup> For an older but still useful summary of these organisations, and the scholarship around them, see Lewis L. Lorwin, "The Structures of International Labor Activities," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 310 (1957): 1-11.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Antony Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organization* (London: Octagon Books, 1971); *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organization and Beyond*, eds. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Drouz (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> For the ASE, see James B. Jeffreys, *The Story of the Engineers* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1945); Ken D. Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia, 1852-1920* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1970).

And it would be trite, not to mention misleading, to say that scholars of that subject have “moved on” from the four Internationals. Their history still provokes new research and rightly so. But historians in recent decades have begun to extend the study of working-class internationalism beyond the Internationals, on the one hand, and the largely institutional studies of international trade unions and union federations on the other. Several important questions or problems have guided much of this research. One concerns the prevailing assumption of much early scholarship, often unstated, that working-class internationalism and socialism are more or less synonymous. That assumption, as historians have explored in growing detail, not only leaves out the international movements created by anarchists and syndicalists, such as the International Working People’s Association (or Black International) which was born in 1882 and has disappeared and reappeared several times since. It also leaves out a long tradition of working-class liberalism which found institutional expression in the ILO and, to an extent, within the international trade union federations of the twentieth centuries, as well as an equally long tradition of Catholic and/or Christian trade unionism which grew throughout Europe during our period and maintained its own international organisations.<sup>20</sup>

Historians have also begun to explore other movements that do not fit easily into one of the above boxes. The history of the four Internationals and the international union federations of the time is, after all, largely a European history – with, of course, some notable exceptions. The rise of global and transnational labour history in the past 20 or so years, and the growth of labour history as a discipline in countries such as Brazil and India, has the potential to bring the rest of the world – Latin America, Asia and Africa in particular – into the story of working-class internationalism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> On anarchism, cf. Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Collins, 1992); Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005); on the International Working People’s Association, especially in the United States, cf. Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). For working-class liberalism on an international scale see Elizabeth Killen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013). For Christian trade unionism see Jan de Maeyer, Lex Herma von Voss and Patrick Pasture, *Between Cross and Class. Christian Labour in Modern Europe 1840-2000* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> For examples of the growth of labour history in Brazil and India, see Alexander Fortes, “Brazil,” *Labour/Le Travail* 50 (2002): 249-253; *Coolies, Capital, and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour History*, eds. Rana P. Behal and Marcel van

Parts of the “developed” or industrial world have benefited from a closer examination as well. The rich but understudied contribution of American labour to the story of working-class internationalism, for example, has benefited from greater attention in recent years. This includes early movements such as the Knights of Labor and avowedly radical ones such as the Industrial Workers of the World, but also includes movements generally considered more insular and conservative, such as the American Federation of Labor.<sup>22</sup> Samuel Gompers, no friend of socialists in the Second International at home or abroad, founded the Pan-American Federation of Labor (in which he hoped the unions of Central and South America would form along American lines and under his own tutelage and guidance), and his enthusiasm for tripartite boards representing labour, business and government during the First World War was replicated in the structure of the ILO.<sup>23</sup>

Wider trends in labour history, in particular the move away from institutional histories and toward greater emphasis on questions of culture, ideology, community, gender, race, and more diffuse working-class networks in general, have altered our understanding of internationalism as well. Workers did not always need an institutional framework to act on a global level (although this usually helps), nor did they always express themselves along the ideological lines of the major international working-class movements. They might, for instance, support workers in other countries on strike. Labour historians are very well aware of the enormous – and barely solicited – sums of money from Australia that allowed London dockers to win the Great Dock Strike of 1889, but there are countless other, forgotten episodes where workers in different countries have done the same thing. The intersections between race and class, from international movements to keep out Chinese immigrations to the

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der Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Prasanna Parthasarathi, “Indian Labor History,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82 (2012): 127-135.

<sup>22</sup> For the Knights of Labor see Steven Parfitt, “The First-and-a-half International: The Knights of Labor and the History of International Labour Organization in the Nineteenth Century,” *Labour History Review*, 80:2 (2015): 135-67. For the Industrial Workers of the World, see an upcoming volume edited by Peter Cole, David Struthers and Kenyon Zimmer, titled *Wobblies of the World: Towards a Global History of the IWW*.

<sup>23</sup> For the Pan-American Federation of Labor see Sinclair Snow, *The Pan-American Federation of Labor* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1964); Burra G. Andrews, *Shoulder to Shoulder?: The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1924* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

intersections between trade unionism, the left, Pan-Africanism and black nationalism, has been the subject of much more historical research in recent years, also in the light of anti-colonial struggles for emancipation.<sup>24</sup> So too have the intersections between gender and class, especially as they pertain to connections between the international labour and feminist movements.

At the same time, other historians – especially but not only linked to the International Institute for Social History - have moved away from the focus on individuals and ideological tendencies that has characterised much of the scholarship on the four Internationals, and toward the material aspects of working-class internationalism. They have explored the ways in which changes to the work process, global migration, and the development of labour and product markets on a local, national and global scale – to name only a few of the major processes involved – have led workers to think and act in global terms.<sup>25</sup> Ideas have not been written out of the narrative but have instead been placed in their material context, and historians in this tradition are as likely to reach for the relevant immigration statistics as for one of Trotsky's polemical tracts.<sup>26</sup> John Logue has even argued that working-class internationalism 'developed

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<sup>24</sup> For the development of anti-Chinese immigration as an international movement see Kornel Chang, "Enforcing Transnational White Solidarity: Asian Migration and the Formation of the U.S.-Canadian Boundary," *American Quarterly* 60:3 (2008): 671-696. On black nationalism, Pan-Africanism and workers' internationalism, cf. Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013); Michael C. Dawson, *Blacks In and Out of the Left* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); *The Black International: From Toussaint to Tupac*, eds. M. O. West, F. C. Wilkins and W. G. Martin (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2009); Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 287-351.

<sup>25</sup> A selection of publications in this area, which captures the progressive abandonment of institutional history towards a more marked focus on global labour history, includes: *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830-1940*, eds. Frits L. van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (Leiden: Brill, 1988); *The Formation of Labour Movements: an International Perspective* eds. Marcel van der Linden and Jiirgen Rojahn (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen, *Prolegomena for a Global Labour History* (Amsterdam: International Institute for Social History, 1999); *Workers Across the Americas: the Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of this work see Jan Lucassen ed., *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

from concrete material self-interest grounded in the pattern of migration of skilled labor in the middle of the last [nineteenth] century,' only to then stop serving workers' material interests as national movements entered their respective political arenas – that is, except for a small coterie of trade union bureaucrats who enjoyed the travel and expense accounts that came with international conferences.<sup>27</sup> That conclusion might be a bit much for us to bear. It certainly, however, points to the importance of understanding the material, as well as the ideological, context in which working-class internationalism has developed.

But the biggest opportunity, and challenge, for scholars writing the history of that subject is what at first glance seems like its antonym: nationalism. Much scholarship has tended to establish a binary relationship between the two concepts with little interaction between them – except of a negative kind. Nationalism appears here as the serpent whose seductive words ruin the internationalist Eden. In some cases, such as August 1914 or the more gradual Stalinisation of the Third International, that picture approximates events. In others the relationship between nationalism and internationalism is much more complicated. We have already seen the important role that national liberation movements played in the creation of the First International, and need only think of relatively recent international struggles waged by trade unionists in support of national movements, such as the anti-apartheid movement, to further grasp that point. The very word internationalism, moreover, presupposes the existence of nations and national borders across which workers can interact. It is no coincidence that what is often seen as the golden age of working-class internationalism, the period of the First and Second Internationals, was also a golden age of nationalism. Then, nations formed and consolidated themselves around the world – or movements stirred to bring those nations into being – while at the same time workers were forced to confront the globalisation of production, trade, and mass migration that did not stop conveniently at national borders. Historians have never ignored the complex interactions between nationalism and internationalism but they have, in recent years, begun to analyse those interactions in more detail. The many similarities between our age of globalisation and the one in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries only gives those analyses a sharper edge.

The revival of the study of nationalism as a historical phenomenon has also made this task easier. Many scholars for most of the twentieth century, especially those on the left, saw nationalism largely through the lens of the First and Second World Wars, and the holocausts that

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<sup>27</sup> John Logue, *Toward a Theory of Trade Union Internationalism* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 1980), 23-4.



accompanied them. They viewed it accordingly as a negative force that they hoped would disappear on its own. In the 1980s and 1990s, as events rendered those predictions wrong, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson and other historians began to look again at this powerful and durable idea and historicize it. They called for nationalism to be studied as a social and political process subject to historical change, rather than as a simple, unchanging and natural state of mind. They found its origins in the upheavals that followed the French Revolution. They insisted that it involved the construction by people of what Anderson calls an “imagined community,” in which reading, the press and national educational programmes inculcated a sense of togetherness between people of the same “nation” who would probably never meet each other, and argued that national feeling was fostered by what Hobsbawm and others have termed “invented tradition” – that is, the creation of a set of national characteristics and customs supposedly rooted in the past but actually of very recent origin. How many of the people who admire the stately traditions of the British Royal Family, for instance, know that much of the protocol and rituals was devised in the twentieth century?<sup>28</sup>

The rise of global and transnational labour history on the one hand, and these new directions in the study of nationalism on the other, raise the possibility of dialogue – even synthesis – between these two fast-growing fields. Along with the other new developments in labour history mentioned above, this dialogue should help us to do the kind of things that all original research should have as its goals. The first is to explore old questions in a new way. The four Internationals, and the international union federations surrounding them, can always benefit from further re-examination especially when they remain such important parts of our story. The second is to explore new questions in a new way. Workers developed their own national identities at the same time that at least some of them began to think of themselves as part of an even wider “imagined community” – the international proletariat, working class, or common people. Were these processes similar and how did they interact? These are only some of the questions that might inform new research at the boundaries between working-class nationalism and internationalism. Other scholars will find other questions and other ways of posing them.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> For a recent contribution in labour history and socialism that builds on a sophisticated understanding of working-class nationalism, cf. Jakub Beneš,

## Our Contributions

We do not attempt to provide a comprehensive synthesis of these two themes in this volume. Each chapter is, instead, a richly-textured account that places working-class nationalism and internationalism within a specific historical context. Some of them provide new angles on well-established historical subjects. Yiannis Kokosalakis takes issue with the widely-held belief – in part repeated above - that the Soviet Union under Stalin simply retreated from internationalism and cultivated Russian patriotism instead. Instead, he views his subject, political instruction given to sailors in the Soviet Baltic Fleet in the 1920s and 1930s, through the prism of “revolutionary patriotism,” a synthesis of Soviet nationalism and the internationalism of Lenin and the early Bolsheviks. Kerrie Holloway addresses one of the most famous conflicts between the two world wars – the Spanish Civil War – and the “Aid Spain” movement that appeared in Britain within weeks of the outbreak of the war. From British miners relieving the distress of their Spanish counterparts, to working-class women ensuring that Spanish children had warm clothes for the winter, Holloway demonstrates the powerful connections that developed between local communities, national movements and international solidarity in defence of the Spanish Republic.

Other chapters deal with movements that historians do not always put together, or do not appear so frequently in Anglophone scholarship. Christian Dietrich looks at debates that raged before the First World War within the largest affiliate of the Second International, the German Social-Democratic Party, on one of the most contentious national movements of the twentieth century: Labour Zionism. Situating this debate within wider arguments about colonial policy in the Second International in general, and Germany colonial policy in particular, Dietrich explores the tensions between nationalism and internationalism at play here through a close examination of key Social-Democratic publications and the proceedings of the 1907 Congress of the Second International. Kostas Paloukis writes about the attitudes of the Greek interwar left toward nationalism in general and the founding event of modern Greek nationalism in particular: the Greek War of Independence of 1821. Aurelien Zaragori, meanwhile, examines the early years of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions and emphasises the role that the new International Labour Organization played in turning Christian trade unionism into an international movement. Christian trade unions remained a minority of

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*Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

trade unionists in almost every country, and thus that they could not be assured of much or any representation at the highest levels of the ILO. Zaragori argues that Christian trade unionists accordingly recognised the need to work together if they wanted any voice at all in this body, and built an international movement for the most practical of reasons.

Still more concern individuals whose place in the history of working-class internationalism has not always been recognised. Christina Till takes us through the political life of Jiang Kanghu, the founder of the Chinese Socialist Party in 1913, and his international work in support of Chinese socialism. That Party predated and was later overshadowed by the Chinese Communist Party, much like Jiang himself, and Till offers us a number of compelling reasons why we should take this neglected figure more seriously, even if only to give us a glimpse of what the alternatives to the CCP on the left might have looked like. Suz Garrard recovers Ellen Johnston, a Scottish female factory worker and poet in the nineteenth century, from even greater obscurity. Garrard focuses on Johnston's poems concerning the 1864 tour through England and Scotland of Giuseppe Garibaldi, hero of the *Risorgimento*. In these poems, she writes, we find a complex brew of Scottish and Italian nationalism, filtered through a kind of Victorian cosmopolitanism and all from a working-class perspective. Nationalism and cosmopolitanism, needless to say, did not easily coexist in these poems or in Johnson herself.

Merilyn Moos takes an individual very close to her but not widely known: her father, Siegfried, who was associated with the German Communist Party (KPD) and opposition to National Socialism during the 1930s. She situates her father's role in the anti-Nazi struggles of that period within a wider network of grassroots activists who maintained a close but nonetheless ambivalent relationship with the KPD and the Third International. Finally, Dan Gallin's keynote address explores the historic battle for internationalism that has translated itself into a fight against nationalism, and a campaign for democracy in the labour movement and society at large. He examines the career of Dutch trade unionist Edo Fimmen, who believed International Trade Sectors were the best vehicle for leading international labour struggles. Exploring Fimmen's commitment to independent Marxism, Gallin calls for a reestablishment of "socialist values, socialist morality and socialist conduct" in the present day and concludes by calling for an "invisible international," a network of revolutionary movements for socialist change.

In their own ways, each of these contributions is part of one or more of the new trends in labour history outlined in this introduction. They all belong to a new wave of scholarship, drawing strength from the growth of

global and transnational approaches to labour history and from the study of nationalism as a historical process, that will allow us to better understand the ways in which workers have organised (or not) across national borders, and the problems, opportunities, victories and defeats that they have encountered along the way. As we noted at the start of this introduction, these are also subjects that still concern us in the present. Deindustrialisation and defeats have crippled labour movements across the West. The growing numbers of workers in the Global South have yet to win the basic rights that their counterparts in the West take for granted – or, at least, that they used to take for granted. Whether decline can be halted or reversed in the first case, and whether victories can be achieved in the second, will depend in large part on how workers in both cases can deploy working-class nationalism and internationalism for their own ends – and on how these two ideas are deployed against them. We make no predictions here. All we can say is that a better historical understanding of both themes might help to illumine the way ahead, and that the chapters that follow each provide a glimpse of the road down which we have already travelled.

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