



Workers' Internationals

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[The First International](#) [1]



The International Working Men's Association (IWMA), later to be known as the First International, was founded on 28 September 1864 at St Martin's Hall in London. Despite the fact that it only existed for 12 years, it had an enormous influence on the world working class and anticapitalist movement. It was the first organisation which consciously set out to organise the working class into a worldwide force struggling against capitalism for its own emancipation.

Though it was mainly concentrated in Europe, many labour movements in north and south America owe their origins directly to the IWMA and its militants, many of whom emigrated after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. All future internationals claimed a historic link and debt to the First International and most recognised Karl Marx's role in its leadership.

Articles on the History of the First International available [here](#) [1]

[The Second International](#) [2]



The Second International was founded in Paris in 1889 and it ended the national isolation of socialist organisations after the collapse of the First International. By this time, powerful socialist parties had been created in many European countries, often on the basis of the programmatic documents of the IWMA.

The later history of the International saw a struggle between a growing reformist tendency, based on the trade union bureaucracy and the majority of parliamentarians, and, in a number of countries, a small revolutionary wing.

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[The Third International](#) [3]



The Third International, also known as the Communist International, was born out of the revolutionary opposition to the first World War.

The Russian Communist Party took the lead in convening a conference to found a third, Communist International in Moscow in March 1919. In the first years of its existence, the Comintern was the motor force for many significant achievements by the world working class: the defence of the October Revolution in Russia against imperialist encirclement and internal counter-revolution; the establishment of communist parties around the world; the development of revolutionary policy on the trade unions; the struggle against imperialism and national oppression; the building of revolutionary women's and youth movements; the elaboration of the tactics of the united front and the workers' government; and many other issues.

From the early 1920's, a growing bureaucracy around Stalin took power and started to preach the need for 'socialism in one country' and peaceful co-existence with global capitalism.

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On 3 September 1938, 30 delegates from 11 countries gathered in the home of the veteran revolutionary Alfred Rosmer, outside Paris, to adopt a new international programme and to formally found the Fourth International.

Unlike the first three internationals, the fourth never became a mass international. Its strength remained in its programme (the Transitional Programme) and in a tiny but heroic band of cadres who defended it and fought for it in Europe, the Americas and Asia. After the Second World War, however, this small band fell into confusion and disarray.

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Articles on the History of the Fourth International available [here](#) [4]

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