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**WORKERS OF THE WORLD SERIES
NUMBER 4**

**SOLIDARITY
OF LABOUR**

**THE STORY OF INTERNATIONAL
WORKER ORGANISATIONS**



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GROUP**

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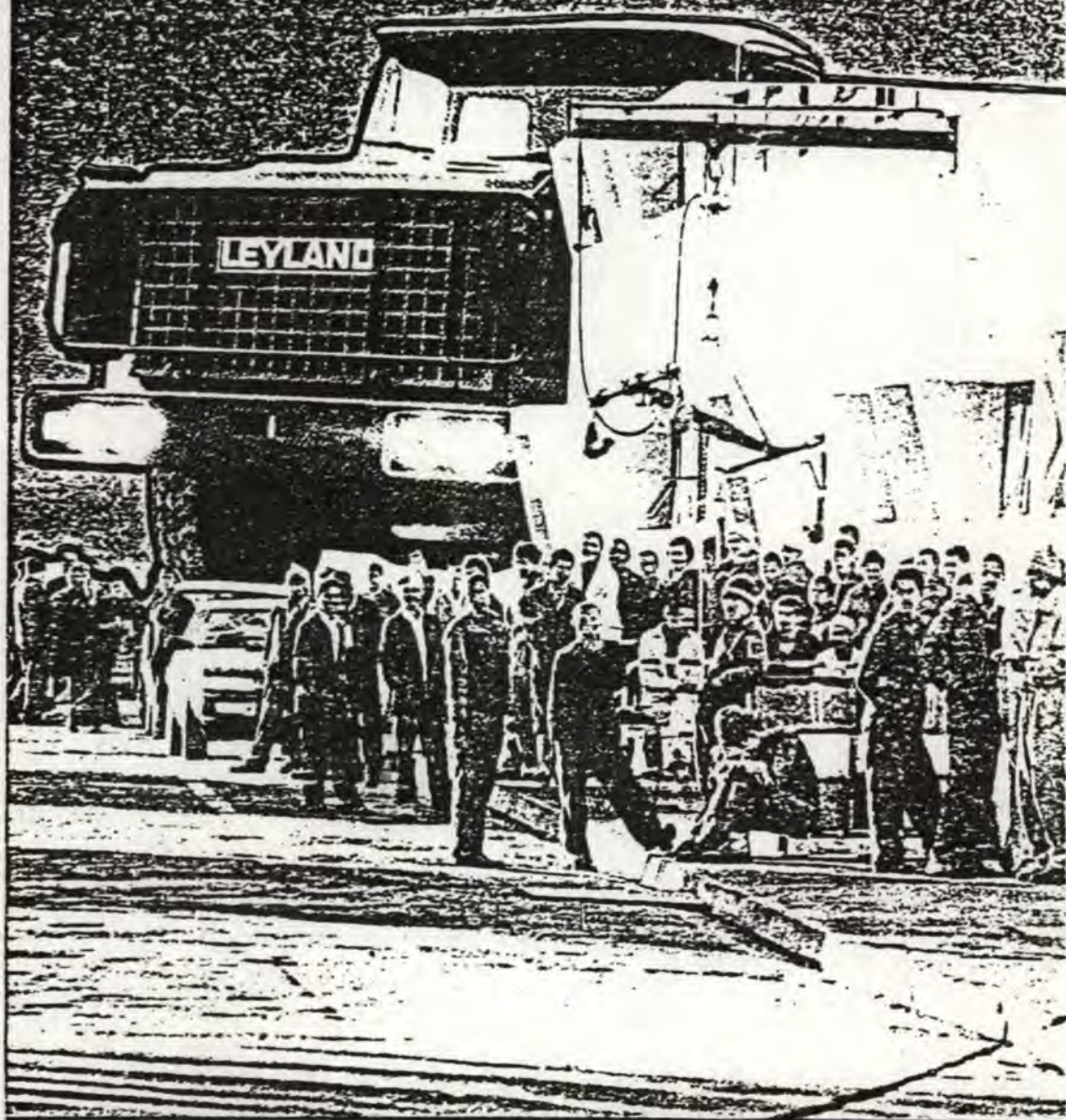
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This picture shows workers standing outside the gates of the Leyland car factory near Cape Town in 1981. Two thousand Leyland workers were on strike for higher wages.

The Leyland management dismissed all the strikers, and gave their jobs to new workers. But the workers and their union fought back. Other unions and community organisations gave them support.

Workers in other countries also gave support to the Leyland workers. Leyland owns factories in Britain as well as South Africa. So when Leyland workers in Britain heard of the strike, they tried to help their comrades in South Africa.

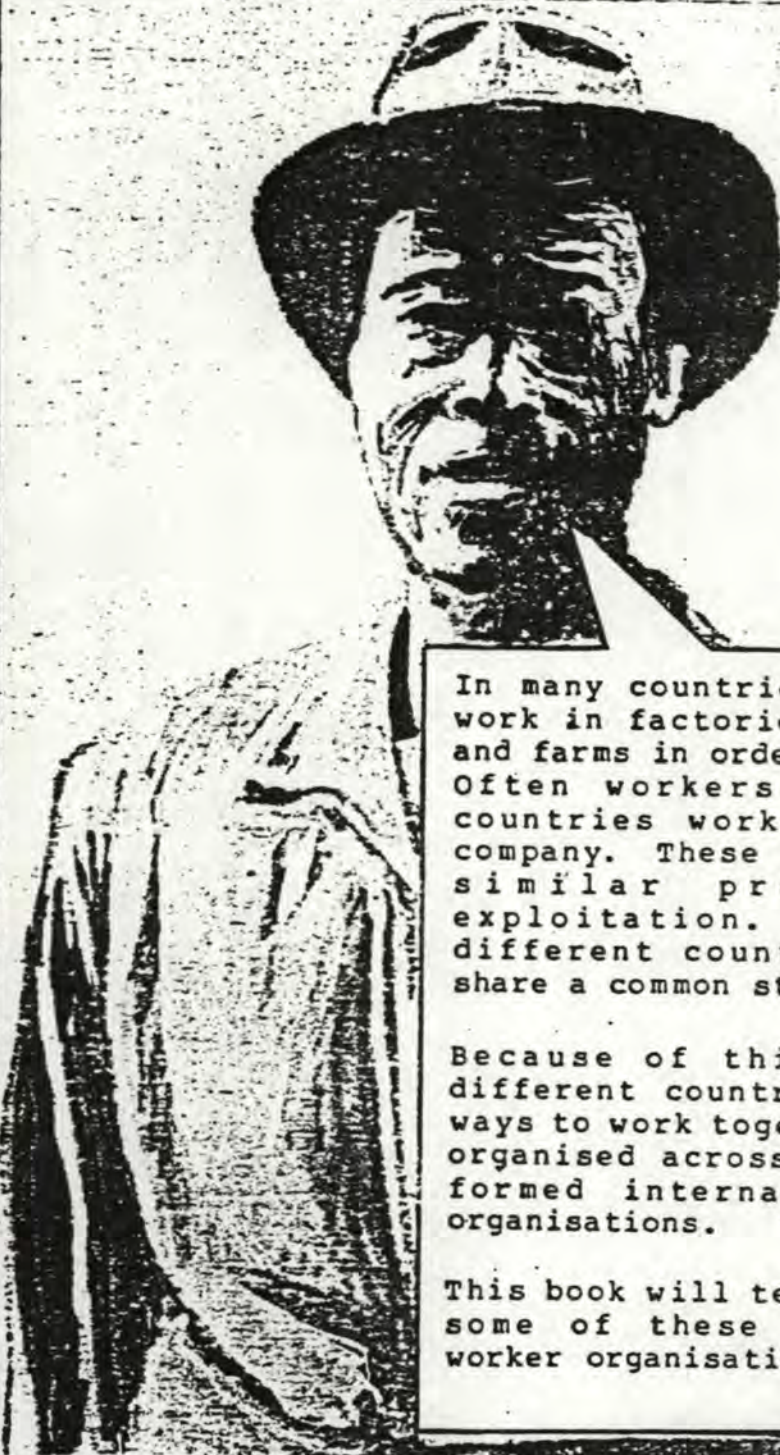
The trade unions of Leyland workers in Britain protested to Leyland in South Africa. One British union threatened to stop sending car parts to Leyland factories in South Africa if the bosses did not talk to the workers.

The strikers also got messages of support from international trade union organisations like the ICFTU and the International Metal Workers' Federation, and from the International Labour Organisation.

In the end the Leyland management agreed to talk with the union and give back the jobs to the strikers.

This story of the Leyland strike brings up some questions. What are international trade union organisations? What are the ICFTU and the International Metalworkers' Federation? Why do workers far away in Britain offer support to workers in South Africa? How much unity is there between workers in different countries?

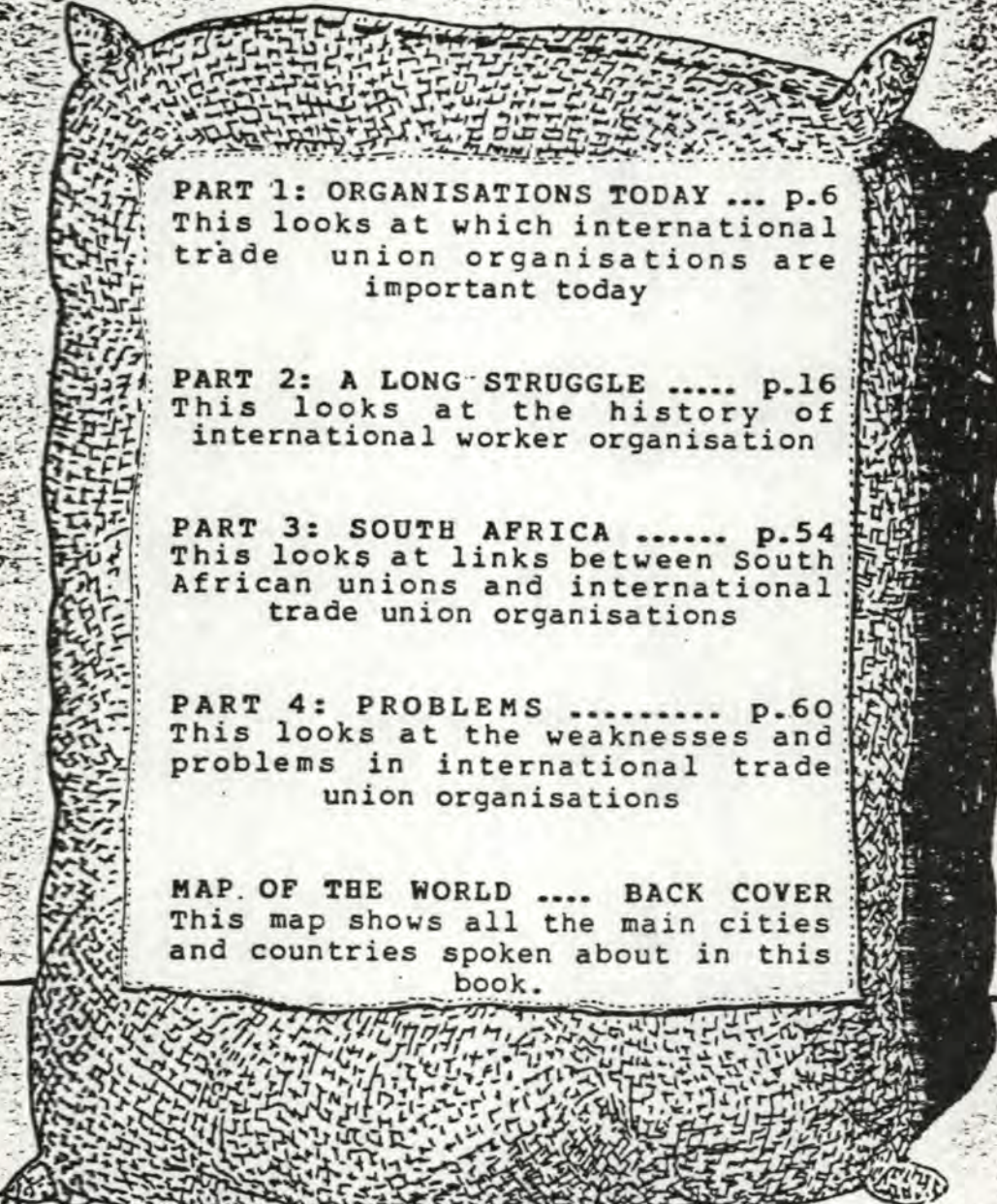
This book will look at some of these questions.



In many countries today people work in factories and on mines and farms in order to earn wages. Often workers in different countries work for the same company. These workers suffer similar problems and exploitation. They live in different countries but they share a common struggle.

Because of this workers in different countries have found ways to work together. They have organised across the world and formed international worker organisations.

This book will tell the story of some of these international worker organisations.



PART 1: ORGANISATIONS TODAY ... p.6
This looks at which international trade union organisations are important today

PART 2: A LONG STRUGGLE p.16
This looks at the history of international worker organisation

PART 3: SOUTH AFRICA p.54
This looks at links between South African unions and international trade union organisations

PART 4: PROBLEMS p.60
This looks at the weaknesses and problems in international trade union organisations

MAP OF THE WORLD BACK COVER
This map shows all the main cities and countries spoken about in this book.

PART ONE

ORGANISATIONS TODAY

There are many international trade union organisations which bring together workers from different countries. Here, we will focus on three of the most important of these organisations:

1. International confederations which bring together trade union federations from different countries.
2. International trade secretariats which bring together unions in the same industry from different countries.
3. International work of national trade union federations.

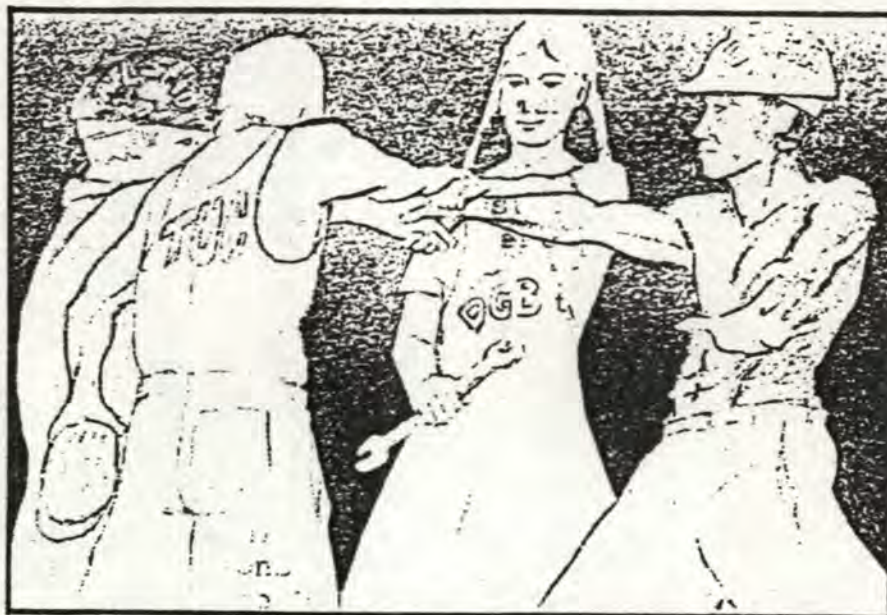
The names of many of these organisations are very long. This book will often use the short form of the name. It will give just the main letters of the name, for example ICFTU. At the end of this section, on page 15, the names of many of these organisations are written out in full.

TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS

In many countries different unions come together in one organisation called a national trade union centre or federation.

For example, in Britain all the unions come together in the Trades Union Congress - the TUC. In the United States unions are joined in a federation called the AFL-CIO, and in Germany most big unions belong to the DGB. In some countries there is more than one federation. In France there are three. In South Africa, in the 1970s, non-racial unions formed two different federations - FOSATU and CUSA.

When federations from different countries come together to form one international organisation, it is called an international trade union confederation.



Today there are two main confederations which bring together trade unions from different countries:

ICFTU - INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS:

has 85 million union members, from federations in 93 different countries. Its influence is strongest in Western Europe, North America and Japan. The British TUC, the American AFL-CIO, and German DGB and the South African federation, CUSA, are some of the centres affiliated to the ICFTU.



WFTU - WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

has over 200 million members from 88 different countries. Its influence is strongest in socialist countries like the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.



There is also a third international confederation called the **WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (WCL)**. This is smaller than the other two, and is strong mainly in Latin America.

If we want to know how strong a confederation really is, it is not enough to ask how many members it has. In many West European countries, workers must belong to certain unions because of closed-shop agreements. In many Eastern European countries, unions are controlled by the state and all workers must belong to a union. This pushes up the number of members in the ICFTU and the WFTU.



Usually only one trade union federation from each country can join an international confederation. If there is more than one federation in a country, each centre will join a different confederation. For example in France there are three trade union centres. One belongs to the ICFTU, another belongs to the WFTU, and a third belonged to the WCL (but it is now independent).

What is the work of international confederations?

They aim to build up trade union organisation in countries where it is weak. They give lots of money to new unions, and give education and training to trade union organisers. They protest when governments repress workers' organisations. Later this book will look at some of the problems of their work.



AFRICAN LABOUR NEWS

The monthly journal of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) - African Department - Volume 11 No. 107 - March 1968

Special Issue
ICFTU SYMPOSIUM ON SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT BLACK TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

OPENING EDITORIAL

SIGMA



The ICFTU produces this newsletter for unions in Africa

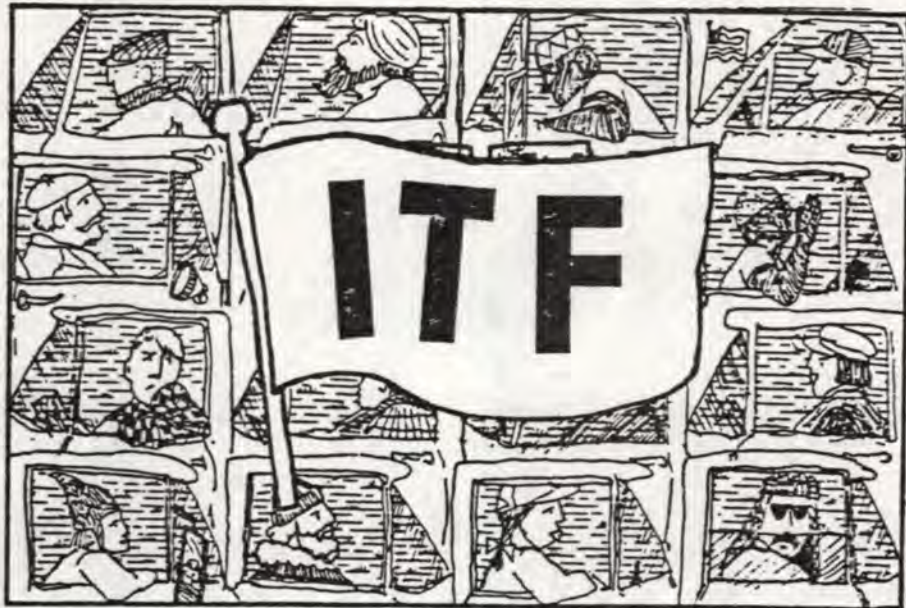
INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS

What are trade secretariats?

In many countries, workers in the same industry or same type of factory are organised into one union. For example, in South Africa many transport workers are organised by the Transport and General Workers' Union.

The **INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS (ITS)** bring together unions in the same industry from different countries.

For example unions which organise transport workers in many different countries, have joined together to form the **International Transport Federation (ITF)**.



Today there are 16 ITSS with almost 60 million worker members across the world. These trade secretariats are linked to a particular confederation, the ICFTU. There are also other trade secretariats linked to the WFTU as well as to the WCL.

Only one union federation from each country can join a confederation. But more than one union from each country can join a trade secretariat. For example in South Africa, the General Workers' Union as well as the Transport and General Workers' Union both organise transport workers. Both these unions are members of the International Transport Federation.

What is the work of the ITSS?

Like the international trade union confederations, the ITSS also aim to build trade union organisation in different countries. But the ITSS deal more with the industrial problems of ordinary workers at their places of work.

For example, they help unions in different countries to exchange information and to cooperate, particularly when they are dealing with the same company. Sometimes they help workers in different countries to support each other by organising strikes or boycotts. Later in this book we will look at some examples of this. We will also look at some of the problems of these organisations.

NATIONAL FEDERATIONS

Some national federations, like the British TUC, the American AFL-CIO, and a number of European federations, also run their own trade union programmes in other countries.

For example, the TUC has close ties with trade union movements in many countries in Africa and Asia that were once colonies of Britain. Another example is Germany, where each union federation runs its own programmes in other countries.

The American AFL-CIO has a special International Department which runs big trade union programmes in many different countries. It has one section organising programmes in Latin America (AIFLD), another in Africa (the AALC), and another in Asia (AAFLI).



Workers are also brought together internationally by:

REGIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

These bring together unions in one part of the world. For example the ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN TRADE UNION UNITY (OATUU) brings together national federations from many countries in Africa.

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO)

This is part of the United Nations. It is made up of representatives of employers, representatives of workers and representatives of governments. These representatives talk together about how to raise the conditions of all workers in different countries to the same level.

WORKER TO WORKER LINKS

Often unions prefer not to work through these big international organisations. They may make their own direct contact with workers in other countries, by organising visits or meetings between shopstewards or ordinary workers in different countries. They may also have links with workers in other countries through church organisations, like Young Christian Workers (YCW). This sort of contact has become important for workers in the last few years. Later this book will look at some examples of these contacts.



NAMES OF ORGANISATIONS

Confederations

- ICFTU - International Confederation of Free
Trade Unions
WFTU - World Federation of Trade Unions
WCL - World Confederation of Labour

Trade Secretariats

- IMF - International Metal Workers' Federation
ITF - International Transport Workers'
Federation
ITS - International Trade Secretariat

Other International Organisations

- AALC - African-American Labour Centre
ILO - International Labour Organisation
OATUU - Organisation of African Trade Union
Unity

National Federations

- AFL-CIO - American Federation of Labour -
Congress of Industrial Organisations
CGT - Confédération Generale du Travail
(France)
DGB - Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Germany)
TUC - Trades Union Congress (Britain)

South African Federations

- CUSA - Council of Unions of South Africa
FOSATU - Federation of South African Trade
Unions
TUUSA - Trade Union Council of South Africa

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