This first volume of *The Cambridge History of Communism* deals with the tumultuous events from 1917 to World War II, such as the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the revolutionary turmoil in post-World War I Europe, and the Spanish Civil War. Leading experts analyze the ideological roots of communism, historical personalities such as Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky and the development of the communist movement on a world scale against this backdrop of conflict that defined the period. The volume addresses the making of Soviet institutions, economy and society while also looking at mass violence and relations between the state, workers and peasants. It introduces crucial communist experiences in Germany, China and Central Asia. At the same time, it also explores international and transnational communist practices concerning key issues such as gender, subjectivity, generations, intellectuals, nationalism and the cult of personality.

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The Cambridge History of Communism is an unprecedented global history of communism across the twentieth century. With contributions from a team of leading historians, economists, political scientists and sociologists, the three volumes examine communism in the context of wider political, social, cultural and economic processes, while at the same time revealing how it contributed to shaping them. Volume I deals with the roots, impact and development of communism, analyzing the tumultuous events from the Russian Revolution of 1917 to World War II, and historical personalities such as Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky. Volumes II and III then review the global impact of communism, focusing on the Cold War, the Chinese Revolution, the Vietnam War and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. Together the volumes explain why a movement that sought to bring revolution on a world scale, overthrowing capitalism and parliamentary democracy, acquired such force and influence globally.

Volume I
World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917–1941
EDITED BY SILVIO PONS AND STEPHEN A. SMITH

Volume II
The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960
EDITED BY NORMAN NAIMARK, SILVIO PONS AND SOPHIE QUINN-JUDGE

Volume III
Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present
EDITED BY JULIANE FÜRST, SILVIO PONS AND MARK SELDEN
THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF COMMUNISM

VOLUME I
World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917–1941

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Contents

List of Plates page viii
List of Figures xi
List of Tables xii
List of Contributors to Volume I xiii
Preface xvii

General Introduction 1
SILVIO PONS

Introduction to Volume I 28
SILVIO PONS AND STEPHEN A. SMITH

PART I
ORIGINS 47

1. Marxism and Socialist Revolution 49
GEOFF ELEY (UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN)

2. The Russian Revolution and Civil War 74
REX A. WADE (GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY)

3. Revolution and Counterrevolution in Europe 1917–1923 96
JOHN PAUL NEWMAN (MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY)

4. Lenin as Historical Personality 121
ROBERT SERVICE (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD AND STANFORD UNIVERSITY)
Contents

5. Bolshevik Roots of International Communism  142
   Lars T. Lih (McGill University)

6. Stalin as Historical Personality  166
   James Harris (University of Leeds)

7. Trotsky and Trotskyism  189
   Bertrand M. Patenaude (Stanford University)

8. Communism and the Crisis of the Colonial System  212
   Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (University of Calcutta, Retired)

9. The Comintern as a World Network  232
   Serge Wolikow (Burgundy University)

10. The Popular Fronts and the Civil War in Spain  256
    Tim Rees (University of Exeter)

PART II
PATTERNS AND EXTENSIONS  277

11. Communism, Violence and Terror  279
    Hiroaki Kuromiya (Indiana University)

12. The Soviet Government 1917–1941  304
    E. A. Rees (University of Birmingham)

13. Migration and Social Transformations in Soviet Society 1917–1941  327
    Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Michigan State University)

    Mark Harrison (University of Warwick)

15. The Soviet State and Workers  377
    Donald Filtzer (University of East London)

16. The Soviet State and Peasants  399
    Nicolas Werth (Institut d’Histoire du Temps Present)
Contents

17. Bolshevik Feminism and Gender Agendas of Communism
   ANNA KRYLOVA (DUKE UNIVERSITY)

18. Communism, Nations and Nationalism
   ANDREA GRAZIOSI (UNIVERSITY “FEDERICO II” OF NAPLES)

19. Communism, Youth and Generation
   MATTHIAS NEUMANN (UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA)

20. Communism as Existential Choice
   BRIGITTE STUDER (UNIVERSITY OF BERN)

21. Communism and Intellectuals
   MICHAEL DAVID-FOX (GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY)

22. Cults of the Individual
   KEVIN MORGAN (UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER)

23. German Communism
   ERIC D. WEITZ (CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK)

   ALEXANDER V. PANTSOV (CAPITAL UNIVERSITY)

25. Communism on the Frontier: The Sovietization of Central Asia and Mongolia
   ADEEB KHALID (CARLETON COLLEGE)

Index 637

Color plates are to be found between pp. 396 and 397

vii
Plates

1. Crowds on Nevskii Prospekt during the February Revolution in Petrograd. Slava Katamidze Collection / Getty
2. A political demonstration in Petrograd on 18 June 1917. Central Press Hulton Archive / Getty
3. Red Guards at the Triangle rubber works in Petrograd, October 1917. Stringer AFP / Getty
4. A column of soldiers demonstrating along Nikol’skii street under a banner proclaiming “Communism” in Moscow, November 1917. Sovfoto / Universal Images Group / Getty
5. Lenin reading Pravda, 1918. DEA PICTURE LIBRARY / Getty
6. The Council of the People’s Commissars, Russia, 1918. Heritage Image Partnership Ltd. / Alamy
7. Lenin and Trotsky soon after the October Revolution. Keystone / Getty
8. Lenin and Stalin soon after the October Revolution. Keystone Pictures USA / Alamy
9. Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, 1918. ITAR-TASS Photo Agency / Alamy
10. Street battles and barricades in Schutzen Strasse, Berlin, end of 1918. Culture Club / Getty
11. The founding congress of the Communist International (Comintern), Moscow, March 1919. Universal History Archive / Getty
12. The Hungarian communist Béla Kun surrounded by workers and students in 1919. DEA / A. DAGLI ORTI / Getty
14. A group of Russian refugees at Tbilisi (Tiflis) railway station during the civil war, January 1920. I. Masini / Getty
15. Young civil war fighters, returning from Mongolia in 1921. Vestnik Arkhiva Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Krasnaya Armiia v 1920-e gody (Moscow, 2007), 87.
List of Plates

18. “To the Polish Front! Comrades, the commune is strengthening under a hail of bullets. With rifles we will treble our strength.” Propaganda poster by Vladimir Maiakovskii and Ivan Maliutin, 1920. Photo 12 / Universal Images Group / Getty


20. Lenin, Bukharin, Zinoviev and Paul Levi at the Comintern Third Congress, 1921. ullstein bild / Getty


23. “Emancipated Woman, Build Socialism!” Poster by Adolf Strakov, 1926. Photo 12 / Alamy

24. Professor Chen Duxiu, the first general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, at the Comintern Fourth Congress, Moscow, November 1922. Russian State Archives of Social and Political History, Moscow, 491/2/93

25. Manabendra Nath Roy in Moscow as the Indian delegate to the Comintern Fifth Congress. Topical Press Agency / Stringer / Getty

26. Professor Li Dazhao, one of the first Chinese Bolsheviks and a co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party, at the Comintern Fifth Congress, Moscow, June 1924. Russian State Archives of Social and Political History, Moscow, 495/225/2740.

27. “The Flame of Revolution Will Not Be Extinguished! Therefore Vote for Communists!” KPD electoral poster, late 1920s. Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt


29. Stalin, Bukharin and Grigori Ordzhotnikidze, 1929. Imagno / Getty


32. Bolshevik propagandists talk to Ukrainian peasants at the start of the collectivization of agriculture, 1929. SPUTNIK / Alamy

33. Forced labor in Ukhta on the Izhma River, circa 1930. SVFz Universal Images Group / Getty

34. “Kolkhoznik, Guard Your Fields Against Class Enemies, Thieves and Idlers Wrecking the Socialist Harvest!” Poster by Viktor Ivanovich Govorkov, 1933. Heritage Image Partnership Ltd. / Alamy

35. George Bernard Shaw during his visit to the Soviet Union, 1931. Heritage Images Hulton Archive / Getty


37. Antonio Gramsci, secretary of the Communist Party of Italy (1924–26). Postcard issued in 1934. World History Archive / Alamy

38. A group of survivors from the Long March after their arrival in Yan’an, northern Shaanxi, in 1935. Keystone-France / Getty

ix
List of Plates

39. The Executive Committee of the Comintern at its Seventh Congress, July–August 1935. ITAR-TASS Photo Agency / Alamy
41. Spanish Communist Party election poster urging voters to support the Popular Front, 1936. Universal History Archive / Getty
42. Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria) speaking from a podium to members of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, 1937. ullstein bild / Getty
43. British volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. International Brigade Memorial Trust
44. Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War, Yan’an, late 1930s. Russian State Archives of Social and Political History, 495/225/71
47. “We’ll Dig Out the Spies and Diversionists, the Trotsky–Bukharinite Agents of Fascism!” Poster, 1937. Heritage Images / Getty
48. The Ayach Yaginsk mine barracks in the Gulag work camp, 1930s. Photo from the State Central Archives of the October Revolution. SPUTNIK / Alamy
49. Signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, 23 August 1939, Moscow. Photo 12 / Universal Images Group / Getty
50. “Let Us Mercilessly Smash and Destroy the Enemy!” Poster by Kukryniksy workshop, 1941. Photo 12 / Universal Images Group / Getty
51. The Russian Civil War
52. The Soviet Union and Europe After World War I
53. The Soviet Union in the Interwar Years
Figures

14.1 Russia and the Soviet Union: Real National Income per Head in International Dollars and 1990 Prices  page 350
14.2 Russian and Soviet National Income by Origin, 1913 to 1940  350
14.3 Russian and Soviet National Income by End Use, 1913 to 1940  351
## Tables

11.1 Number of People Convicted and Executed in Cases Investigated by the OGPU/NKVD

11.2 Number of Prisoners in NKVD Camps

11.3 Number of People Confinement in Colonies and Prisons of the NKVD as of 1 January

11.4 Number of People Convicted in Cases Investigated by the OGPU by Occupation (1925)

14.1 Top Ten Powers in the International System, 1913 and 1940

15.1 Workers in Large-Scale Industry, 1928–1936

15.2 Turnover in Major Branches of Soviet Industry, 1924–1936

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List of Contributors to Volume I

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List of Contributors to Volume I

Soviet Russia (1917–41) and in China (1949–76) used the resources of popular religion and magic to make sense of the turbulent changes that overwhelmed their lives in the course of the communist revolutions.

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Preface

If one hundred years after the October Revolution of 1917 communism has become history, it cannot simply be confined to the past. The projects and experiences of world revolution, noncapitalist economies and collectivized societies of the twentieth century are a matter for reflection in terms of historiography, memory and the legacies they left behind. The endurance of communist regimes in some Asian countries and the integration of their economies into globalized capitalism (with the exception of North Korea) have stimulated interest, analysis and questions. This is particularly the case in light of postsocialist China’s influence in the world economy and world politics. Indeed, an entirely new phase of scholarship started after the demise of communism in Europe and Russia in 1989–91, with historical research fueled by the opening of the archives. Scholars have investigated, debated and even redefined major topics and periods of communist history on the basis of previously inaccessible evidence. Many collections of documents have been published in several languages. New books and articles have displaced pre-archival literature, thus decisively moving the field of communist studies beyond “Sovietology.” A decisive transformation in terms of scholarship is under way. Complaints by historians of communism about the relative backwardness of their own field, when compared with other fields in contemporary history, are in many respects a thing of the past.

Such a transformation has not always been obvious in the last quarter-century. Archival evidence sometimes led historians to embrace a positivist approach that favored accumulation of sources over interpretation, and to use documents in support of already established arguments. The advantage represented by greater distance from the object of study has been counterbalanced by the decreasing interest in it, especially as far as Europe and Russia are concerned. Some might even reject any need to explore the communist experience at all, considering it either irrelevant to our current problems or as an anomaly in the course of European and Russian history.
Preface

Others have contended that communism deserves no particular attention because of its manifest failures. Yet assessment of the place of communism remains crucial for framing narratives of the past century, even as scholars assign it different meanings and adopt diverse intellectual perspectives. Historians will continue analyzing how and why communist revolutions, parties, states and societies built mass followings, shaped identities, attracted ordinary people and outstanding intellects, everywhere gave rise to passions of hope and hate, set in motion radical change, spurred modernization, incited violence and genocides, challenged world power and eventually underwent rapid decay, dissolution and profound transformation. Furthermore, to the extent that we recognize the global impact of communism – regardless of our assessment of its outcomes – the issue should have intellectual significance far beyond the bounds of professional historians. The focus on communism helps us understand how our world took shape in the past century, as its history displayed multiple local, national, international and transnational aspects, while connecting Western and non-Western perspectives. Scholars have developed innovative approaches in accordance with the emergence of new historiographical trends, in order to overcome mono-dimensional interpretations inherited from the past, and to place communist history in a multidimensional narrative of twentieth-century history.

The project of *The Cambridge History of Communism* started four years ago, drawing on precisely such insights. This work aims to contribute to the global history of communism. Its purpose is to adopt comprehensive and multiple perspectives, within an inclusive framework of “the global” in history. It aims to understand communism in the context of wider political, social, cultural and economic processes, constraints and vectors, at the same time as acknowledging how communism contributed to shaping them. The chapters combine assessments of classical themes with inquiries into freshly explored issues. They deal with national, regional and international topics, thus unifying scholarly perspectives that were until recently often separated. They focus on Asia and the global South no less than on Europe and Russia. They highlight relationships, interactions and connections while adopting different approaches to social, cultural, economic and political history. While recognizing the Soviet experience as seminal, they devote extensive attention to the other communist experiences, their peculiarities and their increasing diversity.

*The Cambridge History of Communism* brings together a team of internationally distinguished editors representing different overlapping competences. They helped define the project, organized the volumes and gathered a group of about seventy experts from various countries.
The authors of individual chapters have been selected primarily because of their standing in the various fields of studies on communist history. They include both younger and more established scholars, which is particularly important in order to combine an assessment of scholarly debates with the development of new approaches. Representing various schools of thought, they have been invited to advance their own distinctive approaches and arguments. In the tradition of Cambridge Histories, this work provides synthetic accounts for key periods and topics, while aiming at offering interpretive keys and at being wide-ranging and pluralist. As an authoritative work of reference, it should serve as an ambitious scholarly achievement, written by experts for fellow academics and advanced students, as well as providing an introduction that can be consulted by nonprofessionals.

The Cambridge History of Communism has a basically chronological structure, though several chapters provide long-term overviews and links between the different volumes. Volume I – World Revolution and Socialism in One Country, 1917–1941 – deals with the period from 1917 to World War II. It includes chapters analyzing momentous events such as the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the revolutionary turmoil in post-World War I Europe, the crisis of the colonial system and the Spanish Civil War. It deals with the ideological roots of communism as well as with historical personalities such as Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky. It addresses the making of Soviet institutions, economy and society while also looking at mass violence and relations between the state, workers and peasants. It introduces crucial communist experiences in Germany, China and Central Asia. At the same time, it also explores international and transnational communist practices concerning key issues such as gender, subjectivity, generations, intellectuals, nationalism and the cult of personality, whose historical significance exceeds its chronological boundaries.

Volume II – The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s – focuses on the period from World War II and the outbreak of the Cold War to the 1960s, but also has many longer-term accounts. It includes chapters dealing with the emergence of Soviet power in the aftermath of the war, anti-fascist resistance, the Sovietization of Eastern Europe, the Chinese Revolution, Chinese modernization, de-Stalinization, Soviet dominance in post-Stalin Eastern Europe, the Prague Spring, the Cuban Revolution, Mao Zedong's personality, the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Cold War anti-communism in the West. It analyzes the political and economic relations between the Soviet Union and the decolonizing world as well as the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance. It provides an overview of world communism.
Preface

by analyzing national and regional communist experiences in Korea, Vietnam, Latin America, India, Indonesia, Africa, the Arab world and Iran, Yugoslavia, France, Italy and the United States. In addressing all of these single topics efforts are made to supply long-term assessments and also comparative and transnational implications.

Volume III – Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective 1968 to the Present – covers the period from the 1960s to 1989–91 and to our own day. It includes chapters on the “global 1968,” the world impact of the Vietnam War, the role of the Soviet Union in the global Cold War, communist propaganda in the Cold War, Marxist revolutions in Latin America and Africa, communism and genocide in Cambodia, post-Stalin social and cultural developments in the Soviet Union, the decline of Soviet-type economies, reform tendencies in international communism and the Soviet Union, and post-Maoist transformation in China. It deals with Deng Xiaoping’s socioeconomic changes and with the failure of Gorbachev’s reforms. It looks at the relationship of late socialist experiences and communist cultures to religion, human rights, gender regimes, feminism and environmentalism. It puts a focus on the “global 1989” and on the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It analyzes economic, social and geopolitical developments in postsocialist China. And finally, it offers reflections on the implications of globalization and the legacies of communism.

I am thankful to Juliane Fürst, Norman Naimark, Sophie Quinn-Judge, Mark Selden and Stephen Smith for sharing responsibilities in the project, for their contributions at every stage, and for their invaluable efforts as co-editors of the volumes. I wish to extend my gratitude to all contributors who joined us in making possible the realization of this ambitious work. Michael Watson, our editor at Cambridge University Press, put forward the original idea and then provided advice at crucial moments of the project’s development. Elizabeth Hanlon and Cassi Roberts did an essential job in the implementation of the work. Alessandro Larussa helped in keeping order and editing the chapters. The Gramsci Foundation in Rome kindly hosted a workshop in which key topics, concepts and periodizations were debated in depth from different scholarly perspectives. Over several years, I had the chance to discuss this project with many friends, colleagues and experts in Russia, China, the United States, Latin America and Europe. I feel in debt to all of them. This has been a great scholarly and cultural experience, which I hope may bear some lasting fruits.

Silvio Pons

xx