

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
COMMUNISM

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

GENERAL EDITOR

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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 1941–1960s

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EDITED BY JULIANE FÜRST, SILVIO PONS AND MARK SELDEN

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HISTORY OF
COMMUNISM

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VOLUME I
World Revolution and Socialism in One
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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.

Preface

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

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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.

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Silvio Pons