

Introduction to Volume II

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This second volume of *The Cambridge History of Communism* covers the high-water mark of communist power. The victory of the anti-fascist coalition in World War II brought the Soviet Union vastly expanded military reach in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as a period of great prestige as the Red Army defeated Hitler's armies and conquered Berlin. Behind the lines, the military victories of the Soviet Union were matched by the political advances of communist parties throughout Eastern Europe. Moscow oversaw the development of "people's democracies" in the region, while increasing communist control eliminated the possibilities of open and democratic politics and societies. At the same time, anti-fascist resistance highly amplified the role of communists across the continent, particularly in the Balkans and Southern Europe. The robust electoral strength and the sheer size of the French and Italian Communist Parties after the war increased the possibilities of serious Soviet influence in Western Europe. The establishment of the Cominform in September 1947 sanctioned the turn to the division of Europe by gathering all the communist parties in power and the two major Western communist parties in a new international institution – a purported successor to the Comintern.

With the creation of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, the socialist bloc swelled to cover most of Eurasia. In the early days of the Sino-Soviet alliance, this combination of industrial might and a population dwarfing that of Western Europe appeared to threaten the predominance of the West, particularly because of the potential appeal of the Chinese Revolution in the decolonizing Third World. The Soviet Union's successful atomic bomb test in early 1949 contributed to the mood of impending danger that gripped Western capitals, including Washington, DC. By the late 1940s, however, one could no longer speak of monolithic communism, as Tito and the Yugoslavs were able to resist Stalin's pressure to conform

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after their expulsion from the Cominform in 1948. One decade later, the Sino-Soviet relationship fell apart. The once omnipotent and fatherly image of Joseph Stalin had been dismantled by his successors, and unrest and uprisings in Eastern Europe led to a Soviet invasion of Hungary in October 1956 that disillusioned many believers in the superior virtues of the USSR.

The authors of this volume write at a time when this contest for world power, what we have come to know as the “Cold War,” is behind us. Since the fall of the East European communist regimes in 1989 and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, the bipolar order and world communism itself have disappeared. Marxist-Leninist ideology with its many national variants had long been losing its attraction, as the economic development of noncommunist countries all over the world far outstripped that of their Soviet rivals. Communist China has relaunched the challenge of development in the new century by integrating into the world capitalist economy and building a hybrid form of state capitalism. The history of the post-World War II spread of communist power now has a beginning and a finite end. The passing of a full generation since the Soviet Union imploded has freed historians to write about the socialist bloc dispassionately, as a phenomenon that was far less monolithic than contemporary observers once assumed. The communist world possessed a wide array of internal contradictions and, as we now know, its very successes in the 1950s carried the seeds of its failure.

Access to archival sources in repositories across the communist world has afforded scholars the opportunity to explore the contradictions, problems, failures and achievements of the communist system in its various national contexts. The chapters in this volume demonstrate the extent to which our knowledge has expanded and our questions have become more complex since the fall of communism in Europe and Russia.

Contents

This volume is divided into two parts, with the first, “Expansion and Conflict,” covering general multinational issues that have to do with the spread of the communist system after World War II and the global challenges it increasingly represented. This part traces the dynamic proliferation of communist-led governments to Eastern Europe and then to Asia, with revolution in China as the crucial linchpin. But Moscow’s attempts to manage this growth and expansion led to serious conflicts

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both among communist regimes and within individual countries. Complicating matters, Soviet domestic politics, de-Stalinization and post-Stalin succession struggles intersected with political conflicts within the respective communist allies of the Soviet Union. Internal Kremlin politics influenced the extent and resolution of uprisings in Eastern Europe, as well as interactions with Beijing. Soviet hegemony did not overcome the test of de-Stalinization. The breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance was of key importance in putting an end to international communism as a unitary actor in world politics.

The second part of the volume, “Becoming Global, Becoming National,” deals both with general issues relating to the Third World and with individual communist movements that had a major historical impact in all parts of the world. Most scholars acknowledge that insufficient attention has been paid to the development of communism and the Cold War in Africa, Asia and Latin America, in contrast to the Soviet Union, Europe and the United States. Communists in the Third World were important actors in the conflict between “East” and “West” as they decisively contributed to expanding the conflict into a global arena. At the same time, the Soviet Union established connections and alliances with postcolonial countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Syria, India and Indonesia. The encounters between the socialist camp and nationalist elites in the global South had a crucial impact on the Cold War agenda and geopolitics, by enhancing the issues of modernization, state-led development and economic competition on a global scale. These regions also frequently served as tragic surrogates for military competition between the superpowers, suffering death and destruction in wars of insurgency and counterinsurgency. The countries of the developing world continue to suffer from the brutal legacies of the Cold War period.

Communism was a worldwide phenomenon, just as imagined by its purveyors in the Kremlin and among its followers around the world. But it was also an ideological movement deeply tied to national contexts. While this volume makes no claim to covering all the communist parties of the world, it explores in separate chapters a number of the largest and most significant. Moreover, it has chapters on communism in major regions of the world – Latin America, Africa and the Middle East – that follow distinct non-European patterns of development. The purpose of these chapters is to show how communism developed national, international and transnational profiles for decades after World War II, but could never overcome fatal contradictions between state interests, cultural diversity and center-periphery relations.

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Common Themes

One of the major themes of this volume is the tension between the center of world communism in Moscow and both the peripheries formed by the states that adopted communist forms of government in the late 1940s and early 1950s and nonruling parties in the West and the Third World. As a world power, the Soviet Union often found its own interests diverging from those of its allies and “friends.” In his chapter on “World War II, Soviet Power and International Communism,” Evan Mawdsley demonstrates the ways in which the Soviet Union became a world power as a consequence of its great victories in World War II. This marked change in power and status translated into an ability to carry out its will in the territories under the control of the Red Army. Already during the war, communist parties looked to the Soviets to support their ideas of revolution, yet it also became clear that Moscow claimed the prerogatives of a “superpower” early on in its relationship with the East Europeans. However, as Albert Rieber discusses in his “Anti-Fascist Resistance Movements in Europe and Asia During World War II,” the communists had experience with leading and fostering resistance against the Nazi occupiers throughout Europe, and also against the Japanese invaders in Asia, affording them a sense of their own claims to political power and legitimacy, social change and even national identity after the war. Though clearly loyal to Moscow, whether in Europe or in Asia, the communist parties nevertheless were able to formulate their own policies within the resistance movements and carry out their own actions in the underground, which was frequently out of touch with the Soviets or their agents. At the same time, as Rieber demonstrates, neither were they able to control the resistance movements nor were they themselves following monolithic policies.

Wary of Western hostility and potential intervention, the Soviets followed a carefully calibrated policy of instituting people’s democracies in Eastern Europe and following parliamentary procedures in the West. Norman Naimark, in his chapter on “The Sovietization of East Central Europe 1945–1989,” argues that even this policy of flexibility and accommodation was planned from the center and implemented frequently against the wishes of more radical local communists, especially in Yugoslavia. Ivo Banac, in his chapter on “Yugoslav Communism and the Yugoslav State,” also emphasizes that the break with Stalin that came in 1948, and the expulsion of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, came primarily from the radicalism of Tito’s programs, not from its reformism.

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Though pledging obeisance to Stalin and Moscow, Mao and the Chinese communists pursued the resistance against the Japanese and fought the civil war against the Guomindang according to their own lights. Even after coming to power in 1949, writes Chen Jian, in “The Chinese Communist Revolution and the World,” there was an inherent tension between the goals and needs of the Chinese and those of the Soviets. While Mao Zedong expressed warm support for the Soviet Union and gratitude for its aid, he also made it clear that China’s experience of revolution would be an important model for other countries in Asia. This implied that “the victory of the Chinese Communist Revolution might result in complications or even tensions between the international communist movement’s Moscow-centered structure and the Chinese Revolution’s self-claimed and non-Western-oriented ‘model.’” And this indeed would be the case, even though much of Mao’s thinking on economics came straight from Stalin’s writings, as Thomas Bernstein in his chapter on “The Socialist Modernization of China Between Soviet Model and National Specificity 1949–1960s” and other authors note.

Linked to the theme of conflicts between interests of the emerging communist world and Soviet power is the tension between the ideology of “orthodox” communism, as defined by the Moscow leadership, and national variants, especially in the People’s Republic of China, which claimed to have created a form of Marxism-Leninism with Chinese characteristics, a form more appropriate for Asian nations than the Moscow variant. Traditionally, analysts have highlighted conflicting views of the peasantry in the Russian and Chinese Revolutions as the heart of these differences. But as the chapters on Chinese communist history demonstrate, the Sino-Soviet split over ideology also grew out of contrasting approaches to communist reforms in the 1950s after Stalin’s death, including disagreements on the place of violence in the revolution and “peaceful coexistence” in international relations, as well as the role of class struggle over the long term.

Daniel Leese in his chapter on “Mao Zedong as a Historical Personality” presents the multiple, if personalized, nature of the divergences between Moscow and Beijing. He shows how Mao Zedong’s “Sinification” of Marxism-Leninism starting in the late 1930s freed him from having to bow to other sources of authority, so that Mao Zedong Thought could become a “flexible guiding principle.” Leese rates the Chinese leader’s ability to frame a historical narrative using popular tradition and legend as “among Mao’s most outstanding leadership skills,” as well as a powerful tool for creating a history that demonstrated the rectitude of his own policies. At the same

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time, he shows the combined influence of China's tradition and of socialist modernity on Mao's strategies and thinking.

Bernstein also notes that Mao felt more free to pursue his own course after Stalin's death, and even more so after Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" of 1956, condemning the excesses of Stalinism. Yet, ironically, Mao used this freedom to reject Soviet advice that China should advance more slowly toward socialism than had the USSR in the 1930s; in 1953 Mao took Stalin's *History of the CPSU: Short Course* as the guide for China's accelerated socialist transformation, which included forced grain procurement, a high priority on heavy industry and the struggle against societal class enemies. And in 1958, as the Great Leap Forward began, Mao made Stalin's 1952 pamphlet *Economic Problems of Socialism* required reading for cadres.

Andrew Walder pinpoints the moment of ideological no-return as Khrushchev's 1956 Twentieth Party Congress speech. In his chapter on "The Chinese Cultural Revolution," Walder underlines the fact that Mao's rejection of the post-1956 Soviet model was hardened by Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's cult of personality and his rejection of the need for class struggle. These were aspects of Chinese political life that had blossomed under Mao's leadership. The Cultural Revolution was Mao's response, Walder shows, amounting to a "massive purge" with the explicit purpose of "remov[ing] 'people in authority taking the capitalist road.'" China's public rejection of Soviet policy in 1963 led to the splintering of communist movements in the Third World, as Victor Figueroa Clark shows in his chapter on "Latin American Communism." In Vietnam, as Sophie Quinn-Judge writes in "The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party 1941–1975," the Sino-Soviet split led to the sidelining of leaders who were viewed as "revisionist" or too close to Moscow in the 1960s. Sergey Radchenko, in his chapter entitled "The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1949–1989," sums up the dramatic effects of the split this way: "Just as the rise of the alliance legitimized the global communist project, its demise undermined this project by destroying the political ideological unity of the international communist movement and by setting the socialist camp against itself." According to Radchenko, we can understand such a momentous event in the history of communism only by taking into account an entire set of interactions between ideology and national interests, domestic and international policies, cultural identities and clash of personalities. The consequence was a disruptive competition between the Soviet Union and China, particularly for influence in the Third World.

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A third theme is the issue of communist reform and reformers. This relates also to the previous question of ideology, since after the death of Stalin there were movements within the East European parties to pursue their own individual roads to socialism. The ripples from the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow affected all parties, those in power and out. Jörg Baberowski's "Nikita Khrushchev and De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union 1953–1964" traces the domestic reforms carried out by Khrushchev as part of his de-Stalinization and demonstrates that the major impetus for the reforms came from Khrushchev's own sense of humiliation under Stalin and determination to do away with the worst of his abuses. Communist parties all over the world were impacted by Khrushchev's reforms – the US communist party, examined by Phillip Deery in his "American Communism" is a case in point – the effects were devastating for the morale of the leadership, which never recovered from the shock of Khrushchev's revelations. In Banac's chapter on Yugoslavia, we see that the Twentieth Party Congress served positive purposes in improving Soviet–Yugoslav relations. However, Tito remained committed to his strategy of developing the "nonaligned" world independent of both Moscow and Washington.

The East European Communist parties, on the other hand, had to find a way to accommodate to the relaxation of Stalinist political domination and ideological conformity. Mark Kramer traces this complex history in his "The Changing Pattern of Soviet–East European Relations 1953–1968." Here the story is of uprisings and interventions, political struggles and shifts in policy emphases. In response to increasing diversity within the bloc, Moscow introduced institutional means of guaranteeing conformity, through the Warsaw Pact, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and intensified bilateral relations with individual parties. But, as shown by Kramer and by Pavel Kolar, in his contribution, "Reform Undercurrents and the Prague Spring," this did not prevent the Czechoslovaks from pursuing a renewed, human-centered communism in the Prague Spring. The articulation of the "Brezhnev Doctrine," in response to the Prague Spring, had its origins, in Kramer's view, in Stalin's and Khrushchev's policies toward Eastern Europe, but nevertheless created a new framework for structuring relations with the bloc. Kolar traces the path to the Prague Spring and its implications by showing the interconnections between contrasting national developments, the transnational impact of de-Stalinization toward new forms of socialist legitimacy, and the wider picture of the "global 1968," including the influence of Western-style mass culture. Although the Prague Spring left a legacy of "humanistic socialism" up to Gorbachev's times, its repression decidedly

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inhibited perspectives of reform in Eastern Europe, producing disillusionment and discrediting any projects inspired by socialism.

The fourth theme in the volume is the frequently misunderstood history of the Soviet relationship with the Third World. In “Communism, De-Colonization and the Third World,” Andreas Hilger explores the intricate and sometimes difficult relationship between Moscow, as the “center of world communism,” and the decolonization efforts that it supported, especially in the post-Stalin period. The rivalry between nationalist noncommunist movements and communist-led or -inspired ones frequently served as a source of conflict and discord in a “complex trilateral relationship” which could no longer simply rely on shared anti-imperialist assumptions. Sara Lorenzini in her chapter on “The Socialist Camp and the Challenge of Economic Modernization in the Third World” invites taking seriously the powerful attraction of the Soviet model of economic development for countries that viewed the West as the heirs of the colonial world. In her view, the Soviet Union had “huge political capital” that it tried to translate more consistently than we often assume into a genuinely alternative way of organizing trade, commerce and industry for the Third World, while promoting ideas of socialist modernity. However, both Hilger and Lorenzini demonstrate how the relationship between the Second and Third Worlds was a tenuous one, as the supposed anti-imperialist identity of interests eroded and the project to construct independent political economies failed, giving way in the 1970s to the acknowledgement of the interdependence of world trade and commerce.

The chapters on individual Third World parties expand on these themes, while demonstrating the variety of communist experiences that countries in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia lived through. There are several fascinating aspects of these individual country and regional studies as they illustrate the global reach of communism. From those on “The Cuban Revolution: The First Decade” by Piero Gleijeses and on “Latin American Communism” by Figueroa Clark, one learns not only of the deep influence of communism on the development of the struggle against indigenous ruling classes and US influence in the region, but also of the frequently contradictory impact of communist politics. Gleijeses underlines conflicts and tensions between the Cuban Revolution and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the missile crisis of 1962. As guerrilla strategies developed in Latin America, they had to face not only US-inspired counterrevolution, but also hostility by Moscow because of détente and the acceptance of spheres of influence. Only in the 1970s, as Cuban internationalism became important in

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Africa, was an alliance with the Soviet Union firmly established and combined with economic aid to domestic development. Figueroa shows how Marxist ideas and communist experiences had a long duration in Latin America from the interwar years up to our time, as a result of repeated experiences of violence, repression and illegality. It would be wrong to underestimate the influence of communist ideas, practices and legacies on efforts to undertake social change, promote social movements and trade unions and, at a later stage, democratize the region.

Analyses of communism in Asia take us to scenarios of violence and armed struggle as well, but also of authoritarian power, the impact of personality, local legal experiences and different combinations with nationalism. One of the lessons of Charles Armstrong's "Korean Communism: From Soviet Occupation to Kim Family Regime" is the powerful impact Kim Il Sung had on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, from the time of its founding in 1948 until the 1960s, when his thinking and political supremacy were transformed into the kind of cult of the supreme leader we see today in North Korea. The North Korean case is characterized by impressive continuity as compared with changes and transformations that emerged in Asian communism and in the wider context of world communism. John Roosa's chapter on "Indonesian Communism: The Perils of the Parliamentary Path" emphasizes the almost European communist-like determination of the members of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) to promote their political program within the structures of the Indonesian political system under Sukarno and its anti-imperialist national ideology. After earlier experiences of failed uprisings, there would be no civil wars or armed struggle as elsewhere in Southeast Asia. On the one hand, this led to the PKI becoming the third-largest communist party in the world, connected to both Moscow and Beijing; on the other hand, the party was vulnerable to the Indonesian military's attack on and elimination of the PKI in 1965–66. Quinn-Judge's contribution on "The History of the Vietnamese Communist Party 1941–1975" shows how closely the development of Vietnamese communism was linked with the anti-colonial struggle. The communists' success clearly was related to their ability to balance communist politics with the language and exigencies of anti-colonialism. Such efforts revealed over time inner conflicts related to the "dual origin" of Vietnamese communism – inspired both by the ideal of national unification and by the model of armed anti-imperialist struggle. The Vietnamese communist experience also reflected the cultural influence of the metropolis in the framework of

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the French Empire, while looking at the model of peasant-based movement developed by Chinese communism. Even the outstanding personality of Ho Chi Minh could not prevent divisions in the party and episodic challenges to his rule. At the same time, Quinn-Judge shows how Vietnamese communists maintained close connections with Moscow and with Beijing, which seriously affected party unity, though it did not create factions that relied entirely on either. Vietnam was the major symbol of communist anti-imperialism in the war against the United States, but its internationalist image did not last long after victory in 1975. In Hari Vasudevan's contribution on "Communism in India," the extraordinary potential for the growth of the communist party in India, given the circulation of Marxist revolutionary ideas in the British Empire and, even more, the inherent attraction of the Soviet model for modernization, was complicated by the great heterogeneity of the Indian subcontinent. However, after the political and social turbulence surrounding independence in the late 1940s, the Indian communists established influence in some regions of the subcontinent by means of legal strategies. In spite of internal divisions brought about by the Sino-Soviet split, Indian communism maintained a longlasting governmental role in regions such as West Bengal and Kerala – a unique case in the Third World – though the party could not compete at the level of national politics.

The experiences of multiple parties and diverse societies are encapsulated in Johan Franzén's chapter on "Communism in the Arab World and Iran" and Allison Drew's on "Comparing African Experiences of Communism." Franzén's emphasis is on the duality between the universalist calling of world communism and the Middle Eastern reality, particularly its religious and nationalist character, which had already emerged in the interwar years. Even if World War II provided new opportunities to consolidate mass parties, particularly in Iran, such duality was never reconciled. Nationalist platforms overwhelmed the communists and relegated them to minor roles in the emergence of modern states in the region. The paradigm of modernization was important to Moscow's influence, but sometimes worked to the detriment of local communists, who were repeatedly outlawed and repressed by regimes allied with the Soviet Union. The African experience, based on the examples of Algeria and South Africa – where communism could develop more easily because of European influence and limited industrialization – was different. It was influenced not only by national constraints and the interests of the Soviet state, but also by the metropole–colony relationship. Interconnections