Stephen A. Smith

Towards a global history of communism

INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS A GLOBAL HISTORY OF COMMUNISM[1]

STEPHEN A. SMITH

> Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, only recedes, and as a consolation to the exhausted, doomed multitudes crying 'morituri te salutant', can give back only the mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you truly wish to condemn all human beings alive today to the sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others some day to dance on...or of wretched galley slaves, up to their knees in mud, dragging a barge filled with some mysterious treasure and with the humble words 'progress in the future' inscribed on its bows?
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> Alexander Herzen, 'Before the Storm' (1847)

On the English Embankment in St Petersburg stands a small tablet that bears the following inscription:

> Moored on this spot, the cruiser *Aurora*, with its thundering guns trained on the Winter Palace, elevated 25 October 1917 to become the date that marks the inauguration of a new era, the era of the great socialist revolution.

When the Bolsheviks announced the formation of a government of soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies on 25 October 1917, they believed they were inaugurating a new stage in human history, namely, the beginning of the transition from capitalism, a system they believed was based on exploitation, inequality, and war, to communism. Communism, in their eyes, would be a society without a state or social classes, characterized by radical equality, peace, and all-round human development. In the event, this new phase of human history lasted little more than seventy years, about as long as the reign of Louis XIV. Capitalism would see off communism as surely as it had seen off feudalism. Nevertheless, if the era in which communism grew to become a movement

on a world scale proved to be short-lived, the impact of that movement on the twentieth century was massive, clearly on a par with that of the two world wars.

Since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been an outpouring of scholarship on all aspects of the communist experiment. Historians, once stymied by the paucity of documentation about the secretive world of communism, have been faced since 1991 with a plethora of documentation from the archives of the Communist International (Comintern) and the state, party, and diplomatic organs of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Even in China, where a communist regime continues in seemingly robust health, there has been a widening of access to state archives for the 1950s and 1960s, together with limited access to the archives of the Foreign Ministry. The archives of the Central Committee in Beijing, however, remain firmly shut. Over the past two decades, projects such as INCOMKA, which created a searchable database of the Comintern archive (<http://www.comintern-online.com>), the Harvard Project on Cold War Studies, the Cold War International History Project, and the Open Society Archive in Budapest have processed a vast quantity of material that covers the multifarious activities of communist party-states, efforts to promote world revolution, and the internal activities of national communist parties. Journals such as the *Communisme* (founded in France in 1982), the *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (Berlin), the *International Newsletter of Communist Studies* (Mannheim), *Journal of Cold War Studies, Cold War History* and, most recently, *Twentieth-Century Communism*, have played a vital part in publishing scholarly work that exploits this new material. As a result of the work of archivists, editors, and scholars, our knowledge and understanding of communist movements and regimes has increased immeasurably over the last two decades.

The thirty-five essays in this *Handbook*, written by a highly international team of scholars, draw on these materials in order to paint a broad canvas of the spread of communism across the globe and, in particular, to sketch the many different aspects of life under communist rule. The chapters are grouped into six parts: the first consists of four essays that focus on the founding fathers, whose ideas and activities were central in legitimizing communist regimes; the second looks at 'global moments', i.e. at the configuration of the world communist movement at five critical points in time; the third examines communist parties and regimes in the major regions of the world; the fourth, fifth, and sixth parts offer detailed analyses of the political, economic, social, and cultural history of regimes that claimed to be building communist societies. Some hard choices had to be made, and the focus of the majority of chapters is on communism in power rather than on communist parties and movements that contended unsuccessfully for power. Readers looking for accounts of the activities of the Communist Party of New Zealand or of the bitter fights between communists and social democrats in the Finnish trade unions will be disappointed. Nonetheless, thematic and geographical coverage of the essays is immense and authors were chosen to represent a diversity of views and to illustrate a range of methodologies and scales of analysis.

Authors were invited to range beyond a single communist state, to think comparatively, and to focus on the similarities and differences between states in order to capture

the historically and culturally changing character of communism. They were encouraged to consider how the schemes and struggles of parties and leaders were constrained and enabled by the particular economic and social structures and by the constellations of political and military power that they inherited from the pre-revolutionary past. Where appropriate, they were encouraged to reflect on how the fortunes of communist governments and movements were shaped by the actions of their adversaries and by the wider economic, political, and cultural forces of the capitalist world. The one exception to the requirement that essays be comparative and/or transnational is the essay on the Chinese revolution, which is singled out for special treatment because it throws into question claims that are still common in the literature to the effect that communist states proved incapable of finding a middle way between state ownership of the economy and the market, that they were intrinsically unreformable, or that ideology was the fundamental determinant of their political evolution. As the twenty-first century advances, it may come to seem that the Chinese revolution was *the* great revolution of the twentieth century, deeper in its mobilization of society, more ambitious in its projects, more far-reaching in its achievements, and in some ways more enduring than its Soviet counterpart. Certainly, more people lived—and still do today—under communist states in East Asia than ever did in post-war Europe. So the *Handbook* distances itself from histories of communism that concentrate primarily on the Soviet Union, and seeks to reflect the wealth of work on communism in all corners of the globe. But if the Soviet Union cannot be assumed to be typical of communist regimes, it remains the prototype for all such regimes, and until the 1960s it functioned as the nerve centre of the world communist movement. Moreover, the historiography of the Soviet Union is more developed and has been generally more innovative than that of other countries, with the exception of East Germany (German Democratic Republic), so it is right that in an Oxford University Press series that 'seeks to lift debate out of excessively worn historiographical ruts', the Soviet experience should be fully reflected in the individual chapters. Recent historiography of the Soviet Union, for example, has focused on the specificity of the late-Stalinist and Khrushchev periods, and work on the Brezhnev era is now beginning, enriching our understanding of the Soviet experiment as one that was only halfway through its cycle of development by the time that Stalin died in 1953. This reminds us that communism everywhere was a historically evolving project whose domestic and international significance changed over time, so historians must be cautious in seeking to capture some single essence of communist rule.

That said, all regimes under review in the *Handbook* were generically similar. All—with the exception of a handful of a democratically elected administrations in India (Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura) and, perhaps, Moldova—were brought into existence through the seizure of power by a communist party organized along 'democratic centralist' lines. Such parties rapidly proceeded to establish monopoly control of the state. All subscribed to an official ideology of Marxism-Leninism, sometimes supplemented by local variants such as Mao Zedong Thought; all established far-reaching state ownership of the economy; all subordinated independent organization to the control of the party; all subjected intellectual and cultural activity to tight control. These features

constituted the common elements of communist regimes across the globe. Yet there was also immense variety between regimes—one thinks of the differences between two physically adjacent states such as Yugoslavia and Albania by the 1960s—variety that derived from differences in levels of economic development, social structures, cultural and religious traditions, and, not least, from the different international conjunctures in which communist parties came to power. The Handbook avoids reducing communism to a single, all-determining essence, as the Black Book of Communism tends to do. At the same time, whether one may speak of 'communisms' in the plural, as does *Le Siècle des communismes*, may also be doubted: variations between regimes were substantial, but they are perhaps best construed as mutations of a single genus—its species, as it were—that spread across far-flung geographical spaces and temporal zones.

There will be readers who object to the use of the term 'communist' to classify the regimes and movements under scrutiny. Social scientists have spilt a great deal of ink assessing the value of alternative classifications of these regimes, such as 'totalitarian', 'state socialist', or 'state capitalist', issues that this volume leaves to one side.[2] Marx was notoriously reluctant to spell out what communist society might look like, even though it is safe to say that he would have seen the regimes that ruled in his name as a caricature of his vision. Nevertheless it has become clearer since the opening of archives that however criminal or repressive, however pragmatic and compromising communist regimes may have been, they believed to the bitter end that they were engaged in a long-term process of building communism. 'Communist' could be a self-serving or deliberately misleading label used to prettify squalid regimes, but such regimes believed that history was on their side, and this enabled them to justify in the name of progress the immense sacrifices they demanded of the current generation. Indeed the psychological pressure on communist leaders to imagine that the longed-for society was just around the corner was immense. In 1923, Lev Trotsky surmised that his great-grandson would be a 'citizen of the commune'; Nikita Khrushchev predicted that communism would be achieved by the 1980s; and in August 1958, the Chinese government announced that the creation of the people's communes meant that communism was only a few years away.

What follows is not a conventional introduction in which the editor introduces each chapter of the *Handbook* in turn. Rather it seeks to provide a historical and analytical framework into which the individual chapters can be fitted. Each has been written with a view to being self-standing—available as an independent essay online—although the *Handbook* has been conceived as a unified whole, designed to be both an informative introduction to the field and to provide an overview of the current state of scholarship. The introduction offers a synoptic view of the history of communist revolutions in the twentieth century, followed by a survey of key issues relating to the political, economic, and social structures of communist regimes. While not attempting to discuss historiography in detail, it does seek to give readers some sense of issues that are currently under debate. It aspires to offer a 'global' introduction to communism not only in the geographical sense but also in the sense of seeking to integrate history from above with history from below, to trace the complex interconnections between state and society, and to

convey the social and cultural as well as political and economic realities that shaped the lives of citizens whose fate it was to live under communist rule.[3]

The Arc of Communist Revolution, 1917 to 1991

Perhaps the central issue at stake in the historiography of communist revolutions concerns whether these arose because of objective circumstances, such as economic backwardness, extreme social inequality, endemic poverty, political repression, or colonial rule, or as a result of the wilful actions, sometimes heroic, sometimes desperate, of parties and leaders. The issue may be characterized as a difference between 'structuralist' and 'intentionalist' explanations of communist revolution. In the view of Marx and Engels, communist revolution was largely the outcome of structurally determined processes, principally the contradiction between the increasingly socialized character of capitalist relations of production and the private ownership of the means of production. For Lenin and Mao Zedong, by contrast, revolutions happened principally because of the resolve and tenacity of revolutionary leaders and organizations that strove to capitalize on political crisis. No communist revolution emerged in the way Marx predicted, i.e. directly out of the contradictions of the capitalist system: successful revolutions in Russia, China, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Nicaragua were rooted in economic backwardness, deep-rooted social inequalities, political repression, or colonial domination, but the relationship of these phenomena to capitalism was complex and highly mediated. If one is looking for a single overwhelming cause of communist revolution, it was war rather than the systemic crisis of capitalism. The Bolsheviks were able to seize power because the Provisional Government in 1917 opted to continue to participate in the First World War. Similarly, it was the massive destruction caused by the Second World War that enabled the Soviet Union to install communist states in Eastern Europe and this facilitated the rise to power of communist movements in China, Vietnam, and Korea.

In Russia capitalism began to take off only from the 1890s—although by 1913 the country was the fifth largest industrial power in the world. The roots of revolution can certainly be traced back to socio-economic backwardness and political immobilism, but it was the First World War that triggered a terminal crisis of the tsarist regime. From the turn of the century, industrialization, urbanization, migration to the cities, the emergence of new social classes, such as industrial workers, industrialists, and the professional middle classes, led to deepening social conflict. In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, in the face of domestic unrest and external threat—especially in the Balkans—the autocracy quickly lost the will to undertake substantial political and social reform. Failing to create channels through which new social forces could find political expression, it increasingly lost support even among its traditional supporters, the

landowners and the Church. However, it was the outbreak of war in 1914 that brought political and socio-economic tensions to a head. In February 1917, popular protests against food shortages in the capital, Petrograd, war-weariness, and the withdrawal of support by military and political elites forced the abdication of Nicholas II. The Provisional Government that followed was mildly populist in its politics, but its efforts to create a democratic political order were undermined by its resolve to continue the war. Following the failure of the military offensive in June, the urban working class, the most politicized of the popular classes and one well organized in soviets, factory committees, and trade unions, along with those soldiers garrisoned in the rear, shifted support from the moderate to radical socialists. The still small Bolshevik party began to grow as a result of its unremitting opposition to the 'government of capitalists and landlords' and to the 'imperialist' war. At the same time, peasants grew impatient with the government's failure to enact land reform, and began spontaneously to seize property from the landed gentry. The radical movements that grew apace from summer 1917 to spring 1918 can be construed as a set of discrete revolutions: a workers' revolution concerned with defending jobs through workers' control of production; a peasant revolution concerned to overthrow the landed gentry; a soldiers' and sailors' revolution concerned to democratize the armed forces and bring the war to an end; and assorted movements on the periphery of the Russian Empire demanding national autonomy. As the Provisional Government lurched from crisis to crisis, a discourse of class conflict and socialism, focused on the demands for peace and the transfer of power to the soviets, came to unify these discrete movements, albeit tenuously. This was, in many respects, a remarkable development, given that the working class was small and still tied to the peasantry, the bourgeoisie weak and internally divided, and that key groups, such as soldiers and non-Russian nationalities, did not fit comfortably into any class schema. The failed military coup by General Kornilov at the end of August proved to be a turning point, rallying support for the Bolsheviks. From his hiding place in Finland, Lenin blitzed the Central Committee with demands that it seize power.

The specificity of the Russian Revolution, when compared with later communist revolutions, lay in the autonomy and dynamism of the mass movements. These were the subject of much innovative historiography in the 1970s and 1980s, but in the past two decades there has been a tendency to revert to explanations of a more intentionalist cast that present the Bolshevik seizure of power as no more than a coup by a band of politically determined and ideologically driven men. Such a narrowing of perspective makes it difficult to explain why radical socialism proved appealing and why the Bolsheviks garnered enough support to allow them to stay in power in the critical months after October. On coming to power, the Bolsheviks sought to meet the demands of the mass movements by declaring peace, soviet power, land redistribution, and, briefly, workers' control in the factories. Yet as the country spiralled into economic collapse, bringing unemployment and mass privation in its wake, working-class and peasant support for the new regime fell sharply. In the course of a bitter civil war, the Bolsheviks forged a Red Army that defeated a succession of enemies, including the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Whites, Allied interventionists, and peasant partisans. In so doing, they instituted

key elements of what would become the generic communist system: a highly centralized state under a single party, the crushing of dissent, and the curtailment of popular organizations. In explaining why this came about, intentionalists point to Lenin's determination to concentrate power in a single party and his readiness to stamp out political opposition, while structuralists contend that dictatorship was primarily a response to the desperate problems the Bolsheviks faced in defeating the counter-revolution, in feeding the Red Army and the urban population, in maintaining production for the war effort, and in combating tendencies to crime and social anomie. Significantly, however, once the Bolsheviks had trounced the Whites in 1920, they made no attempt to return to the decentralized vision of socialism associated with the popular revolutions of 1917, as the sailors of Kronstadt learned to their cost in 1921. Soviet democracy and workers' control vanished for good (although these aspirations would return ephemerally in some later revolutions, notably in Catalonia in 1936 and in Yugoslavia in the 1950s).

If much of the historiography of the Russian Revolution stresses how ruinous economic circumstances constrained the Bolsheviks' room for manoeuvre, a comparative perspective highlights the extent to which objective developments played into their hands, at least during 1917. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called October the 'revolution against Das Kapital', crediting the Bolsheviks with understanding that 'collective, social will', 'not raw economic facts', 'moulds objective reality'.[4] This was perceptive. Yet one could say that the Bolsheviks, though attuned to the importance of decisive action, were more the unintended beneficiaries than the moulders of 'objective reality'. Right up to August 1917, they were on the margins of Russian politics, and without minimizing the importance of Lenin's perspicacity and determination, their opportunity to seize power sprang from the fact that the war-induced crisis had bankrupted a succession of political forces from monarchism to liberalism to moderate socialism. The true achievement of the Bolsheviks lay not so much in seizing power as in consolidating it. If one looks, by contrast, to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), one appreciates how desperately it had to struggle to survive against the depredations of the Guomindang (1928–36) and the Japanese (1937–45), and then to defeat the Guomindang in conventional warfare between 1946 and 1949. Of course, 'objective' factors—the massive human and physical destruction of the Sino-Japanese War together with bitter civil war, economic collapse, and Guomindang corruption—played their part in helping the CCP's rise to power, but the balance of causation was skewed far more towards the 'subjective' factor, i.e. to the ability of the CCP to 'mould objective reality' than was the case with the Bolsheviks in 1917.

No subsequent regime came to power in the way the Bolsheviks had. Yet the Second Congress of the Comintern declared in 1920 that the model of Bolshevik organization—a highly centralist party characterized by 'iron discipline'—and the Bolshevik strategy of insurrection—a party-led insurgency, generally of an armed character—had universal applicability. In fact, Bolshevik organization in 1917 had been loose and the party's seizure of power had depended on the passive acquiescence of the Petrograd garrison. It was only in the course of the civil war that the Bolsheviks came to realize that revolutionary possibilities could be created by a disciplined party and, above all, by an army.

When the revolution was brought to regions such as the Caucasus and Central Asia it came not via popular mobilization but via a conscript Red Army, staffed by professional officers. Similarly, the Hungarian soviet republic soon learned that armies were more critical than popular organizations: in spring 1919 a militia-style army of mainly factory workers proved unable to withstand the assault of the invading Romanian army, forcing the government of Béla Kun to turn to elite units and officers drawn from the Austro-Hungarian army, officers motivated by patriotic revulsion at the dismemberment of their country rather than by any love for workers' power. In China, too, the critical importance of an effective armed force was brought home brutally to the CCP in 1927, when the party was almost annihilated by its erstwhile allies in the Guomindang. As Mao Zedong later put it: 'Having guns, we can create party organizations... we can also create cadres, create schools, create culture, create mass movements.'[5] In all revolutions subsequent to October 1917, in fact, communists came to power primarily as a result of disciplined party organizations (including a powerful secret police) and effective armed force, and not by winning influence in popular organizations such as soviets, factory committees, or trade unions.

The First World War shattered the social and economic fabric of European societies, destroying empires and discrediting liberal democracy. The Bolsheviks construed this as proof that capitalism was in its death agony. The degree of revolutionary turbulence set in train by the fall of the German Reich and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was indeed profound: in the first half of 1919, short-lived soviet republics were proclaimed in Bremen, Hungary, Bavaria, and Slovakia, and Italy was convulsed by factory and land occupations during the *biennio rosso* of 1919–20. In Italy and Central Europe the beneficiaries of the crisis were not radicalized soldiers, workers, and peasants but the demobilized officers and nationalist students who formed paramilitary units to combat 'international Bolshevism'. The attempt of the German Communist Party—with 350,000 members, the strongest party in Europe—to seize power in March 1921 was a shambles, and in summer 1923, when Germany was wracked by hyperinflation and French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr, the most daring challenge to the Weimar Republic came not from a weakened communist party, but from Hitler in Munich. As late as November 1922, however, Grigorii Zinoviev, chair of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, could tell its Fourth Congress: 'What we are now experiencing is not one of capitalism's periodic crises but *the* crisis of capitalism, its twilight, its disintegration.'[6]

In fact, from the early 1920s the Soviet government was forced to face up to the reality of a downturn in revolutionary prospects, international isolation, and a crippling internal economic situation. With the exception of its satellite Mongolia, which was brought into the socialist fold in 1924, Soviet Russia would remain isolated and dependent on its own resources for twenty-eight years. In this context, the meaning of socialist revolution underwent drastic revision: it ceased to be understood in terms of radical democracy and far-reaching equality, and became reconfigured in terms of building a strong state capable of mobilizing the human and material resources of an impoverished country in order to bring about rapid economic and social modernization. Presiding

over a shattered agrarian society, the Bolsheviks found themselves responding to many of the same challenges—the need rapidly to industrialize, to modernize agriculture, to build a credible defence capability—that had pressed upon the late-tsarist government. Of course, the Bolsheviks articulated these challenges in the language of socialism, but objectively the tasks were very similar. The desire to put an end to what Stalin called 'the continual beatings suffered because of backwardness' galvanized all subsequent communist states and ensured that the needs of citizens, especially those in the countryside, were ruthlessly subordinated to the task of raising investment in industry and defence. Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, a supporter of Trotsky in the inner-party struggle of 1924 to 1927, called this process 'primitive socialist accumulation'. It was bound to be a coercive process, since it involved squeezing resources from peasants, who were required to sell agricultural produce to the state at below market prices, and from workers whose wages were kept low and working hours long. If Trotsky or Bukharin had defeated Stalin in the conflict that rent the Russian Communist Party, they would not have been able to avoid 'primitive socialist accumulation', although there is no reason to suppose that their victory would have entailed the horror and bloodshed unleashed by Stalin.

Historians continue to argue about the relationship of Stalinism to Leninism. Did the extreme violence of Stalinism arise logically out of Lenin's model of the militant vanguard party with its antipathy to dissent? This is a question on which neither intentionalists nor structuralists are unanimous. In 1904 no less a person than the 25-year-old Trotsky warned about the implications of Lenin's views on party organization: 'The party apparatus at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the apparatus; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee.'[7] Yet in later life Trotsky denied that there was any continuity between Leninism and Stalinism, insisting that a 'river of blood' separated the two. Neither view seems wholly credible. The key institutions of the party-state were certainly in place by the time of Lenin's death in 1924. Terror, forced labour, show trials all had their antecedents under Lenin. Nevertheless, what Stalin called the 'great break' of forced collectivization and pell-mell industrialization (1928–32) was exactly that: a violent revolution imposed upon a reluctant population in order to bring about a massive development of economy and society. For the peasantry, who constituted the mass of the population, living in collective farms proved to be an altogether bleaker experience than living under the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, at least until the 1960s. And for the population as a whole, Stalin's brutal dictatorship, the unrestrained use of violence, the cult of power, endemic fear, paranoia about encirclement and internal wreckers, signalled a sharp deterioration of political life. Residual emancipatory impulses from the Revolution of 1917, moreover, which had continued to reverberate through the 1920s (in relation, for example, to women's emancipation, nation-building by the non-Russian peoples, or experimentation in the arts) were snuffed out.

Yet Stalinism proved to be only one stage of Soviet rule. When Stalin died in 1953 the development of the Soviet Union had only reached its halfway mark. The changes initiated under Nikita Khrushchev, although qualitatively not as substantial as those brought about by the 'great break', were nevertheless significant: collective leadership

of the party was restored, terror was abandoned, party control over the secret police was asserted, the concept of 'class enemy' was expunged from official discourse, a temporary 'thaw' in cultural life took place, and social structures stabilized. This pattern of relatively distinct stages of development was characteristic of all communist regimes. It was in the People's Republic of China (PRC), however, that such distinctions were most dramatic: the initial phase of 'new democracy' did not last long and was soon followed by the 'socialist high tide' of 1955 and the catastrophic Great Leap Forward (1958–61); the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) brought China close to anarchy; and then, from the late 1970s, Maoism was utterly repudiated and a rapid transition to a market economy inaugurated.

If the institutions and practices forged in the Soviet Union were taken up by communist parties throughout the world, differences in the way that national communist parties came to power were of paramount significance. In China the CCP developed a model of revolution that came to exercise huge influence on communist parties in colonial societies, especially in South East and East Asia. It did so by promoting nationalism as the dominant discourse through which the Chinese people was mobilized: significantly, this was not the statist nationalism of the Guomindang, but a class-inflected, anti-imperialist nationalism that harnessed a revolutionary economic and social programme to the achievement of national liberation. In addition, from the late 1920s, the Red Army developed a strategy of guerrilla warfare as a means of avoiding extermination at the hand of the Guomindang. Relying on the local population—the 'sea' in which the guerrilla 'fish' must swim to survive—it sought to lure the forces of the National Revolutionary Army into a territory, surround them, and split them up, using hit-and-run tactics. However, it was only with the outbreak of the war against Japan in 1937 that serious revolutionary possibilities emerged. In the course of the war, which saw the loss of around 20 million military and civilian lives, Guomindang officials and regular army units withdrew from the localities leaving rural elites and former warlord forces to contend with the Communists and the Japanese. In this situation, the Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army became the CCP's principal instruments of revolution, allowing it to establish base areas and to instil its ideology, values, and discipline into the local populace. By 1945, there were nineteen base areas in existence, stretching in an arc across north China and south along the east coast, with 90 million people in areas under the control of the Maoist Eighth Route Army and 34 million under the control of the New Fourth Army. However, the alliances and tactics applied in these bases varied according to local ecology, social structure, and particular needs and grievances of the peasantry. There proved to be no natural affinity between the CCP and the peasantry, although peasants comprised the great majority of soldiers, party members, and local activists. Only when peasants were persuaded that the CCP provided the best defence against Japanese brutality, Guomindang retaliation, and local warlords and bandits, would they join party-led campaigns for tax relief, rent reduction, increased production, and, during the civil war, for land reform. The rise to power of the CCP rested as much on building coalitions of diverse social forces, including social and cultural elites, as on mobilizing the peasantry. This willingness to engage the privileged

classes on patriotic grounds was sharply at odds with the class struggle message of the Bolsheviks in 1917.

The victory of the Soviet Red Army over Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria created possibilities for communist revolution in Eastern Europe. This had been the principal theatre of war in Europe, the site of the bloodiest confrontation between communism and Nazism, the region where 6 million Jews had been exterminated. Losses were scarcely imaginable: Poland lost 22 per cent of its population (5.7 million people) and Yugoslavia 11 per cent. Historians debate whether Stalin intended from the start to establish communist governments, again in a pale reflection of the intentionalist versus structuralist debate. There appears to have been some flexibility initially on the Soviet side, with Stalin principally concerned that the Soviet Union should be protected from Germany by a ring of biddable states. In the case of Poland and Romania, however, the Soviets from the first exerted significant military and political control; in the case of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet zone in Germany policy was more pragmatic. Relatedly, there is debate as to whether the Soviet Union and the communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe were sincere in their efforts to form 'people's democracies', i.e. coalitions with social democratic, populist, and democratic parties. Certainly, there was rather widespread support for radical social reform in 1945, pre-war elites having been discredited by their collaboration with the Nazis. In Hungary, Poland, and Romania, hundreds of thousands of acres of private property were turned over to peasants. In Czechoslovakia, the country with the most developed industrial base, the communist party won 38 per cent of votes in elections in 1946. Nevertheless the abuses of the Red Army and the commandeering of industrial plant and grain for shipment to the Soviet Union soon fostered animosity. The Soviet secret police, the NKVD, was quick to impose itself on the secret police throughout the region, and non-communist parties were watched closely. Whether the breakdown of coalition governments was deliberately engineered by Moscow as part of its strategy of Sovietization or whether it was a response to President Truman's new policy of containment and the Marshall Plan is again contentious. Certainly by late 1947, non-communist parties had been forcibly merged or dissolved and communist parties themselves were subject to a process of Stalinization.

Elsewhere, in Yugoslavia, Albania, and very nearly Greece—all countries that had experienced ferocious Axis occupation—resistance movements had emerged during the war that split between right-leaning nationalists and communists. Communist parties, repressed by authoritarian regimes during the interwar years, proved well suited to provide the disciplined leadership needed in movements of national resistance. In Yugoslavia in April 1942, Tito dropped a 'class war' approach to revolution in favour of one based on 'national liberation'; and with the help of Soviet troops, his partisans cleared out the Nazis in 1944, leaving the communist party the only effective political force. Significantly, it was Tito, the head of a self-confident and popular party, who first stood up to Stalin. Historians debate whether his excommunication by the second meeting of the new Cominform in June 1948 was due to his supposedly adventurist policies in Trieste and Albania or his attempt independently of Moscow to strike a deal with Bulgaria and Greece.

In South East and East Asia communist parties also took up the banner of national liberation, but enjoyed a greater degree of legitimacy than their counterparts in Eastern Europe. The attempt by the USA and its allies to 'contain' communism in Asia, together with the efforts of nationalists to assert their different visions of self-determination, would shape the Cold War and lead to two deadly wars in Korea and Indochina. In South East Asia, communist parties that had perfected underground organization during the 1930s rose to the challenges of the Second World War, forging broad anti-Japanese guerrilla movements, often with arms and training supplied by the Allies. In 1945, with Japanese and European colonial rule in tatters, these parties emerged strong in Vietnam, Malaya, Burma, and Indonesia. Yet their capacity to determine the course of post-war events proved variable, and only in Vietnam did they succeed in coming to power. The experience of colonial rule had not been uniform and this was a factor that shaped the post-war character of communist parties. In Vietnam, for example, there had been no parallel to the repressive policies practised by the Japanese in Korea, where agrarian and labour unions had been dissolved in 1937, Korean rescinded as the language of tuition in schools, and Koreans forced to adopt Japanese names. The record of resistance to the Japanese of the Korean Communist Party went back to the early 1920s, and on coming to power it looked with deep suspicion on those Koreans it perceived to have acquiesced in Japanese rule.

In September 1945, without consulting representatives of the Korean people, the Allies divided the Korean peninsula along the 38th Parallel, the USA controlling the South and the Soviets the North. The failure to hold nationwide elections in 1948 led to the formation of an authoritarian government under Syngman Rhee in the South, which crushed powerful left-wing uprisings, and the formation of a factious and despotic government under Kim Il Sung in the North. The Soviet archives have shed light on the circumstances that led Kim to launch an invasion of the South on 25 June 1950 to reunify the peninsula. When Kim first broached the subject in 1949, Stalin rejected the idea; but in the wake of the communist victory in China and the acquisition by the Soviets of the atom bomb, Stalin dropped his opposition. The Korean War became the first war by proxy between the superpowers. The USA responded to the invasion of the South with massive force, determined to draw a line against what it perceived to be communist expansionism. Asia, not Europe, became the principal theatre of the Cold War, part of the larger battle of the USA and the Soviet Union for influence over the political and social development of the former colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The death of the dictator on 5 March 1953 ended the process of Stalinization that had been taking place in the communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe. It was not until February 1956, however, that the critical turning point came when Khrushchev delivered a speech to the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in which he denounced the personality cult of Stalin and the bloodletting of the purges. His speech had an electrifying effect on the communist world. In Poland worker unrest broke out in June which culminated in an anti-Stalinist faction, led by Władysław Gomułka, taking control of the communist party and liberalizing civic life

to a small degree. In Hungary workers, backed by students and intellectuals, took to the streets, prompting Soviet troops to intervene. In the fighting that took place between 4 and 7 November, some 2,500 insurgents and over 700 Red Army soldiers lost their lives. In June 1958 Imre Nagy, leader of the reform communists, was hanged. In China and Vietnam the governments cautiously encouraged intellectuals to speak out, but soon took fright at the Hundred Flowers Movement and Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm movements. François Furet branded the year 1956 the 'beginning of the end' of communism, yet with the singular exception of Poland, communism in Eastern Europe proved essentially stable for the next thirty years, as it did in Asia. Indeed by the end of the 1950s the world communist movement—notwithstanding the alarming cracks in the Sino-Soviet alliance—had reason to feel confident. The Soviet economy was booming and technological feats such as Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth in 1957, together with Yurii Gagarin's flight into space in 1961, fed the belief that the communist bloc was stealing a march on the West. At the Twenty-First Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in January 1959, A. I. Kirichenko, secretary of the Central Committee, boasted that 'the ideas of communism have become the ruling ideas across the entire world, no borders or barriers impede them, they conquer peoples by their life-affirming strength and truth'.[8]

Just a few weeks before this boast, revolutionary guerrillas, led by Fidel Castro, defeated Batista's government in Cuba. This marked the onset of a decade of revolutionary turbulence across Latin America. The local communist party in Cuba, which dated back to 1925, played no part in the insurgency. Buoyed by popular support, Castro's forces proceeded to carry out land reform and nationalize US firms. Cuba was the only communist country where the 'class war' was waged primarily by expelling the bourgeoisie to a neighbouring country. Only in April 1961 did the Cuban government begin to move into the Soviet orbit, mainly as a response to the CIA-backed 'Bay of Pigs' invasion. The Soviet orientation firmed up when Khrushchev rashly decided to place nuclear missiles on the island to deter any further aggression by the USA. Thus crystallized the most anxious moment in the entire Cold War, when for thirteen days in October 1962 the USA and the Soviet Union teetered on the brink of armageddon. Henceforth Cuba was to prove a close ally of the Soviet Union, yet it retained considerable autonomy, especially in its rejection of the Soviet view that revolution in the Third World must go through distinct stages of development, the most that could be achieved—and then only in certain condition—being a democratic non-capitalist path of development. Comandante Ernesto 'Che' Guevara advocated a much more ambitious vision of socialist revolution in Latin America, based on rural guerrilla warfare, in which the Andes would the play the same role as the Sierra Maestra had done in Cuba.

In the light of the Soviet archives and new diplomatic sources from the PRC, we see that the Sino-Soviet alliance was far more dynamic up to 1958 than many appreciated at the time. But this makes the speed and completeness of its breakdown all the more puzzling. Historians agree that Mao Zedong's decision to launch the Great Leap Forward, which was in essence a recklessly utopian leap away from the Soviet model, was at the root of the Sino-Soviet split. But there is little agreement on the respective importance

of other factors, including economic matters relating to loans, technology transfers, and border regions; military matters relating to the atomic weapons programme, military bases, and intelligence; or foreign policy matters relating to Taiwan, India, and Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West. At one extreme, some historians put the accent on deep structural factors, notably the rivalry and mistrust between two geographically contiguous great powers; at the other, some stress a factor as apparently trivial as the personality clash between Khrushchev and Mao.

The Sino-Soviet split testified to the steady development of national conflict within the communist bloc. Stalin had construed communist internationalism to mean implicit obedience on the part of national communist parties to the one existing socialist state. After 1945, the rise of other parties to state power gave them potential autonomy from Moscow, a development that was masked at the time by the intervention of the Red Army in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. By the 1960s, however, not only China was asserting its independence from Moscow. In 1967 Romania left the Warsaw Pact and the following year declined to join the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. Such national conflicts were not always 'radial' ones between Moscow and its satellites: they could involve 'regional' hegemons such as Yugoslavia (in conflict with Albania) or Vietnam (in conflict with Kampuchea and Laos). This steady 'nationalization' of the communist movement ultimately gave rise to such bizarre phenomena—bizarre, at least, when judged by the canons of socialist internationalism—as the invasion and occupation of communist Cambodia by Vietnam (1978–89) and war between Vietnam and China in 1979. Fundamentally, such conflicts erupted because communist regimes, like all twentieth-century polities, based themselves on the territorial and social space of the nation-state. These regimes, moreover, focused the identities of their citizens on a nation often defined in ethnic rather than civic terms. A symptom of the congruence of Communist regimes with the nation-state is the fact that none of the three states with federal structures – the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – survived into the post-Communist era. Yet through the 1960s and 1970s the significance of nationalism for the long-term viability of the communist movement was largely hidden by the expansion of communist influence into new regions of the world.

Rapid decolonization in the British and French empires in the 1950s and 1960s meant that many newly independent states looked to the USSR as a model of state-led economic growth and social and cultural modernization. Moscow went to great lengths to cooperate with anti-imperialist governments, seeing their support as vital in the Cold War battle, even if this was at the expense of local communist parties. In Egypt Nasser received strong Soviet backing because of his sweeping agrarian reform, his health and welfare measures, and for standing up to the West over Suez in 1956. Soviet support did not falter when Nasser crushed the small Egyptian Communist Party in 1959. In Iraq General 'Abd-al-Karim Qasim overthrew the monarchy in 1958, with the help of the communist-led mass organizations of students, workers, and women, whose membership comprised as much as one-fifth of the population. Again Soviet support did not falter when Qasim turned against the communists. In 1963, he in turn was overthrown by Ba'thists, to whom the Soviets duly switched their support.

In Africa no fewer than thirty-five out of fifty-three countries declared themselves to be 'socialist' in some form or other between the 1950s and 1980s. Some of the newly decolonized states, such as Tanzania, espoused a distinctively 'African' form of socialism, although this was generally seen to be failing by the 1970s. A few opted for Soviet-style communism, attracted by the prospect of Soviet aid and the supposed advantages of state-directed economic development. As early as 1963, Congo-Brazzaville espoused 'scientific socialism' and, following a military takeover in 1968, declared itself a 'people's republic'. Similar developments occurred in Somalia in 1970—where the communist party was not founded until 1976—and in Ethiopia, where strikes, demonstrations, and mutinies overthrew Haile Selassie in 1974. There the military junta (Derg) espoused Marxism-Leninism in 1976, although again a workers' party was not formed until 1984. In Lusophone Africa, and in what would become Zimbabwe, anti-colonial guerrilla movements provided a spur to the creation of Soviet-style regimes. Neither Frelimo in Mozambique nor the the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) started out as movements of this type, but in 1977 both declared themselves Marxist-Leninist. Despite this evidence of advance, the Soviet Union had little experience of Africa and pursued a cautious policy largely confined to modest diplomatic and financial support for liberation movements. It was only following Cuba's lead, that Moscow started to provide some military support to Angola to help it defeat the attempt of the South African army to invade the country in 1976. Yet the ease with which putatively Marxist-Leninist regimes subsequently 'undeclared' themselves to be such, testified to the superficiality of revolution in most parts of the African continent. Benin (Dahomey), for example, declared itself Marxist-Leninist in 1974 only to drop that appellation in 1989, and President Kérékou converted first to Islam and then to born-again Christianity.

Historians tend to treat the history of communism separately from the history of anti-communism, yet the two were dialectically connected, especially after 1945. NSC-68, the document secretly issued by the US National Security Council on 14 April 1950, warned: 'The Soviet Union... is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world.... Being a totalitarian dictatorship, the Kremlin's objectives in these policies is the total subjective submission of the peoples now under its control.'[9] Throughout the Cold War the USA and its NATO allies, backed by assorted dictators in Latin American and Asia, largely succeeded in checking the expansion of communism through military, economic and political means. The West employed a battery of methods to 'contain' communism, from conventional warfare, as in Korea, Malaya, or Indochina; to the overthrow of legitimate governments, as in Iran, Chile, or Nicaragua; to economic and military support for authoritarian regimes (Latin America *passim*); to assassinations and clandestine operations linked to right-wing terrorists (Gladio in Italy); and, not least, by relentless escalation of the arms race. More seemly—and arguably, more effective—methods of countering communist expansion included the promotion of intellectual and artistic freedom and, from the 1970s, the advocacy of human rights (the Helsinki Final Act of 1975). Most of these methods, with the obvious exception of the latter, were also used

by the Soviet Union, although it was far less involved in 'hot' wars than its US adversary. Nevertheless, despite the material and human resources invested by each side in conquering its adversary, the oft-made claim that the USA 'won' the Cold War is questionable. Doubtless the burden of military expenditure fell far heavier on the USSR than the USA, and doubtless Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative—'Star Wars'—threatened to make the economic problems of the Soviet Union intolerable, yet there is no evidence that these were immediate causes of its fall.

If we are looking to explain the demise of communism, we turn once more to the conundrum of 'intentionalism' versus 'structuralism'—to the debate between those who argue that the end of communism in Eastern Europe was brought about by the conscious agency of individuals and groups and those who see it brought about by the operation of impersonal, long-term forces. Those inclined to intentionalism emphasize the roles played by individuals such as Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, even Nicolae Ceaușescu. Poland, where signs that the system's days were numbered came as early as the mass strikes of the 1970s, provides a striking example of the importance of visionary leadership and mass action. In 1980, the government of Edvard Gierek, desperate to curb living standards to meet the surging cost of energy and of loan repayments to Western banks, was forced to recognize the independent trade-union movement, Solidarność. The speed with which the latter snowballed into a mass movement promoting workers' rights and democratic change so alarmed the government that in December 1981, General Wojceich Jaruzelski declared a 'state of war', arresting Solidarność leader Lech Walesa and thousands of others. By April 1989, however, the government had come to recognize that it could no longer go on ruling in the old way. Solidarność was once again legalized and went on to win a resounding victory in the elections in June. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary the role of 'civil society' was less dramatic in bringing about the end of communism: there reformist elements within the communist parties, conscious that economic reform was failing and that one-party rule was unsustainable, played a correspondingly larger role in effecting change. However, the prime example of the part played by individual leadership in bringing about the end of communism was that played by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, above all in his decision not to intervene militarily to support the regimes of the Eastern Bloc.

Others are drawn to more structuralist explanations of the fall of communism. For a few, the collapse of the system was inscribed in its origins, in the very attempt to realize 'integral' socialism. For others, disintegrative tendencies steadily gathered pace from the 1960s, working to undermine the system: these included declining rates of economic growth; the inability of the command economy to move from mass production to intensive growth; the burden of military expenditure; and the emergence of educated professional strata who baulked at their exclusion from political participation. It is doubtful that nationalism in the non-Russian republics was one such corrosive factor: however, it did become decisive between 1989 and 1991, when nationalist protests, especially in the Baltic, derailed Gorbachev's plans for partial democratization and economic reform. What was remarkable about the demise of communism throughout the Eastern Bloc was its largely non-violent character. Where governments agreed to negotiate with

the opposition, as in Poland and Hungary, the transition went more smoothly than in countries such as East Germany or Czechoslovakia, where people took to the streets. Nevertheless even here the mass demonstrations were largely peaceful. Violence was mainly confined to Romania, which was close to economic ruin as a result of Ceaușescu's determination to pay back the country's alarming foreign debt, and to Yugoslavia where the break-up of the federal state saw communist leaders garb themselves in the mantle of ethnic nationalism.

Peter Nolan has made a cogent case to the effect that policy choices were critical in determining the variant fates of the USSR and the PRC. In his view, the fall of the Soviet Union was less the direct outcome of structural problems and more the consequence of the particular policies adopted during perestroika, mainly Gorbachev's choosing to carry out economic and political reform simultaneously; his reluctance to use force to preserve the Union; and the lack of consensus in the political elite. This perspective can be enlarged to suggest how misguided policies set in train more structurally determined processes that eroded the power of the party-state, the command-administrative economy, and the structures of quasi-imperial dominance, accelerating the evolution of the federal republics of the USSR into independent nation-states. Conversely, the success of reform in China can be explained by the fact that economic reform was not accompanied by political reform; that economic reform was incremental rather than the 'big bang' favoured by the Washington consensus, and by the fact that the state remained strong throughout the process of transition. Not all historians are persuaded that policy choices were decisive; they prefer to stress structural factors that determined the outcome of reform, such as differences in the levels of industrialization, urbanization, and small-scale industry in the Soviet Union and China, plus differences in traditions of entrepreneurship and the differential availability of capital from overseas. Nevertheless, whatever determinacy one assigns to policy, the success of reform in the PRC does require reconsideration of some of the overly determinist explanations of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe that were current in the 1990s.

Communist Politics

With the exception of Czechoslovakia, communist regimes took root in societies that had no traditions of representative democracy, civil liberties, or rule of law. In that respect, they represented a continuation of deep-rooted patterns of authoritarian government now reconfigured to fit the age of mass politics. In no sense were party-states accountable to those in whose name they claimed to rule—whether that was the 'proletariat' or the 'people'—though the degree of unaccountability was less in some cases than in others, e.g. workers' self-management in Yugoslavia empowered labour in a way that did not occur elsewhere in Europe and served to curb the power of the state and party elites. Primary decision-making was confined to the very highest level of the party-state—to the politburo or its analogues—although policy implementation

depended heavily on officials at the lower levels of the party and state apparatuses and, in the last analysis, on the willingness of citizens to comply with directives from on high. Almost all communist countries were one-party states, and where other parties existed, such as the People's Party and the Democratic Party in Poland, they were virtually toothless. In almost all countries the system of power was a dual one in which the party apparatus at central, regional, and local levels monitored the corresponding levels of the administrative, judicial, and military organs. Formally, sovereignty was vested in 'democratically' elected state institutions, such as the Supreme Soviet in the Soviet Union, the State Council in the PRC, or the National Assembly in Vietnam, which were the supreme bodies responsible for law-making and for the appointment of ministers. In some countries there were also 'united front' organizations, such as the People's Political Consultative Conference in China and its homologue in North Korea. In reality, all important legislative and administrative decisions were taken by the central leadership of the party, usually called a politburo. Ruling communist parties were diverse in their size and structural complexity. In Cuba in 1969 party membership stood at only 55,000, or 0.7 per cent of the population, and the party had not yet developed a network of local organizations. By 1988, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had 19 million members, or 8 per cent of the population; by 2011, the CCP had up to 83 million members, or around 6 per cent of the population. In the 1960s the biggest communist movement outside a Communist state was led by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which had tens of millions of supporters and organizations for youth, women, peasants, labourers, artists, and others. In 1965, it was accused of an abortive coup that killed several top army leaders. Following a counter-coup, the army, Muslim groups, and paramilitary thugs purged suspected communists, killing between 500,000 and 1 million by 1967.

Analysts differ on the question of the extent to which politics sprang from ideological principles. Some, such as Martin Malia, argued that communist regimes were nothing less than 'ideocracies', bent on the realization of a utopian vision. Others, while recognizing the rootedness of policy in ideology, argue that policy resulted from the encounter of ideas and principles with intractable realities and unforeseen contingencies. What the key elements of Marxist-Leninist ideology actually were was never clear, and the contradictory interpretations that resulted from this ensured that crafting policy was never straightforward. Once in power, moreover, communist governments faced huge problems for which Marxian theory left them woefully unprepared, whether in the form of a capitalist system that grew in dynamism over the twentieth century, or in the form of mass politics in which national identity seemed constantly to trump class identity. Stalinism, moreover, petrified the ideas of Marx and Lenin into dogma, so that they became more of a sustaining illusion than a guide to action. Nevertheless, Marxism-Leninism did adapt to different conditions and new circumstances. In Cuba the ruling ideology was modulated by the accents of Jose Martì, the nineteenth-century writer and philosopher; by fierce antipathy to US imperialism; by justification of revolutionary violence; by belief in racial and sexual equality (notwithstanding a prevalent machismo); and by Guevara's distinctive conception of the New Socialist Man. By

contrast, Kim Il Sung's ideology of *juche*, codified in the North Korean Constitution of 1972, stressed self-reliance, sacrifice, a chauvinist nationalism, and the struggle to build a morally purified but prosperous nation.

Many communist parties (Soviet Russia, China, Kampuchea) consolidated their power through the use of terror, although this was not true everywhere (e.g. Nicaragua or East Germany). Yet if communists saw revolutionary violence as the 'midwife of history', they never glorified war and violence in the manner of fascism. On 2 September 1918, the Bolsheviks launched a 'Red Terror', but historians differ as to whether this arose from a principled belief in terror as an instrument of revolution—the Bolsheviks sometimes spoke with admiration of the Jacobin revolutionary tribunals—or as a response to the near-fatal attack on Lenin in 1918 and the mounting threat from the White armies. The fact that other communist states resorted to terror in consolidating their power tends to support the former interpretation, although we should not forget that all faced ferocious challenges from domestic and external foes, who themselves did not flinch at using terror to wipe out their communist adversaries. What is harder to explain is the outbreak of the Great Terror in Stalin's Russia in 1937–8, since the belief that 'enemies of the people' were plotting to overthrow the regime was largely fantasy. In the course of fifteen months, approximately 1.5 million people were arrested, almost half of whom were shot. Similar purges took place in Mongolia, where Buddhist lamas and party officials were accused of being Japanese spies. Indeed, proportionately, the terror of Khorloogiin Choibalsan was more sanguinary than that of Stalin, hitting about 5 per cent of the Mongolian population. Some argue that Stalinist terror was a projection of traits in Stalin's character—his chronic suspiciousness and determination to remove all rivals—others that the terror acquired a dynamic of its own in a context of institutional rivalries, with each level of the party and state administration striving to outdo each other in winkling out 'class enemies' and 'wreckers'.

The other spectacular case of communist terror occurred in Cambodia, although Pol Pot did not declare Cambodia a communist state until 1977. No revolution would have taken place in that country had it not been for the carpet bombing of the Second Indochina War and the right-wing coup against Prince Sihanouk in March 1970. From a few thousand, the Khmer Rouge grew by 1973 to some 30,000, by which time it controlled about a third of the country. Following the collapse of the pro-US government of Lon Nol on 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge marched into the capital, Phnom Penh, a city of 3 million. Paranoid that Khmer culture faced extinction, hostile to Vietnamese hegemonism, detesting urban lifestyles as morally corrupt, idealizing the peasantry, and obsessed with self-sufficiency, the Khmer Rouge proceeded to expel the population from the capital and to abolish money ('no money, no capitalism'). The grotesque consequence was that over one-fifth of Cambodia's population were killed or died of malnutrition, disease, and overwork. In the Eastern Bloc the deployment of terror was on a vastly smaller scale, with party purges claiming dozens rather than thousands of lives. That said, 341 were hanged and about 13,000 sent to internment camps between 1957 and 1960 for their involvement in the Hungarian uprising of 1956. Furthermore, if terror was not ubiquitous, in all communist countries the secret police engaged in surveillance

of the population, helped by spies and informers drawn from the citizenry. Lithuania, fully incorporated into the Soviet Union from 1945, had a population of only 2.6 million, yet in 1951 it had almost 28,000 security agents and informants. In East Germany the Stasi had a staff of 91,000 plus an army of 174,000 informers to monitor a population of 16.7 million.[10] The fact that citizens knew they were under surveillance induced a general mood of caution—especially where contact with foreigners was concerned—and sometimes fear.

Communist parties were susceptible to factionalism which led from time to time to internecine struggles and purges. In the Bolshevik party the right of minorities to form factions was rescinded in 1921, which meant that subsequent oppositionists were seen as de facto disloyal. Debates over policy, moreover, invariably connected to issues of doctrine and thus raised questions about the orthodoxy of dissenters, fomenting charges of 'rightism', 'leftism', 'revisionism' and worse. The scurrilous charges against Kamenev, Zinoviev, Trotsky, and innumerable others are well known. In the 1950s conflicts within the CCP were less doctrinally based, sometimes rooted in pre-1949 networks based on army groups and base areas, differences that Mao Zedong was adept at manipulating. However, Mao was not averse to accusing his opponents of heresy, and he turned against both his designated heirs—Liu Shaoqi in 1968 (a 'traitor, renegade, and scab') and Lin Biao, who died in 1971 while fleeing to the Soviet Union. Hồ Chí Minh did not persecute opponents in the same implacable way, although he certainly knew of the liquidation of scores of Trotskyists, notably Ta Thu Thâu, in 1945. It is hard to believe he would have hurled abuse at Liang Shuming in 1953 in the way that Mao did (although no non-party intellectual in the Soviet Union would ever have dared demand a public apology from Stalin, as Liang did of Mao).

In liberal Western societies the sacrality that had once surrounded the monarchy had over the centuries been transferred to an impersonally conceived state that claimed to embody the common good. This was not a process that had advanced very much in societies where communist parties came to power, so party rule remained highly personalized. In the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, the party leader was the object of a personality cult of baroque proportions. During the Cultural Revolution rituals of 'asking for instructions and reporting back each day' to Chairman Mao, of turning public spaces into 'red oceans', of daily singing 'Sailing the Seas, Depend on the Helmsman', of answering the telephone with the response 'Long Live Mao Zedong' were rife. Unlike tsars or Sons of Heaven, however, communist rulers lacked a transcendental source of legitimation, and thus strove to make good their claim to represent the 'people' through a panoply of mass media and staged spectacles.

At every level of the party-state hierarchy authority was highly personalized, with strong leaders more influential than formal institutions. In the Soviet Union 'bosses' (*nachal'niki*) dominated provincial and regional levels of the party-state administration and developed clientelist networks to consolidate their power and fend off interference from outsiders. This reliance on instrumental-personal ties reached its apogee in Central Asia under Leonid Brezhnev, where party leaders sat atop vast networks of patronage based on kinship and place of origin. In 1988, the First Secretary of the Communist

Party of Uzbekistan, I. B. Usmankhodzhaev, was put on trial for an elaborate scam in which party officials and industrial managers reported to Moscow that planned targets for cotton production had been achieved and then divided among themselves the difference between payment received from the All-Union funds for plan fulfilment and the cost of the actual amount of cotton produced. In China, where peasants constituted almost the entirety of local officials and a majority of middle-ranking officials, there was an equally dense culture of 'connections' (*guanxi*) which individuals used to circumvent formal regulations. In China, as in the Soviet Union, people at all levels depended on their *lingdao* (leader); and even lowly *lingdao*, such as workshop managers or village team leaders, exercised extensive and unaccountable power. Those dependent on them sought access to scarce goods, housing, or promotion in their jobs, by demonstrating loyalty to patrons of various kinds, often on the basis of kinship or native place ties.

Analysts debate the extent to which communist politics is best construed as 'neo-traditional', i.e. reflecting cultural norms and practices, or as modern. Phenomena such as personalized rule, court politics, petitioning, and clientelism appear to support the former view. By contrast, the modern character of communist politics appears to be evinced by the mobilization of citizens in support of state goals through campaigns, trades unions, youth leagues, or women's association; by the pervasiveness of propaganda and mass media; by surveillance of the population; and, as communist regimes matured, by reliance on forms of governmentality that encouraged individuals to regulate their own behaviour through social practices not necessarily centred on the state.

Modern society depends on bureaucracy, whose essence Max Weber saw as lying in functional specialization, impersonal rules, trained officials, and clearly defined lines of authority. Communist state and party structures were massively bureaucratized, not least because the state took over many functions that in capitalist societies are carried out through the market. In the Soviet Union in late 1920, 5.8 million people were employed in soviet organs, vastly more than were employed in industry at that time. From the first, the Bolsheviks wrestled with what they called 'bureaucracy', although in truth the problem was not so much bureaucracy as bureaucratism: the proliferation of offices, endless red tape, buck passing, deference to superiors, and abuse of office. Marxist ideology provided few tools for understanding these phenomena (in the 1920s, Bukharin read Max Weber in an attempt to gain some insight into the process). Usually, the Bolsheviks tried to explain them by reference to the pernicious legacy of tsarism and the fact that 'alien class elements' supposedly staffed the organs of administration. Yet the worst abuses were often committed by persons of unimpeachably lower-class origin. In 1919 and 1920, the Commissariat of State Control was inundated with complaints about corruption and illegality by officials in local soviets, and Cheka reports provide hair-raising accounts of bribery, profiteering, embezzlement, violence, and drunkenness. With remarkable speed a new word appeared—*komchvanstvo*, 'communist arrogance'—to describe the airs put on by the new breed of officials. In the light of this, it is no surprise that in his last years, Lenin became increasingly sombre: 'We are being sucked into a foul, bureaucratic swamp,' he observed.[11]

There was no sterner critic of bureaucracy than Stalin himself, and throughout the 1930s he instigated regular campaigns in which workers were exhorted to struggle against bureaucratism, the supposition being that grass-roots campaigns would shake industrial managers and state and party officials out of their lethargy. Some historians have gone so far as to suggest that the terror of 1937–8 was instigated by Stalin's concern to ensure that state and party structures did not calcify into a new order of privilege. However, it was in China, from the early 1960s, that the struggle against bureaucracy took on its most outlandish form, as Mao Zedong became convinced that a 'state bourgeoisie' now ruled the Soviet Union and that in China, too, 'higher officials' (*gaoji ganbu*) threatened to take China towards the restoration of capitalism. Already by 1962, 2 million cadres had been sent down to the countryside (*xiafang*), usually for one month a year, to be 're-educated' by the peasants. But this did little to change the culture of bureaucracy. And so spectacularly, in 1966, in a bid to eliminate what he perceived to be a mortal threat to the revolution, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The invitation to Red Guards and workers to attack 'those in power taking the capitalist road' massively destabilized the structures of power: by 1968, some 70 to 90 per cent of cadres in central ministries had been 'struggled against' and sent for reeducation to the countryside. The mass movement against capitalist roaders quickly descended into violent factionalism. In June 1967, for example, two members of the Central Cultural Revolution group, the body that had displaced the Standing Committee of the Politburo as the key centre of power, were kidnapped in Wuhan by a 'conservative' mass organization known as the Million Heroes. This prompted the People's Liberation Army to intervene, resulting in a loss of 600 lives and 66,000 casualties. The Cultural Revolution was an event without parallel in any other communist state. But the fact that the supreme leader of the party could set in train a revolutionary movement that came close to destroying the very foundations of the party-state reminds us how careful we must be when seeking to generalize about politics in communist regimes.

If the ubiquity of the phenomena lumped together as 'bureaucracy' suggests that communist political systems shared many structural features, it is also clear that culturally specific norms and dispositions shaped political behaviour. In China and Vietnam, Confucian notions of the state as an agency whose function was to promote harmonious order by improving the moral conduct of its citizens influenced official policies. Officials were expected to endeavour to ensure the correct thinking and ethical training of the masses through remorseless propaganda and mass campaigns. In both countries party leaders largely renounced the physical elimination of supposed oppositionists, which had been such a feature of the Stalinist system, emphasizing instead 'thought reform' of intellectuals—a process that was by no means free of psychological and physical violence. Whereas the policing of dissent was left to the tender mercies of the NKVD in the Eastern Bloc, in China and Vietnam it was carried out with the active involvement of the masses, who were called on to unmask the class enemies in their midst.

The Economy

With the exception of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, communist parties came to power in agrarian countries where at least three-quarters of the population farmed the land, where agriculture was technically backward, where land distribution was extremely unequal (more so in Vietnam, for example, than in China), and where poverty was endemic. Land reform was a key means used by communist parties to win peasant support. In Russia peasants spontaneously expropriated the landlords in 1917–18, leaving the Bolshevik government to cheer them on. The effect was to reduce the number of wealthy and very poor households and to strengthen the ranks of middling smallholders. A byproduct of carving up the minority of capitalist estates and consolidated farms was to reduce overall productivity. In East Asia communist parties themselves carried out land reform, in a process that aimed not only to break the power of rural elites and redistribute resources to the poor but also to classify rural households according to official class categories. In China in the course of the land reform peasants were mobilized through struggle meetings and at least 1 million landlords lost their lives. By summer 1952, about 43 per cent of cultivated land had been redistributed to about 60 per cent of the rural population. Poor peasants substantially increased their holdings, yet middle peasants were the biggest winners, since they started out from a stronger position. The class labels assigned to families in this process were to shape life chances for the next thirty years. In North Vietnam land reform (1953–6) was also violent—between 3,000 and 15,000 landlords were killed—and never as popular as in the PRC (where it was by no means universally welcomed). In 1957–8, the Vietnamese leadership rectified many 'excesses' that had been committed during the reform. In North Korea land reform (1946) proved to be more peaceful yet provoked greater opposition from families of dominant lineages: over 100,000 fled South, just as thousands of farmers fled from East to West Germany when private farms were grouped into vast cooperatives from 1958 to 1960.

Insofar as land redistribution strengthened private property, it was incompatible with the long-term goal of communism. However, the normally rapid move to collectivization of agriculture was motivated less by ideology than by the need to feed a rapidly growing urban population, to boost food production, and to squeeze a surplus from the rural population to finance industrialization. In 1928, faced by food shortages in the city and by a peasantry reluctant to sell grain at fixed prices, the Stalin regime resolved to step up collectivization. Over the winter of 1929–30, it was implemented at breakneck pace, involving violence, fines, taxes, and deportation. Central to the collectivization process was the 'liquidation of kulaks as a class'. Such was the force of the onslaught that in the course of 1930 alone, more than 2 million peasants engaged in 13,754 acts of collective resistance. The consequence of punitive levels of grain procurement, administrative chaos, and a poor harvest in 1931 was the devastating famine that struck Ukraine and Kazakhstan in 1932–3. In total, deaths directly resulting from 'dekulakization' and

famine may have been as a high as 8.5 million. Only from the late 1950s did rural life improve as the Khrushchev government raised the prices of agricultural produce, permitted an expansion of private plots, and provided a majority of kolkhozy with tractors or combine harvesters. In China collectivization was by no means as brutal, yet nearly all the forms of resistance that occurred in the Soviet Union, such as withdrawing from cooperatives, reducing levels of production or slaughtering livestock, took place on a smaller scale. Even before full-scale collectivization commenced in 1955, the gross extraction rate—state procurement plus exports as a share of domestic production—was already higher than in USSR (except for 1931). During the Great Leap Forward local cadres came under intense pressure to step up grain procurement and to 'overcome reactionary conservatism'. They exaggerated output, and on the basis of false reports of increased yields, central government ramped up procurement quotas. The appalling result was the worst famine in human history, when between 24 and 30 million died in 1959–61. In both the Soviet Union and the PRC these were 'man-made' famines, the unintended consequences of reckless and inhuman policies.

Despite its own disastrous experience, the Soviet Union pressed collectivization on to many of its client states in the late 1940s, although by the late 1960s, it no longer attempted to do so in Cuba. This was not least because it recognized that collectivization was the optimal means to strengthen the state's capacity to extract a surplus from the countryside. Nowhere was it a popular policy. In North Vietnam collectivization began in 1955–7 but was never completely implemented: by 1960, 86 per cent of rural households were members of cooperatives, but they were of a lower-level type. In Eastern Europe collectivization disrupted peasants' lives far less violently than in the Soviet Union and China, although in Albania the semi-feudal chieftains (*bajraktar*) of the northern highlands were destroyed, along with blood feuds and patriarchal clans. In neighbouring Yugoslavia, collectivization was cancelled in 1952, and by the 1980s, 82 per cent of land was under the control of 2.6 million peasant families, the proportion of the population working on the land having fallen from 70 per cent in 1945 to 36 per cent in 1980. In Poland after 1957, Gomułka began to hand back land to small farmers, and in Hungary a mixed system of collective and private agriculture prevailed. Nowhere were peasants able positively to influence the political agenda, most communists seeing rural dwellers as a class destined to be swept away by history, but they did prove capable of thwarting policies through passive resistance. Even in China, where peasants were the bedrock of the revolution, there was no rise in rural incomes prior to the reform era in the 1980s, although agricultural output did manage to keep pace with a booming population. Even more than in the Soviet Union, peasants were prevented from moving to the cities by the system of household registration. Nevertheless the picture was not completely grim. Over time, the lives of peasants became more secure: mortality fell substantially and health and educational standards improved. In Cuba as a result of the literacy campaign of 1961 illiteracy fell from 23.6 per cent to 3.9 per cent.[12] Improved irrigation, use of fertilizers, technical innovation, and the expansion of communications all gradually made agriculture more productive.

All communist states built highly centralized command economies in which the main sectors were owned and controlled by the state and in which an all-embracing system of planning determined economic goals. In the Soviet Union the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) saw a surge in iron and steel production, mining, metallurgy, and machine-building, and the creation of prestige projects such as the steel city of Magnitogorsk in Siberia and the hydroelectric dam at Dneprostroi. This drive—like the Great Leap Forward in China—took place in an atmosphere of utopian radicalism and military-style mass mobilization: 'There are no fortresses the Bolsheviks cannot storm.' In contrast to the Soviet Five-Year plan, the Great Leap Forward ostensibly lauded balanced development between rural and urban industry—'walking on two legs'—yet in reality heavy industry was an even greater investment priority than in the Soviet Union. Moreover, between 1964 and 1971 China invested massively in a military-industrial complex—the so-called 'third line'—in remote regions of the south-west and north-west out of fear that it would be attacked by the USA or the Soviet Union. Everywhere in the communist bloc rapid extensive growth entailed the unrestrained abuse of natural resources (water, forests, pollution of air, soil, water) and pollution on a scale that exceeded that of earlier phases of capitalist industrialization.

Any day, anywhere in the communist world, one could open a newspaper and find it stuffed, on the one hand, with articles trumpeting achievements in production; and, on the other, with criticisms of unresponsive planners, lax industrial managers, and inefficient workers. The command economy facilitated rapid growth, but it prioritized quantity over quality; engendered waste, shortages, and breakdowns; and forced managers to bypass official channels in order to meet supply and repair problems. The magnitude of the problems of managing complex economies from a single centre gave rise to bureaucratic distortions, such as *vedomstvennost'* (putting the interests of one's bureaucratic department first) and *mestnichestvo* (localism), and stirred endless debate about whether the branch of industry or the geographical region was the appropriate unit of economic organization. The best that can be said is that the command economy turned the Soviet Union into a military power capable of defeating Nazi Germany, since from 1936 there was a big increase in the production of military hardware. However, in the short term, the 'socialist offensive' led to dreadful privation for its citizens, as living standards were cut in order to sustain massive investment in industry and defence. In the 1950s, the Soviet economy moved beyond the phase of primitive socialist accumulation and began to catch up with those of the West, but it never came close to overtaking them, and from the mid-1970s, growth began to slow. Just as instrumental-personal ties articulated the bureaucratic structures of the party-state, so a 'second economy' existed in symbiosis with the structures of the planned economy. By the last decades of the Soviet Union, it is reckoned that the production of goods and services outside the state sector, on a semi-legal or illegal basis, accounted for some 40 per cent of economic activity.

For the ordinary consumer the reality was a 'shortage economy', i.e. an economy, in the words of János Kornai, of 'countless frustrations, thwarted purchasing intentions, queuing, forced substitution, searches for goods, and postponement of purchases in the

daily lives of consumers and producers'. In the Soviet Union rationing was never permanent, but in the PRC it lasted from 1953 to the mid-1980s. Queuing for basic consumer goods was normal, and led to millions of hours being wasted, mainly by women. An exhibition on the 'subsidy economy' era in Vietnam (1975–86) featured a rock with the name Mai Hai scratched on it, the rock that Hai had used to keep his place in countless queues for rice rations. To make things worse, the state-controlled system of distribution was hierarchical, privilege-based, and corrupt. A network of 'closed distribution' stores existed for the Soviet elite, and restaurants and cafeterias were reserved for members of trade unions and professional organizations. In most countries, a connection to a lowly shop assistant with access to scarce goods counted for more than savings in the bank. Adding to these frustrations was the fact that shop assistants in state stores were notoriously rude since customers did not have the option of taking their custom elsewhere. Nevertheless, in the late 1950s, communist governments, especially in Eastern Europe, did become more responsive to the needs of the consumer, advocating a 'rational' pattern of consumption centred on women and the domestic sphere. The hope was to navigate between a still strong commitment to asceticism and the vision of communism as a society of abundance, to create styles of dress, home furnishing, or product design that eschewed Western extravagance yet met the desire of consumers for choice and self-expression. The hope, too, was to improve the 'culture of trade' and elevate the taste of the consumer.

As communist economies matured, the task of economic reform became ever more urgent. By the 1960s, in a desire to overcome the rigidities of the command economy and to shift production from producer to consumer goods, governments in Eastern Europe began to experiment with market mechanisms. The Soviet economy, by now reliant on the import of Western technology in return for the export of raw materials, proved particularly resistant to reform (although there was experimentation with cybernetic modelling of the planned economy). Market-oriented reform went furthest in Hungary, where from 1968 enterprises were freed from quotas and inputs set by the planning authorities and encouraged to interact on the market with the aim of making a profit (although some prices continued to be fixed). In 1982, Hungary went so far as to legalize the 'second economy'. Generally, however, market disciplines remained weak in the Eastern Bloc. In East Germany Walter Ulbricht's reforms of 1963 led to enterprises being judged by profitability rather than by output, and to directors being given discretion over pay and bonuses. Nevertheless industrial managers complained that they faced pressure from workers to spend profits on higher wages rather than on improving productivity; planning officials complained that they were expected to fulfil plans but no longer had the means to do so; and the government complained that shutting down unprofitable plants or raising the price of consumer goods exacted too high a political price.

By the 1960s, a 'social contract' had come into existence in the Eastern Bloc, whereby the state promised health care, employment, education, pensions, and trade-union rights in return for political quiescence. By this time the improvement of the living standards of the population had risen up the political agenda. Khrushchev pledged to

give each family its own flat, instead of rooms in a shared *kommunalka*, and opportunities for vacations expanded, with increased ownership of dachas and access to beach holidays. The 1961 Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union committed the government to improving the prosperity and leisure of its citizens by boosting the production of vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and other electrical goods. In the Soviet countryside requisitions of grain and restrictions on job mobility gradually ended and peasants gained entitlement to pensions, guaranteed wages, paid maternity leave, and a month's annual holiday. In Hungary the 'goulash communism' of János Kádár gave the country the reputation of being the 'merriest barrack in the socialist camp'. In East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, the supply and quality of consumer goods greatly improved, although by the later years of these regimes, citizens were well aware of the higher standards of living enjoyed by their Western neighbours. Gary Cross has called consumerism the '"ism" that won' in the twentieth century. Historians debate how far the relatively poorer performance of communist governments in meeting consumer aspirations was a factor bringing about their demise. In East Germany, for example, by the late 1980s, about 40 per cent of households had cars—higher than in any other country in the Eastern Bloc (in the Soviet Union the figure was about 10 per cent)—yet the ubiquitous 'Trabi' was a standing joke in West Germany. In China, mass consumption became an ideology and practice that served to legitimize the regime only in the 'reform' era, especially following the Tiananmen crisis of 1989. Since then, the country has seen the average household rapidly move from owning a bicycle and radio, to a television, refrigerator, and washing machine, and currently many look to car ownership as the next step.

Society and Culture

Many aspects of social and cultural transformation are discussed in the *Handbook*, so there is no need to anticipate these. It is, however, worth pointing out—against a still strong tendency to write the history of communism in terms of the policies and actions of party leaders—that the social sphere generated its own dynamics that shaped the evolution of these regimes in ways that were not always understood by political leaders. As communist societies matured, for example, changing demographic and family patterns, divisions between generations, the increasingly urban character of the population, rising educational standards, declining rates of upward social mobility, and the increased dependence on technocratic and scientific elites were all factors that came to shape the lineaments of the communist order often in ways entirely unanticipated by or invisible to party leaders.

Despite the claim to be building societies based on the most far-reaching forms of equality, hierarchies of privilege and status reemerged with astonishing speed. Communist parties could dispatch the old ruling classes with ruthless ease, expropriating their wealth and abolishing private ownership of the means of production, yet they

were far less able to prevent new forms of inequality. As early as 1922 the Bolsheviks established a *nomenklatura* system whereby the Central Committee appointed officials to key positions. Through this mechanism, a new elite emerged, consisting of party officials at *oblast'* level and above, senior state officials, directors of industrial enterprises and scientific institutions, and senior officers in the army and navy. Analysts disagree as to how far these groups constituted a social class, since it was one defined by tenancy of office, rather than by wealth or ownership of property. Nevertheless, although unable to bequeath office to its offspring, it was able to provide them with cultural capital and useful connections, and after 1944 Soviet law once again allowed the inheritance of private property. Separate from this elite were technical and artistic intellectuals, who were subject to censorship and state restriction but who often enjoyed social status and a degree of material comfort their counterparts in capitalist societies might envy. In China the *bianzhi* system, modelled on the *nomenklatura*, was established in the 1950s and classified party and state officials into nine categories (with status subtly indicated in such matters as the cut of the Mao suit). Clients of powerful officials who displayed loyalty and commitment might expect promotion through non-regular channels, a practice known as *tiba* (significantly, a term drawn from the lexicon of the imperial bureaucracy). The Cultural Revolution dealt a shattering blow to this elite, but did not eliminate 'special privileges', which might take the form of access to foreign films and forbidden books, or to university places for offspring. In North Korea hierarchies of social distinction proved far more rigid than in the USSR or China. A hereditary aristocratic elite survived until 1910, when the 500-year-old Choson dynasty was toppled by the Japanese, and the communist regime reconfigured a system of social classification that was essentially heredity: today it is estimated that North Korea's 23 million citizens are divided into a 'core class', 'wavering class', and 'hostile class', reckoned to be 28 per cent, 45 per cent, and 27 per cent respectively.[13] This is redolent of the distinctions that existed in imperial Korea between *yangban* (literary and martial classes), commoners, outcasts or slaves. Upward social mobility for workers and peasants, normally extensive in the first phase of communist development, also seems to have been much less in North Korea, and it is noteworthy that it is the one communist country ruled by a dynasty (with Kim Il Sung the 'eternal leader').

As children of the Enlightenment, the Bolsheviks sought to raise the cultural level of the masses, which essentially meant raising educational standards, disseminating scientific knowledge, and opposing religion and superstition. 'Culturedness', however, had a wide semantic reach and could denote anything from improving standards of health and hygiene, inculcating efficiency and punctuality, or internalizing the norms and aspirations of Soviet ideology. In 1921, following victory on the military and political fronts, Lenin declared that 'culture' was now the 'third front' of revolutionary activity. In his last writings, he invoked the concept of 'cultural revolution', by which he meant principally the propagation of literacy and solid work habits and the application of science and technology. Other Bolshevik leaders had a more grandiose vision, including Bukharin for whom cultural revolution meant nothing less than a 'revolution in human characteristics, in habits, feelings and desires, in way of life and culture', in effect the creation of a

'new soviet person'. This was a vision closer to that of Mao Zedong, who put particular emphasis on culture since he believed that it was in the realm of thought and values that the pernicious residues of 'feudalism' and 'capitalism' were reproduced. In his view, political and economic institutions might become socialist, yet people's consciousness could lag behind. With the Socialist Education Movement of 1963, work teams were sent into the villages to stir up 'class struggle' against traditional practices of rural life, such as mercenary marriage, spirit mediumship, fortune telling, gambling, and corruption. This adumbrated the attack on the 'four olds'—ideas, culture, customs, and habits—that became a devastating element in the Cultural Revolution.

In the Soviet Union in the 1920s there was a vibrant culture of experiment in education, but this came to an end in 1931 with a renewed emphasis on subject-based teaching and discipline in the classroom. It was a version of this model that was taken up by the Eastern Bloc regimes after 1945: in most countries the system of schooling was based on free or low-cost primary education for seven or eight years; commitment to polytechnicism; an exam-driven and tightly controlled curriculum; rote learning; a teacher-centred classroom; and the involvement of Octobrists and Young Pioneers in the classroom. The PRC initially adopted this system, but with the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong unveiled one of the most radical educational experiments of the twentieth century, prioritizing applied studies and an integration of manual labour with academic learning. Examinations were abolished—'the bourgeois method of "making one's way" and achieving individual fame, wealth, and position'—and a professor's exhortation to his students to read more was condemned by Mao on the grounds that 'to read too many books is harmful'. In Cuba, too, there was widespread educational experimentation, some of it drawn from Chinese experience, such as the emulation of labour models, the prioritization of practical over book learning, and military-style production brigades. After the Revolutionary Offensive (1968–70), however, Cuba settled back into a more liberal version of the Soviet model.

The extent to which the state intervened in the private lives of its citizens was variable. At one extreme were Yugoslavia and Hungary under Kádár, at the other were North Korea and the PRC, where from 1979 residence committees and the Women's Federation enforced the one-child policy with methods that extended to forced abortion and sterilization. Historians of East Germany and the Soviet Union have been innovative in conceptualizing the ways in which power saturated everyday life. The party-state created a complex of official knowledge, norms, orientations, and rules designed to shape the activity of the individual, while simultaneously seeking to elicit his or her support. From kindergarten to school, from army service to sports clubs, public identities were constituted through this discursive complex. Some historians contend that subjectivities were shaped so profoundly that there was no external standpoint from which they could reflect critically on themselves or the political order. Others argue that citizens acted more tactically within this complex, learning to speak the language of the regime in public, to demonstrate support when required, to appear to be good workers, to participate in official rituals. Essentially, this argument goes, citizens appropriated official discourse in ways that served personal interests and needs, always with a view to

maintaining spaces of autonomy among family and friends, in the kitchen or the dacha. Such perspectives blur a sharp distinction between state and society. Moreover, instead of dividing the population into supporters and opponents, they draw attention to the forms of accommodation and negotiation that were practised by most citizens, who were far from being passive objects of power. This does not mean that there were no active supporters or resisters of communist regimes. At one end of the spectrum were fierce Soviet patriots, such as the war veterans who cheered on Soviet military intervention in 1956 to bring 'ungrateful Hungarians' to their senses; at the other end were evangelical sects or dissident intellectuals fighting for freedom of expression and human rights. In between were the majority who might, in one moment, consider themselves good Soviet citizens, yet in the next feel very aggrieved as the shortages, abuses and petty restrictions that curtailed their daily lives. Mass resistance did occur, especially in the early years of communist rule—in East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, Prague in 1968—but it was a relatively rare occurrence in communist regimes. In the Soviet Union collective resistance died down after 1932, although in 1962 a strike erupted in Novocherkassk against hikes in the price of meat and dairy products, which culminated in soldiers killing twenty-three and injuring sixty-nine people. But this was exceptional.

The position of women improved in communist societies even as those societies remained fundamentally patriarchal. Some historians castigate the limitations of the official vision of women's emancipation since it assumed that women would be liberated simply by becoming involved in wage work, and otherwise did little to help them cope with the tasks of childcare and domestic labour. Others take a more generous view, arguing that notwithstanding the limitations of communist policy, women's status in the family rose as they became independent wage earners, acquired education, and moved into sectors once firmly closed to them. In the years immediately after the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks attacked the patriarchal order with vigour, exhorting working-class and peasant women to become 'new socialist women' by casting off the shackles of family life and throwing themselves into socialist construction. The Bolsheviks recognized that for this to work the state would need to take over childcare and household labour, but progress towards this goal was limited in the conditions of civil war. During the 1920s, the Women's Department (*Zhenotdel*), though chronically underfunded, undertook campaigns against wage and hiring discrimination, layoffs of female workers, sexual harassment, alcoholism, and wife-beating. Yet the 1920s also witnessed a revival of more conservative attitudes to marriage and the family, as mothers abandoned by husbands looked to the state for support and as the number of children orphaned or abandoned by their parents rocketed. Under Stalin the emphasis in official policy shifted towards promoting motherhood and stable family life, a conservative shift signalled more generally by a limitation of the right to divorce, the criminalization of homosexuality in 1934, and a ban on abortion in 1936. Yet the rhetoric of gender equality was never jettisoned: images of women as workers and warriors continued to be disseminated, and the massive entry of women into the workforce during the 1930s put paid to the idea of the husband as the family breadwinner.

In China, under the Jiangxi Soviet in 1931 the CCP had advocated a radical policy of free-choice marriage, a right to divorce, bans on polygamy, the sale of women, and child marriage. Later, it played down the right to divorce and free-choice marriage, arguing that the key to women's emancipation lay in participation in the public sphere of work. How far this shift was forced on the party by the rural environment in which it operated, how far by the exigencies of war, and how far by a lack of will on the part of a male-dominated leadership remains moot. The Marriage Law of 1950 proclaimed the abolition of the traditional family system 'based on arbitrary and compulsory arrangements and the superiority of man over woman' and instituted a system based on 'the equal rights of both sexes, and on the protection of the lawful interests of women and children'. With collectivization the economic position of peasant women improved, although women did not earn work points on the same basis as men, and during the Great Leap Forward there were attempts to socialize housework, childcare, and cooking, although given the generalized privation these measures were not popular. During the Cultural Revolution stereotypical femininity (but not masculinity) became the object of revolutionary scrutiny, with 'iron girls' exalted in official propaganda. In south-eastern Europe communist modernization brought about a decline of the clan-based family and here as elsewhere fertility decreased. With the exception of Romania, which in 1966 banned abortion and contraception, women's access to contraception remained extremely limited and they were forced to rely on abortion to limit family size. In the Eastern Bloc, as elsewhere, the number of women in employment grew substantially, but they tended to be concentrated in agriculture, low-wage industrial and clerical jobs, health care or education. By the 1970s women comprised half of all university students in most parts of the Eastern Bloc. In all countries they got the vote, although not until 1958 in Albania, and came to make up around a quarter of parliamentary representatives, considerably more than in post-communist times.

Despite their claim to stand for the transcendence of the nation-state, communist governments did much to promote nation-building and national identity. The USSR was the largest and one of the most complex multi-ethnic states in the world—comprising in 1970 over 104 officially recognized nationalities, 22 of which consisted of more than one million people. The PRC, too, was a multi-ethnic state in which 56 nationalities were recognized, but non-Han peoples constituted only about 8 per cent of the population. During the 1920s, the Bolsheviks had swept away the traditional elites in the non-Russian regions and sought to create a social base for themselves by promoting ethnic minorities—mainly young, political committed males from humble backgrounds—to positions of leadership within the autonomous regions and republics of the Soviet Union. At the same time, they provided mass education in native languages and created native intelligentsias who were enjoined to develop a culture that was socialist in content but national in form. If Moscow supported national diversity as a principle, it showed little compunction in attacking elements of cultures (notably religious ones) that it deemed backward, as happened in Central Asia. Moreover, in the course of the Second World War, Stalin ordered the forcible deportation of non-Russian nationalities suspected of collaborating with the Nazis, such as the Chechens and Crimean Tatars.

Nevertheless the institutionalization of nationality as the ethno-territorial principle of a federal state structure, combined with its institutionalization as an ethno-cultural principle in individual citizenship (via the internal passport that was introduced in 1932), created conditions favourable to the creation of independent nation-states in the long term. Moreover, the centralization of economic power and the monopolization of political power in a unitary party dominated by a largely Slavic elite, together with the dominance of the Russian language in public life, more generally, did much to sharpen nationalist consciousness among non-Russians.

Conclusion

The history of communism cannot be understood except as a product of what Eric Hobsbawm called the 'Age of Catastrophe': the era of two world wars, fascist reaction, the Depression, and movements for national liberation from colonial rule. Some of the century's worst atrocities were committed by communist regimes, as Stalin's terror, the famine in China of 1959–62, or Pol Pot's laying waste to Cambodia testify. Communist states made relentless demands on their citizens, pressing them to make sacrifices for the future and to stifle impulses to self-expression. And they cynically exploited the idealism and courage of millions across the world who struggled to create a better future. Yet communist regimes also had achievements to their credit, bringing social security, rudimentary welfare, improved health care and education to people who had lacked these things under the old order. If these benefits also came to be enjoyed by those who lived in the developed capitalist world over the course of the twentieth century, in vast areas of the world, such as Latin America, Africa, parts of Asia and the Middle East, hundreds of millions of ordinary people fared badly by comparison with their counterparts in communist states. In addition, communist parties made a huge contribution to the defeat of fascism in East Asia and Europe (albeit one that was deeply tainted by the Soviet occupation of Poland and the Baltic in 1939–41) and gave a big boost to struggles for national liberation and racial equality. That said, the collapse of communism in 1989–91 revealed just how weak the social foundations of these regimes were—regimes that had seemed once to threaten to subjugate the 'free world'. This does not mandate a facile explanation of communist regimes as ones that were simply imposed on unwilling populations. There were a few states that enjoyed very little legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens (Poland in later years), yet there were others—mainly those that arose out of movements of popular mobilization and national liberation—that enjoyed significant popular support. In the last analysis, it was the inability of communist states to stay abreast economically in a world of post-Fordist production, conspicuous consumption, and global commodity chains that proved critical, although as we have seen, there were a myriad other factors that helped to bring them down. The task of historians remains to grapple with the diversity that existed alongside the uniformity, with the mutability that existed alongside the immobility of

communist regimes, with the contradictory reality of repressive and often criminal regimes that nevertheless had economic, social, military, and cultural achievements to their credit. In so doing, they should seek to avoid moralizing condemnation, on the one hand, and credulous apologetics, on the other.

Notes

1. My warm thanks to Karl Gerth, David Priestland, and Jonathan Waterlow, all of the University of Oxford, for their helpful comments on this introduction.
2. David Lane, *The End of Inequality? Class, Status, and Power under State Socialism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982); Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2009).
3. On a technical matter. At a time when so much can be followed up on the Internet, authors were asked to keep footnote references to a minimum, restricting them as far as possible to sources of quotations and less accessible statistics. The major secondary sources on which authors rely are listed in the select bibliography at the end of each chapter.
4. <http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1917/12/rev_against_capital.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
5. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
6. John Riddell (ed.), *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International 1922* (Brill, 2012), 120.
7. Leon Trotsky, 'Our Political Tasks', <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1904/tasks/cho3.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
8. *Pravda*, 1 February 1959, 4–5.
9. <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm> (accessed 15 December 2012).
10. Amir Weiner and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, 'Getting to Know You: The Soviet Surveillance System, 1939–1957', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13/1 (Winter 2012), 33.
11. V. I. Lenin, 'O perestroike raboty SNK, STO i malogo SNK', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 44 <http://leninism.su/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=999:o-perestrojke-raboty-snk-sto-i-malogo-snk&catid=83:tom-44&Itemid=53> (accessed 15 December 2012).
12. Claes Brundenius, 'Growth With Equity: The Cuban Experience (1959–1980)', *World Development*, 9/11–12 (1981), 1088.
13. *Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 2012.

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