

# Editorial

If communism, as our opening editorial had it, was one of the defining political movements of the twentieth century, it was not just that communism itself helped define Hobsbawm's 'age of extremes'. Nor was it merely that communism's positive influence, for good or ill, can be traced through a host of wider agencies. Communism also matters because so much else in twentieth-century politics was in some sense defined in relation to it, whether in rivalry, competition or open hostility. In addressing this theme of 'A century of anti-communisms', the present issue of *Twentieth Century Communism*, overspilling into the next, joins a rapidly increasing body of literature on the subject. Not only are these anti-communisms rightly seen as crucial to our understanding of the century that is now behind us. In the projection and anathematisation of new 'extremes', notably, of course, that of militant Islam, they also offer insight into the political uses of threat in our own times.

How far, and in what circumstances, that threat (or promise) was real or phantasmagoric is a much debated question. It will hardly be resolved by the series of historical aperçus presented here. What is nevertheless striking is how, as our focus shifts to communism's antagonists, there should for the first time come to the fore several cases in which communism on its own account was a marginal force. Certainly this is true of Switzerland, Ireland and the USA. This is not of course to suggest some inverse correlation between communism and anti-communism. Despite the communists' strengths in West Bengal, where for thirty-four years they ran the government, anti-communism was an important factor in Calcutta in the years following the Russian revolution. Within the Weimar republic which it helped to bring down, or the cold-war Germany which it divided into two, the conflict was one of formidable domestic rivals. The same was true, among many other cases, of cold-war Italy, or of the Latin American states in which anti-communism provided rationale or pretext for dictatorship of the right. Even so, the potency of

anti-communism in diverse environments in which communism posed no substantial local threat underlines the transnational character of these political currents and counter-currents. Indeed, even where communism was most firmly implanted, there was always some association with what Suchetana Chattopadhyay here refers to as the myth (which did not preclude the reality) of the outsider. It is this, if nothing else – and some would argue that there is very little else – which seems to unite the diverse anti-communisms considered in these pages.

The varieties of anti-communism, and the sorts of conditions in which they arose, are discussed both in our opening essay by Jean-François Fayet and in a roundtable discussion to which six historians with very different research interests bring their distinct perspectives. There is therefore no need to attempt a further overview here. One may merely point to some of the connections that can be traced across the material presented in this and our next issue. Emmet O'Connor's discussion of Ireland's anti-communism, for example, not only suggests comparisons with the exiguous presence which, as Suchetana Chattopadhyay shows, could so exercise official minds in Bengal. It also links with the discussions of Christian anti-communism by Dianne Kirby and Stéphanie Roulin which, for reasons of space, have had to be held over to our next issue.<sup>1</sup> The latter, in discussing the Pro Deo commission of the Swiss-based Entente internationale anticommuniste, should also be read alongside Michel Caillat's account of the EIA: the first, it seems, to be published in English. Similarly, Dianne Kirby's focus on Christian anti-communism in cold-war USA, also referred to in her briefer contribution to our roundtable, offers a useful counterfoil to John Callaghan's evaluation here of foreign-policy issues in the same period. Michel Caillat's treatment of the EIA is also revealing of these issues of brute realpolitik, more particularly in this case in relation to fascism and its siblings in inter-war Europe.

The instrumentalisation of anti-communism for conservative or openly reactionary political projects should not be used, as communists themselves tended to use it, to conflate and delegitimise any such form of opposition to communism. This point is strongly signalled in Eric Arnesen's defence of the African-American activists Walter White and A. Philip Randolph, whose anti-communism, it is suggested, was princi-

pled, consistent and in no way to be tarred with the brush of Mccarthyism. One may again suggest cross-readings with the perspectives from the left, of anti-stalinism or anti-Bolshevism, if not necessarily of anti-communism *tout court*, contributed to our roundtable by Carl Levy (anarchist anti-communism) and Madeleine Davis (the British New Left). If the idea of some external agent still mattered here, it was no longer in relation to some imagined national community, but some conception of a movement which was typically seen as being threatened or undermined by Russians. When collecting material for this project, we also received other materials regarding anti-communism or anti-Bolshevism that focused on the British left, which – quite apart from the issue of space – we would have struggled to accommodate here without skewing the international coverage which the journal seeks to maintain. Happily, articles by Ian Bullock, Sarah Cohen and Adriá Llacuna are therefore to appear under the rubric ‘Left-Wing Anti-Communism’ in an issue of *Socialist History* also to appear in 2014. In the meantime, our roundtable discussion may be consulted for the further perspectives of populist anti-comunism in Peru (Paulo Drinot), fascist anti-communism (Matthew Worley) and left-bank anti-communism (Gavin Bowd).

Translations in the issue are by Joan Llanos (Jean-François Fayet) and Kevin Morgan (Michel Caillat). Thanks are also due to the new Communism Specialist Group of the Political Studies Association of the UK, which funded the Manchester event from which much of this material is drawn, with additional support from the universities of Durham and Manchester. For details of the group, and related activities and announcements, there is a website and blog: <http://psacommunism.wordpress.com/>.

Finally, this is the first issue of *Twentieth Century Communism* to appear on its new twice-yearly basis. In future years, this first issue, to be published in February, will comprise reviews and review articles, think-pieces, commentaries and stand-alone contributions based on original research. The second issue, to be published in July, will normally contained themed materials. However, for this one year only we will be producing two themed issues, to catch up with the material on exiles and diasporas generated by a second Manchester event held in December

2012. The next themed issue, on the cultural turn in communist history, will follow in July 2015. Articles and proposals for articles are always welcome, as are ideas or proposals for future themes.

### **Note**

- 1 Dianne Kirby, 'Christian anti-communism'; Stéphanie Roulin, 'A martyr factory? Roman Catholic crusade, Protestant missions, and anti-communist propaganda against Soviet anti-religious policies (1929-37)'.