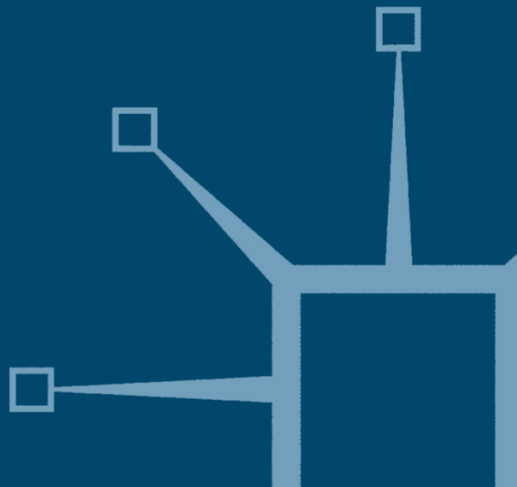# Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern

Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53

Edited by

Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and
Matthew Worley

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1
Introduction: Stalinization and Communist Historiography

Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley

One of the difficulties in developing an international comparative historiography of communism has been the elusiveness of any agreed framework for transnational comparison. In other respects, the movement's international scope and centralized methods of record-keeping seem ideally suited to comparative work. Since the opening of the Moscow archives in the early 1990s, transnational scholarly networks have also flourished, as have a series of published symposia and research bulletins attest.[1] Nevertheless, between work on national communist parties and analyses of the supranational authority of the Communist International, or Comintern (1919–43), the limited development of genuine comparative work remains striking. E. H. Carr's highly regarded studies might in this respect be seen as a sort of epitome of the literature, combining meticulous party studies with the 'scene from Moscow', and yet offering explicit comparison as little more than a subtext.[2]

Constraints of language and knowledge more generally affecting comparative labour history must play a role here.[3] Doubtless, the development of convincing national studies drawing on the archives was and remains a precondition for informed comparative reflection.[4] There are also considerations more specific to the subject. Though Carr possessed in abundance the comparativist's language skills and breadth of knowledge, he nevertheless adopted the largely institutional approach to the Comintern and its national sections, which for many years was the literature's most characteristic form. Like the Leninist organizational precepts that discountenanced 'horizontal' links between lower party units, except as mediated by the centre, party histories shaped by these relationships have also tended to focus their analysis from the centre outwards. Even as such an emphasis came under challenge in the 1970s and 1980s, the resulting 'centre–periphery' debate, focusing on the

extent of the communist parties' subordination to Moscow, tended towards a somewhat polarized contraposition of national or subnational factors with the international domination of the Comintern.[5] Though much important work was produced, by the end of the 1990s the view was being expressed that the centre–periphery debate was running out of steam.[6]

Beyond generalist claims and particularist modifiers, the need has hence been increasingly recognized for more complex, sophisticated and pluri-disciplinary understandings both of communisms (plural) and what held them together as communism (singular). Analogous developments in Soviet studies have been characterized as a maturation and even 'normalization', and the literature on western communist parties has been enriched through a greater openness to wider historiographical concerns.[7] Nevertheless, considered alongside the extensive comparative literatures on fascism or social democracy, the comparative study of European communism remains surprisingly weak.[8] Though with an increasing number of distinguished exceptions, the literature traditionally has been overwhelmingly focused on particular national cases or on the Comintern itself.[9] Even regional studies made only limited use of the comparative method, though the impending publication of a major comparative project on Nordic communism suggests an appetite now exists for such work.[10] Tellingly, examples of transnational comparison have been more in evidence for the post-Comintern period, initially prompted by the exposure in the Eurocommunist period of distinct party narratives sufficiently differentiated to allow for meaningful comparison. The literature comparing the French and Italian communist parties has been particularly abundant. Typically, though, even the most historically ambitious of these accounts, Marc Lazar's *Maisons rouges* (1999), again begins only with the post-Comintern period.[11] Only perhaps in Andreas Wirsching's work on Paris and Berlin has extended transnational comparison been combined with recognition of the centralizing imperatives of the Comintern years.[12]

Pondering these issues, we were drawn to the Stalinization concept of the German historian Hermann Weber. Originally expounded in Weber's seminal *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus* (1969), this concept has been widely invoked to describe the communist parties' transformation by the 1930s into strictly disciplined and centralized instruments of Stalinist power politics.[13] To this extent, Weber's analysis provided a benchmark for the centre–periphery debate, and the issues he raised were already long familiar by the 1960s. On the other hand, one of the outstanding virtues of Weber's work lay not just in its

mass of empirical detail, but also in the elaboration of a clear analytical framework for the better understanding of these developments. As Geoff Eley observed in welcoming the communist 'social' histories of the 1970s and 1980s, Weber – though his work was rooted in political science – was one of a handful of historians internationally to have risen above 'the usual routines of simplistically politicized understanding'.[14] Compared with the simpler versions of the Moscow-centric narrative, he carefully weighed both exogenous and endogenous factors; and, if the conclusions he reached gave clear priority to the former, the method was one that could be fruitfully applied beyond Weber's particular concern with Weimar Germany. It was the potential of the concept for comparison, though left undeveloped by Weber himself, that gave rise to the idea of the present collection.

Despite the significance of Weber's work, it remains only sketchily understood by English-language historians. Indeed, his major writings, along with the main alternatives presented to them by German historians, have not hitherto been translated into English. One object of the present collection is therefore to introduce readers to Weber's Stalinization thesis and the debates which this has generated in Germany. On this basis, we have asked our contributors to draw on their own research in providing a range of different perspectives on the issues raised by the concept of Stalinization. We have not proposed any single template or set of comparators to be tested in uniform ways. Nor have contributors been asked to provide an explicitly comparative approach, though a number do. Instead, a variety of approaches are adopted, taking in both centre and periphery, comparisons and case studies, the social, cultural, institutional and biographical – to say nothing of differences of period and national context, which, as we suggest here, were to some extent interrelated. Together, the contributions convey something of the complexity of meaningful comparison necessary to accommodate these variables of agency, political function, social implantation and periodization, while recognizing the unequalled structurating role of the Comintern.

In the remainder of this introduction, we set out the main points of the Stalinization debate as a prism through which to view the different aspects of communist politics presented in the individual contributions. On this basis, we also offer some preliminary thoughts as to themes which would bear more sustained examination across different periods, countries and fields of political activity. Our hope is that the collection will provide a stimulus to further comparative reflection as well as an introduction to some of the issues at the heart of the current historiography.

Stalinization and the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*

Weber, in his *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus*, sought to explain how a mass party in Germany could become comprehensively subordinated to an external source of authority unprecedented in the history of the workers' movement. The German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; KPD) was not only the largest of the Comintern's sections outside Russia; until 1923, it seemed also to hold out its one credible chance of revolution in the West. A decade later, according to Weber, it had been reduced to acting in the service of Soviet foreign policy, pursuing an ultra-left strategy that was to prove politically calamitous. In tracing this development, Weber emphasized the far-reaching consequences of the KPD's acceptance of the Soviet party's 'leading role' and the promotion through the Comintern of Bolshevik policies and organizational structures. To this extent, he was not oblivious to the roots of Stalinization in the years preceding Stalin's dominance. Nevertheless, he ascribed a more definitive significance to the period from the mid- to late 1920s in which, as Stalin established his authority in Moscow, the Comintern exploited factional tensions of singular intensity to install, dismiss and finally control successive party leaderships.[15] Between the beginning of Stalinization, which Weber dated from 1924, and its successful completion by the end of the decade, the KPD was transformed from a party with a 'relatively high degree of internal democracy' into a *Diktaturpartei* whose key political lines were all written in Moscow.[16] During the final years of Weimar, this Stalinized KPD proved incapable of significantly modifying the Comintern's assessment that social democracy rather than Nazism was communism's 'main enemy'. With Hitler's accession to power and the KPD's virtual elimination, the Stalinization narrative reached its tragic dénouement in 1933.

   Weber's postulate of a relentless centralization of power was a commonplace of commentaries on the communist movement, whether from a conservative, social democratic or dissident Marxist perspective. What was original and distinctive was his explanatory framework. Briefly recapitulated in his contribution to the present collection, Weber's model of Stalinization rested on four interrelated factors: the domination of the party by the party apparatus; the role of internal factionalism; political and material dependence on the Comintern; and the KPD's marginality to German politics. It is the relative sophistication of the model which lends itself to its wider employment as a means of tracing both variation and generic features in communist politics across differences of period and national context.

Weber's first point, the domination of the party apparatus, was one he identified as a more general feature of modern industrial societies. As in this sense a 'modern' party staffed by 'professional revolutionaries', the KPD's centralized chain of command excluded ordinary members and local officials from influencing policy-making. The outcome, according to Weber, was to undermine its activist base, resulting in a rising membership turnover and the failure of members to perform the limited roles the Stalinist model allowed them. The significance of his second point – the rivalry within the KPD of a number of wings and tendencies – was that it prevented the party from finding an independent ideological position beyond both social democracy and syndicalism.[17] In this context, the apparatus itself became the 'motor of unity', integrating the party through a 'military-style' discipline and playing off 'left' and 'right' deviations even when these had virtually ceased to exist. Financial and political dependence on the Soviet Union, Weber's third point, were interrelated. Financially, the KPD relied on 'Moscow gold' both for the apparatus that was so central to the Stalinization model and to support a level of press and campaigning activity that was otherwise unsustainable given the deterioration of the party's activist base. Politically, acceptance of the Comintern's top-down model of democratic centralism, both nationally and internationally, underpinned the domination of the party by the apparatus, while simultaneously binding the latter by policy directives and organizational disciplines imposed from Moscow.

While thus heavily emphasizing the hand of Moscow, Weber, with his fourth point, also recognized the significance of communism's place within the Weimar system. As German politics began to stabilize in the mid-1920s, the KPD was confronted with the dilemma of a revolutionary party trapped in a bourgeois republic. Its early failures, culminating in its inability to launch a 'German October' in 1923, only made it the more receptive to the successful Bolshevik model, and no doubt to the maximalist rhetoric of the Comintern's so-called 'third period' of 1928–35, characterized by extreme hostility to social democracy.[18] This predicament, of a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary environment, was not specific to Weimar Germany; indeed it was more striking still in most other countries. That this served to reinforce a compensating identification with the Russians was already proposed in a wider context by contemporary commentators like Franz Borkenau.[19]

Implicitly or explicitly, the Stalinization model thus touched on a wide range of issues that could fruitfully be explored in other contexts.

Among them were the role of national party leaderships in relation to the Comintern; the significance of both internal factionalism and personal and ideological leadership rivalries; the quality of communist party activism at the local level; party finance and the issue of material dependence on the Comintern; national and subnational patterns of party competition, notably the cleavage between communism and social democracy; and the generalization of common forms of political discipline through the adherence to democratic centralism, both nationally and internationally.

Consideration of the Stalinization model internationally inevitably raises as many questions as it answers. Even in its original German application, it has not gone unchallenged. Within the parameters set by his methodology, Weber's explanatory framework has been largely vindicated in such aspects as increasing Soviet domination of the Comintern apparatus. Though the range of emphases is somewhat wider, there would also be general agreement that individual communist parties by 1933 exercised little independent judgement in what the Comintern saw as key issues of policy and organization. Even the extension of the historiography into the more culturalist territory of communist identities, while going beyond Weber's political science approach, has generated insights and a periodization broadly compatible with the Stalinization narrative.[20] Indeed, the hypothesis has been postulated of a process of sociological standardization corresponding to the Stalinization of the political line and effected by the Comintern's no less systematic attempts at cadre formation and biographical control. As Brigitte Studer puts it, communist parties from the early 1930s were Stalinized not only as a result of institutional pressures, but through the internalization of a system of rules, codes, conventions and cognitive structures which together meant both to speak and see 'Bolshevik'.[21] On these assumptions, the case has also been made for a closer integration of the historiography of Stalinism both within the Soviet Union and beyond it.[22]

Nevertheless, if the Stalinization model has also provoked dissension and critique, it is because of what some historians saw as its too restricted frame of reference. In Germany itself, critics drew on the new social history methodologies of the 1970s–1980s to switch the angle of observation from 'high politics' to 'history from below'. They also posed a chronological challenge to Weber's periodization and the weight he attached to 'Stalinizing' pressures from the mid-1920s. In both respects, the post-1989 historiography on German communism has seen greater emphasis placed on endogenous factors, including

the KPD's indigenous political inheritance.[23] A third dimension, going beyond the model's original German application, is to consider the viability of the Stalinization model in relation to other communist parties. This also poses a 'chronological challenge', not only in relation to the pre-Stalin period, but also in respect of the popular front era in which several of these parties enjoyed their greatest political influence of the Comintern period. Whether this provided a sequel, extension or modification of the Stalinization narrative, or combined elements of all three, is open to debate. Nevertheless, it is clear that a Weimar-based model could not simply be transposed to the very different conjunctures of the anti-fascist period, which was also the period of Stalinist hubris and the terror.

German debates

On its appearance in 1969, *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus* stood firmly within the dominant, western understanding of German communism that had been developed from the early post-war period by historians like Ossip Flechtheim and Richard Löwenthal.[24] Shortly afterwards, however, the subject began to be transformed by new studies addressing how the experience of political, economic and social conditions within Germany shaped both the mentalities of rank-and-file party members and the policy-making decisions of their leadership.[25] The latter certainly had its parallels in other countries and periods: for example, in debates concerning the inception of the popular front in 1934–35.[26] Nevertheless, it was the perspective of a communist history 'from below' that offered the greatest attraction to original scholarship. This, too, was not specific to Germany, or indeed to communism. As Eley pointed out, it drew on 'new' social history methodologies then enjoying a much wider currency and had the appearance of the 'march of historiographical progress into previously recalcitrant fields of study'.[27]

Within Germany, the most influential of these new interpretations held that the sociological division of the German working class conditioned its political division. After the formation of the United German Communist Party (*Vereinigte Kommunistische Partei Deutchlands*; VKPD) as a mass-based party at the end of 1920, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; SPD) largely retained the support of skilled, employed workers organized in the socialist trade unions. The KPD, conversely, found its main support among unskilled, unemployed and often unorganized 'mass' workers,

who identified with its attacks on reformism's alleged 'betrayals'.[28] These historians did not overlook Moscow's influence, though some (in Uta Stolle's words) may have relegated it to the 'second strand of causation'.[29] Primarily, however, they were interested in areas of communist politics, in the workplace and neighbourhood, in which the idea of an evenly predominating Soviet influence was considerably more problematic. In the work of Eric Weitz, the outstanding example of such scholarship in English, stress was laid on the notion of political space as both opportunity and constraint, shaping the character of communist politics in ways that went beyond the intentions or capabilities of its leadership. Weitz acknowledged the importance of what he called a 'circumscribed political history' in delineating some aspects of communist history. He also underlined its inadequacy in respect of other aspects, not intrinsically of a lesser order, such as the capacity or lack of it to form mass parties.[30]

Though the historiography had clearly moved on since the late 1960s, it was not until the mid-1990s that a new voice within it, Klaus-Michael Mallmann's, issued a direct challenge to Weber's Stalinization thesis.[31] In place of a monolithic party subservient to Moscow, Mallmann presented German communism as a relatively autonomous, mass-based social movement rooted in a diversity of local conditions. What Sigmund Neumann famously called a party of 'absolutist integration' had, in this reading, been a programmatic intention, not an achievable aim. Mallmann accepted that in some regions a hate-filled gulf separated the two workers' parties. Where he proposed a novel and even iconoclastic reading was in also identifying a locally based 'left-proletarian milieu' in which party divisions within the workers' movement appeared much shallower than in almost any previous account, from whatever perspective. Focusing on the Saarland, he argued that both wings of the workers' movement inhabited a 'niche society' rooted in the pre-war socialist counter-culture, and continuing to span the party divide in unions, co-operatives and cultural associations, as well as in working-class neighbourhoods and families.

Like Weitz's work, Mallmann's concept of the milieu reflected the influence of wider historiographical developments, notably in respect of community. It may thus be compared with earlier studies elsewhere, such as Stuart Macintyre's *Little Moscows* (1980) and Mark Naison's account of Harlem in the 1930s.[32] Indeed, although Mallmann took issue with what he called the 'orthodoxy' of the Weber view, a decade earlier Theodore Draper had described the prolific production of such scholarship in the United States as itself already a 'new orthodoxy' and

'minor academic industry'.[33] In obvious contrast to Weber, Mallmann argued that communists' primary location in this 'milieu' – rather than the party *per se* – informed a series of shared values and experiences which provided the basis for working-class solidarity as much as fratricidal conflict. It also enabled 'ordinary' communists to ignore or reinterpret central party directives as transmitted by the *apparat*.[34] Despite the leadership's diatribes against 'opportunism' – the remnants of reformism in the party's ranks – many rank-and-file activists remained 'Social Democrats against their will' as the only means of resolving the structural dilemma of being in a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary era.[35] Explicitly presented as an alternative to the Stalinization thesis, Mallmann's account did not merely reject the notion of Moscow's controlling hand. It also threw into question the idea of a binary opposition between the two workers' parties which, despite their differences of interpretation, had been common to both Weber and Weitz. In response, some critics argued that Mallmann failed to demonstrate the existence of a 'left-proletarian milieu' and overstated the areas of consensus between the two workers' parties.[36] Weitz himself felt that his 'strong case' for the importance of locality was undermined by excessive neglect of the national and transnational dimensions of communist politics.[37] This, at least, was not yet an orthodoxy.

Even among Mallmann's critics, there was more support for his challenge to the notion that Stalinization ended an early democratic phase of German communism.[38] Though Mallmann was hardly the first to have issued this challenge, in affirming that 'it did not take Stalin to Stalinize the KPD' he did so in characteristically provocative terms.[39] (Ironically, given his identifying Weber with a 'Western' interpretation of the KPD, it is actually former East German historians who have been prominent in recent attempts to reaffirm the 'democratic' or 'Luxemburgist' traditions of German communism.)[40] Among works contemporaneous with Weber's, Walter Kendall's *Revolutionary Movement in Britain* (1969) supported its stress on exogenous factors, yet concluded in 1921 with the issues of dependency and subordination already settled.[41] In the US, Draper's pioneering histories of the 1950s also outlined a process of subordination well under way by the early 1920s.[42] In France, where there were many democratic elements among the founding cohorts of the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français*; PCF), there was perhaps more support for a Weberian periodization in Annie Kriegel's work.[43] Nevertheless, nowhere more than in Germany has the notion of a prelapsarian phase of communism proved so influential.

An international model?

Critics of Mallmann argued that he had not sufficiently recognized the atypicality of the Saar, which in a German context was plausibly regarded as a 'special case'.[44] Internationally, however, the issue of typicality poses itself rather differently and to some extent provides a testing ground for Stalinization itself. Where Weber's critics stressed the specificities of German communism, one might, for example, expect their emphasis on endogenous factors to produce marked variations, not only at the level of local or regional milieux, but between different national cases. Conversely, notions of variation and atypicality appear almost by definition to require explanation at the level of the particular. If 'the Comintern dictated the same strategy and tactics to all the parties, and the national parties dictated the same strategy and tactics to all the local units', significant variation could only have originated somewhere outside this line of command.[45]

By the same token, the stronger the exogenous determinants of communist politics, the greater the homogenization one would expect to find, both nationally and internationally. To this extent, the validity of the Stalinization narrative presupposed its analytical purchase beyond the specific German context. It is true that by the late 1920s, German issues, like the German language and German functionaries, were at the centre of the Comintern's preoccupations; these, after all, were the grounds on which Carr's *Twilight of Comintern* (1982) dispensed with a separate chapter on the KPD.[46] Nevertheless, if the Saarland was untypical of Germany, the question may usefully be posed of which was the more typical of communism internationally: for example, in France or the Low Countries? In case that risks the suggestion of a Stalinized *Sonderweg*, perhaps the notion of a generalized typicality is itself one that can be usefully problematized.

The issue can be viewed both synchronically and diachronically. Long pre-dating the KPD's formation, the SPD had already become a highly bureaucratized, hierarchical and authoritarian party.[47] The seam of authoritarianism was then intensified by the experience of 'total war' – shared, of course, by the other major European powers – and by the violent and highly polarized political culture more specific to Weimar Germany.[48] Echoing contemporaries like Erich Fromm, commentators have noted how the 'weakness' of the failing Weimar Republic precipitated a 'rebellious authoritarianism' and search for compensating symbols of strength, especially among young workers. If this assisted the acceptance of 'iron discipline', relations between

Germany's two workers' parties were peculiarly acrimonious; and the KPD's perception of the SPD's several 'betrayals', from the suppression of the 'November Revolution' onwards, created the 'negative fixation' which allowed it to see the SPD as its 'main enemy'.[49] To the extent that these conditions were specific to Germany, the generalization during the 'third period' of a sectarian, confrontational and ultra-disciplined style of politics might indeed suggest that it was not these local specificities that mattered, but the acceptance of a single common source of authority.

It is here that a diachronic perspective illuminates, for it was precisely in the period following the relaxation and abandonment of this so-called 'class against class' strategy that several communist parties enjoyed a qualitative improvement in their political fortunes. There is no need to disinter the old argument as to whether pressures from the periphery brought about the change in policy. Rather, as Christophe Charle has observed in relation to the British party, a 'mass communism of the continental type' only proved possible once it had abandoned its revolutionary programme for what Charle calls an 'ecumenical humanism of the left', predicated on anti-fascism.[50] Whether one accepts such a characterization, it was in this period that commentators have identified the 'heyday' of smaller parties like those in Britain and the US, while genuinely mass communist parties were established in both France and post-war Italy.[51] As Wirsching's research shows, while the German and French communist parties can both be identified with an ideal-type 'totalitarian' movement, differing traditions and experiences produced different 'national communisms' affecting the ability even of willing executors to implement common policies in diverse settings. One result was that, while the KPD was pre-disposed to the ideologically driven ultra-radicalism of the third period, the PCF, as Kriegel had observed, functioned best in periods when ideological rigidity was relaxed.[52]

As Wirsching's diachronic time-frame recognizes, the latter experience largely passed the KPD by. Whereas the popular front and resistance experiences were central to the identity of the French and Italian parties, Weber observed in 1991 how the structures, mechanisms and leadership corps of post-war German communism were all established in the post-1945 period.[53] Moreover, the intervening period was hardly one of a simple hiatus. As Weitz puts it, it was again Weber's 'really heroic effort' that established both the extent of the KPD's subordination to the Comintern and the terrible losses its leading cadres suffered at Stalin's hands as well as Hitler's.[54] There was hardly a communist

party that was entirely spared such experiences, and the apparatus of the Comintern suffered particularly cruelly in the terror. Nevertheless, the highly differentiated experiences of these different communist 'milieux', including the milieu that was the apparatus itself, emerge from any casual review of the literature.[55]

Reflections

In his contribution to the present collection, Hermann Weber strongly reaffirms his original conception of Stalinization. Indeed, in shifting the weight towards the third of his explanatory factors – dependence on Moscow – Weber reinforces the case against those he believes have insufficiently acknowledged this dependence, and does so on the basis of the fuller documentation made accessible since he first wrote on the subject. Within certain limits, the case he makes is hardly now a matter of contention, and readers will find a wide acceptance here of the basic dynamic of institutional subordination which Weber characterized as Stalinization. Inferentially, the common usage of de-Stalinization to describe later developments within communism, internationally as well as in the Soviet Union, logically presupposes a prior experience of Stalinization whose core attributes remained intact while Stalin lived. The limits, therefore, are what is at issue; and, on the origin, scope and duration of Stalinization – its quality as outcome as well as tendency – the testing of these limits internationally, as Kerry Taylor and Matthew Worley put it in their contribution, reveals a variety of complicating factors that in some cases may be seen to bring into question the validity of the concept as originally proposed. If de-Stalinization implied a relaxation of the movement's central command system and greater susceptibility to different national political pressures, it was almost inherently neither an even nor a uniform process; in a literal sense, it was disintegrative. The conundrum for historians of the Comintern period is how far the integrative process described by Weber may also have been subject to significant variation, when its underlying rationale was manifestly one of homogenization and closure.

Crucially, one returns to the issue of its timing. Adapting Weber's periodization to the Comintern as a whole, Jürgen Rojahn has proposed an extension of the Stalinization phase to 1934, with the Comintern thereafter functioning, as Weber indicated, as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy.[56] The closing of the time-frame by the mid-1930s finds plenty of support in the present collection. Brigitte Studer and Emmet O'Connor find corroboration in the French, Swiss

and Irish cases. So does Ben Fowkes, discussing communist attitudes to the national question in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and similarly Peter Huber in analysing the composition of the Comintern's leading bodies. By the time of the Comintern's seventh congress in July–August 1935, the seismic shift to the popular front was accompanied by no significant ruptures or even debates, but only ovations at the constant ritual invocation of Stalin's name.

What even at a glance appears more problematic is the dating of this process only from 1924. Continuing with the Comintern's congresses as a sort of benchmark, the first of these in 1919 may reasonably be discounted as but a signal of intent. Already at the second world congress the following year, however, the adoption of the famous '21 conditions' of admission, frequently referred to by contributors here, included provisions for regular purges, the systematic centralization of power and acceptance of the binding nature of Comintern decisions. At the third congress in 1921, organizational theses were then adopted which even Lenin described as too Russian, but which were bolstered by further centralizing measures at the fourth world congress in 1922. Comintern finances were also brought under tight control, allowing the calculating deployment of the subsidies on which Weber's account laid considerable stress. If the fifth world congress of 1924 is the first at which any conceivable claim could be made of Stalin's dominance, which the sixth in 1928 certainly confirmed, some may think that a dynamic of discipline–subordination was already abundantly in evidence. Periodization is thus also pre-eminently an issue of agency and political provenance. Did it only take Stalin to Stalinize the Comintern?

Bolshevization in any case has been the preferred term of many scholars. In their history of the Comintern, Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew use it precisely to describe the 'trend towards Russian dominance of the Comintern' through the inculcation of unity, discipline and organizational centralization; in other words, something very like Stalinization.[57] The advantage of Bolshevization is that it allows for Russifying influences that cannot be traced to Stalin and pre-dated his political ascendancy. Unlike Stalinization, it was also the stated object of the communists themselves. Here, however, is a further ambiguity; for it was only in 1924–25 that the Comintern adopted this usage, which – like the simultaneous construction of 'Leninism' – to this extent becomes a signal of Stalinization and underlines its character as a watershed moment. Presumably with this in mind, Rojahn refers indifferently to a period of 'Bolshevization/Stalinization' dating from 1924.

Like Stalinization, however, the force of Bolshevization may conceivably have been felt even in advance of its formulation as a slogan. It is true, as Peter Huber notes here, that the working through of the Comintern's early centralizing measures took time. The problem in respect of Stalinization is that it took less time in Germany than almost anywhere else. In describing Paul Levi's exclusion from the KPD as early as 1921, Jean-François Fayet identifies a turning from which, as it transpired, there was to be no going back. Andreas Wirsching traces back still further 'Leninist principles of organization and struggle', implicating Levi himself. Both propose what Wirsching calls the KPD's 'very early Bolshevization', and Weber himself allows that a 'prehistory' of Stalinization can be dated from 1921–22. Like Brigitte Studer here, he nevertheless believes that a qualitative change in communist politics must be associated with the rise of Stalin. Much may hinge on whether this is seen as a change of direction, or one of tempo and intensity.

Ironically, Stalinization as a sort of late Bolshevization may seem more applicable to cases like Ireland and Spain than to Germany itself. As Emmet O'Connor and Gina Herrmann show, it was only in the Stalin period, and under the direction of functionaries trained at the Lenin School founded in the mid-1920s, that something like conformity to the Bolshevik model was achieved in these cases. Not with the synchronicity of one of the Comintern's lines, but proceeding from the centre outwards, Bolshevization/Stalinization may thus be seen as a centrally driven transformation of the Comintern's constituent parts, which was precociously effected in front-line Germany, to whose culture and predicament it was readily if not wisely adapted. The sense of external agency stressed by Weber may actually have been stronger in other countries to which its forms of mobilization seemed more obviously unsuited. At the same time, this meant that the ambition of Stalinization in such cases was often less than fully realized. The significance of such variations is itself a matter of judgement. Germany, almost like Russia, was central to the history of communism in a way that New Zealand, at the other extreme, clearly was not. The experience that Weber described was thus a defining one. Nevertheless, its specificity also needs to be recognized: not only in relation to the Comintern fringe, but also with respect to parties in Italy, France and Finland whose membership and electorate eventually outstripped anything seen in Weimar Germany.

Specificities of chronology, contiguity with Moscow and domestic political alignment may be highlighted. Leaving aside the question of pre-Stalinization, the correspondence of Weber's Stalinization narrative

with standard Comintern chronologies, here summarized by Peter Huber, is itself but another indication of the centrality of Germany to the Comintern's worldview. If Germany's failed October was like Europe's revolutionary swansong, occurring in the year (1923) of Lenin's final stroke, so a decade later Hitler's' accession to power proved another crucial watershed coinciding with Stalin's emerging dictatorship and precipitating the turn to the popular front. Whatever judgements are made as to precedence or intentionality, there seems no escaping the interdependence of the two chronologies.

Other communist histories, however, were shaped by national chronologies hardly even registering in the formulation of an international line. The external character of this line was perhaps especially evident in the case of movements and parties under colonial rule guided by a Eurocentric agenda of fascism and anti-fascism.[58] Nevertheless, disjunctures and discrepancies – for example, in the timing of social or political crisis and opportunity – could also generate countervailing pressures. Of these, the most basic was the experience of illegality. In Germany, the communists' especially ruthless and systematic suppression after 1933 uprooted an apparatus without a party and exposed leading cadres to the crueller subordination of Stalin's terror. This was true of other illegal communist parties, such as those in Finland and Italy. In France, Serge Wolikow has argued that it was precisely the experience of illegality that assisted the party's Stalinization following the more ambiguous period of the popular front.[59] In Finland, on the other hand, Tauno Saarela here describes how the leadership's early removal to Russia, while subjecting it more closely to Moscow's authority, at the same time undermined its authority over communists within Finland. Neither Bolshevization nor Stalinization, in this reading, can be applied to these communists in any straightforward way. In Italy, which shared Finland's experience of illegality pre-dating effective Bolshevization, Aldo Agosti recognizes the party's formal compliance with the demands of Stalinization, while similarly underlining the importance of a social and cultural milieu whose relations with the apparatus were often precarious.

Contiguity with Moscow, whether or not assisted by the experience of exile, varied widely. For reasons of size, language, strategic importance and geographical proximity, relations between Berlin and Moscow were peculiarly direct and unmediated. Though this could in theory have increased the KPD's independent political leverage, in practice the party was exposed to unremitting concern for its reliability as at once front-line transmission belt and exemplar. Like the Spanish

party during the Civil War (1936–39), the KPD was both a para-
digmatic case and a rallying point for communists internationally, and
an exceptional one, because of the intense preoccupation with it of the
Comintern and Soviet security organs. As Gina Herrmann shows, the
Spanish case has consequently figured prominently in discussions
of popular front era Stalinism.[60] Nevertheless, as Kerry Taylor and
Matthew Worley point out, not only in New Zealand but also in
Britain, the Comintern did not, for example, even have a permanent
representative stationed by the mid-1930s. In Finland, language pro-
vided an additional barrier to the reception of key texts and directives.
Where parties at the periphery played a mentoring or mediating role,
as Britain's for example did in Ireland, further possibilities existed for
tensions and misunderstandings. The close, continuous, high-profile
and prodigally resourced interaction between Berlin and Moscow in
the 1920s was not representative of the Comintern experience as a
whole.

Domestic cleavages in Weber's account of German communism were
overwhelmingly factional ones. Factionalism had always had a strong
significance for German social democracy, reflecting the weakness or
else subordination of other possible cleavages. Within the framework
of a unified and secular nation state, all was subsumed under the rubric
of class, whose structural differentiation provided the main possible
basis for communism as itself in essence a factional breakaway from
social democracy. This, however, was only one possible basis for com-
munist politics. Even in France, which like Italy experienced a split
within social democracy akin to Germany's, socialism prior to 1917
had never achieved the SPD's cohesion, and there was no comparable
sense of the primacy of party over industrial and other forms of mobil-
ization. If this gave rise to the markedly differing characteristics
described by Andreas Wirsching, the US represents a different variation
again, marked by the still weaker presence of party. In these circum-
stances, as Edward Johanningsmeier shows, the early communist party
was not really a breakaway at all, but a new organizational focus for a
cadre of predominantly industrial activists. Not faction, but a syndical-
ist 'current' thus persisted within American communism, for which no
German equivalent really existed. In listing communist leaders emerg-
ing through the Red Trade Union International, Johanningsmeier men-
tions Americans, Britons, a Frenchman – but no German.

Randi Storch, in her chapter on Chicago, shows the importance of
other forms of cleavage entirely, here notably ethnic and linguistic
difference. Where language sections provided a refuge for particularist

identities and older socialist mentalities, Bolshevization took the form of a sort of 'Americanization', even at the expense of significant organizational losses. In showing how Comintern archives can be used to illuminate grassroots communist politics, the chapter is another reminder that Stalinization is not the whole truth, even if it is nothing but the truth. This is certainly Brigitte Studer's argument in opening a window onto the rich seam of literature on communist subjectivities and the Stalinist construction of the self. Biography, Edward Johanningsmeier suggests, presents a further level of complexity; and Norman LaPorte and Kevin Morgan in their chapter show how the Stalinist cult of leadership serves at once to corroborate and to problematize the Stalinization narrative. This may indeed be thought the overall effect of the collection as a whole.

The strength of a term like Stalinization is that it conveys the sense of process; its contestability lies as much as anything in suggestions of its closure and completion. If ever the process did reach a sort of culmination, it must have been in the Cold War years, which in Russia and beyond are reasonably described as the time of 'high' Stalinism. In Germany's eastern sector, the Stalinized party now entered into its inheritance, under relations of control and subordination as clear and direct as Berlin's *Stalinallee*. Even in this period, however, the spectre of faction was rearing its head in Yugoslavia in spectacular fashion.[61] If both the German and Yugoslav parties are to be regarded as effectively Stalinized by the mid-1930s, other dynamics within communism need equal recognition by which alone these persistent variations, even at the highest level, can plausibly be explained.

Notes

1 For the former, see M. Narinsky and J. Rojahn (eds), *Centre and Periphery: The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents* (Amsterdam: IISH, 1996); S. Wolikow (ed.), *Une Histoire en révolution. Du bon usage des archives, de Moscou et d'ailleurs* (Dijon: EUD, 1996); T. Saarela and K. Rentola (eds.), *Communism: National and International* (Helsinki: SHS, 1998); T. Rees and A. Thorpe (eds), *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919–43* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); M. Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004). For the latter, see for example the *International Newsletter of Communist Studies* (http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/ projekte/ JHK-news/); the *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung*; the *Communist History Network Newsletter* (http://www.socialsciences. manchester.ac.uk/chnn/); and the continuing appearance of the journal *Communisme*, founded in the 1980s.

2 See, for example, E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930–35* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

3 S. Berger, 'Guest Editorial', *International and Comparative History: Socialist History*, 17 (2000).

4 Among the growing number of examples one might mention B. Studer, *Un parti sous influence. Le parti communiste suisse, une section du Komintern, 1931 à 1939* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1994); T. Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty, 1918–23* (Tampere: KSL, 1996); S. Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998); A. Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920–1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); G. Voerman, *De meridiaan van Moskou: de CPN en de Communistische Internationale 1919–30* (Amsterdam: Veen, 2001); E. O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia and the Communist International, 1919–43* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004); S. D. Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919–43: Dialectics of a Real and Possible History* (Calcutta: Seribaan, 2006).

5 For a judicious overview, see K. McDermott and J. Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

6 See, for example, B. Studer and B. Unfried, 'At the Beginning of History: Visions of the Comintern after the Opening of the Archives', *International Review of Social History*, 42 (1997), 419–46; K. Morgan, 'Labour with Knobs On? The Recent Historiography of the British Communist Party', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen*, 27 (2002), pp. 69–84. For more recent symposia reflecting this changing mood, see K. Morgan, G. Cohen and A. Flinn (eds.), *Agents of Revolution: New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); B. Studer and H Haumann (eds), *Stalinistische Subjekte: Individuum und System in der Sowjetunion und der Komintern 1929–53* (Zurich: Chronos, 2006).

7 L. Viola, 'The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography and the End of the Soviet Union', *Russian Review*, 61 (2002), 25–34.

8 Compare, for example, with S. G. Larsen, B. Hagtvet and J. P. Myklebust (eds.), *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980); M. Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); M. Lazar (ed.), *La Gauche en Europe depuis 1945: invariants et mutations du socialisme européen* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996); S. Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Note should also be made of a work such as D. Geary, *European Labour Protest, 1848–1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), which discusses the split between social democracy and communism in a broader long-term narrative.

9 See, for example, G. Swain, 'Wreckage of Recovery? A Tale of Two Parties', in Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution*, pp. 129–51; A. Drew, 'Bolshevizing Communist Parties: The Algerian and South African Experiences', *International Review of Social History*, 48 (2003), 167–202; N. LaPorte and M. Worley, 'Towards a Comparative History of Communism: The British and German Communist Parties to 1933', in *Contemporary British History* (forthcoming, 2008).

10 Edited by Svend Rybner, the project's findings are to be published in English in 2008. See also, for example, A. E. Upton, *The Communist Parties of Scandinavia and Finland* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973); R. J. Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957); M. Caballero, *Latin America and the Comintern, 1919–43* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

11 M. Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les Partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris: Aubier 1992). Other comparative studies include D. Blackmer and S. Tarrow (eds.), *Communism in Italy and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); B. Groppo and G. Riccamboni, *La sinistra e il '56 in Italia e in Francia* (Padua: Liviana, 1987); R. Tiersky, *Ordinary Stalinism: Democratic Centralism and the Question of Political Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985); C. Guiat, *The French and Italian Communist Parties: Comrades and Culture* (London: Cass, 2003).

12 A. Wirsching, *Vom Weltkrieg zum Bürgerkrieg? Politischer Extremismus in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1918–1933/39. Berlin und Paris im Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschftsverlag, 1999).

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14 G. Eley, 'International Communism in the Heyday of Stalin', *New Left Review*, 157 (1986), 90.

15 Weber, *Wandlung*, pp. 53–238.

16 Ibid., pp. 8–9, 232–47.

17 Weber, *Wandlung*, pp. 328–42.

18 For international perspectives, see Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution*.

19 F. Borkenau, *The Communist International* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938).

20 Important collections are C. Pennetier and B. Pudal (eds), *Autobiographies, autocritiques, aveux dans le monde communiste* (Paris: Belin, 2002); B. Studer, B. Unfried and I. Hermann (eds), *Parler de soi sous Staline*: *La construction identitaire dans le communisme des années trente* (Paris: MSH, 2002).

21 B. Studer, 'La femme nouvelle', in M. Dreyfus et al. (eds), *Le Siècle des communismes* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), pp. 381–4.

22 See Studer and Haumann, 'Enleitung'/'Introduction', in Studer and Haumann, *Stalinistische Subjekte*, pp. 9–64; for some caveats, see K. Morgan, 'New Works in the Study of Stalinism', *Communist History Network Newsletter*, 20 (2006).

23 For appraisals of the debate, see S. Koch-Baumgarten, 'Eine Wende in der Geschichtsschreibung zur KPD in der Weimarer Republik?', *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 46, 1 (1998), 82–9; N. LaPorte, *The German Communist Party in Saxony, 1924–33* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 17–38.

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28   Influential studies include D. Peukert, 'Zur Sozialgeschichte der KPD', *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 4 (1978), 29–54; U. Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Männer, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Bosch und in Solingen (1900–1933)*, (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1980); L. Heer-Kleinert, *Die Gewerkschaftspolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1983). For a fuller commentary and references, see LaPorte, *Saxon KPD*, pp. 22–30.
29   Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik,* p. 262.
30   E. D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: From Popular Protest to Socialist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). The concept of political space is also stressed in E. Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929–33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
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32   S. Macintyre, *Little Moscows: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Interwar Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); M. Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983).
33   T. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986 edition), pp. 445–82.
34   Mallmann, *Kommunisten*, pp. 84–164, 353f.
35   Ibid., p. 381, also pp. 18–54, 261–83, 294–303, 312ff.
36   Koch-Baumgarten, 'Eine Wende in der Geschichtsschreibung', 84; A. Wirsching, '"Stalinisierung" oder entideologisierte "Nischengesellschaft"? Alte Einschichten und neue Thesen zum Charakter der KPD in der Weimarer Republik', *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte*, 45 (1997), 449–66.
37   Weitz, *Creating German Communism*, p. 14.
38   Weber, *Wandlung*, p. 8.
39   Mallmann, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp. 57 and 59ff. Important earlier reference points include H-M. Bock, *Syndikalismus und Linkskommunismus von 1918–23* (Meisenheim-am-Glan: Anton Hain, 1969), pp. 137ff; S. Bahne, '"Sozialfaschismus" in Deutschland: Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffes', *International Review of Social History*, 10 (1965), 211–45; see also Weitz's critique of the anti-democratic elements in Rosa Luxemburg's thinking, *Creating German Communism,* pp. 78–99, 181–5.
40   See K. Kinner, *Der deutsche Kommunismus. Selbstverständnis und Realität* (Berlin: Dietz, 1999); Kinner et al. (eds.), *Luxemburg oder Stalin. Schaltjahr 1928. Die KPD am Scheideweg* (Berlin: Dietz, 2003).
41   W. Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1910–21* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).
42   Draper, *American Communism*; also *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking, 1957).
43   A. Kriegel, *Aux origines du Communisme français. Contribution à l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier français* 2 vols (Paris: Mouton, 1964).
44   LaPorte, *KPD in Saxony*, p. 30.
45   Draper, *American Communism*, p. 462.
46   Carr, *Twilight*, p. viii.