

## Editors' foreword

Like seemingly every other journal and research institute in the field, *Twentieth Century Communism* did not fail to mark the centenary of the October revolution. As our readers will recall, we focused more specifically in our last issue on the commemoration of October as a field of partisan contention and how its legacies were variously appropriated and repudiated by different political traditions in different countries and different periods of time. Though in many respects this appeared as part of a (communist) world we have lost, what was also very apparent during the centenary was that these controversies have by no means yet fully abated. Emerging from the fervour of a seminar room or conference hall, one could certainly be struck by the obliviousness to it all of the wider world as it wandered by. Nevertheless, in Britain at least the anniversary was marked by a variety of mainstream and establishment bodies – from the British Library and Royal Academy to the BBC – while diverse currents on the left continued to find in Bolshevism either a model or an anti-model of social and political transformation. If this was the case in Britain, with its always relatively marginal communist presence, we were interested to know how far the anniversary had been similarly assimilated, or registered in more politically sensitive ways, in countries on which the parties and regimes arising from October had had a very much greater impact.

As a follow-up to our earlier discussion, we therefore invited shorter contributions on how the centenary itself was recognised across a range of different countries. Beginning with the former USSR, and with what is still nominally the People's Republic of China, the survey also takes in countries on both sides of Europe's former Iron Curtain, as well as South Africa, where the communist party played such a significant role in the struggle against the apartheid regime. Because the significance and political character of the centenary varied so widely across these different national environments, our contributors were given full licence to offer their personal reflections on these issues, with whatever

particular emphasis seemed to them most appropriate. The scope of the contributions thus extends in some cases to works of academic scholarship, and in several cases to the meaning of the anniversary for parties within the communist tradition, like South Africa's. The feature's broader concern is nevertheless with the contested politics of memory and the centenary of October as a form of public history. We are grateful to our nine contributors for a truly fascinating set of reports and reflections, delivered according to the very tight deadlines that we had to set for the present issue.

Other articles in this issue deal more specifically with current academic understandings of communist history. *Twentieth Century Communism* has always sought to engage with the 'transnational turn' in communist history – whatever that may be taken to signify – and one of our projected themes for the near future will be an issue on transnational communism and anti-colonialism. We are therefore pleased to make available in English Sabine Dullin and Brigitte Studer's critical survey of the current literature on these themes, with our thanks to the journal *monde(s)* in which the original version appeared. We also plan a future issue on Stalin as a global figure, and in this issue publish John Callaghan discussion of the still vexed 'Stalin question', with particular reference to Stephen Kotkin's ongoing Stalin biography. Our final article presents new research on the attitudes to the Holocaust of communists in Britain, and we are always pleased to receive submissions of papers unattached to any particular themed issue, as well as offers of themed issues themselves. Full details on how to submit either will be found on the journal's website. Our next issue, meanwhile, is a thematic one on 'Red Africa' and will be published in the autumn of 2018.

*Kevin Morgan for the Editors.*