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The Rise of Communism: Theory vs. Execution

The execution of a concept is often different than the theory itself, but is it superior? By studying the rise of Communism in Russian and the USSR, the answer becomes clear. To understand the rise of Communism, we first need to understand what is meant by the term "Communism". It surprises many people, but the theory of Communism and the way it was executed were polar opposites at certain points in history. The political movement of Communism formed in 1847, with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels published a manuscript called the Communist Manifesto. The manifesto was frowned upon by many because of its harsh ideas, but welcomed by others interested in a new political system. Some of Russian and the USSR's future leaders, such as Lenin, would try and execute the ideas of the Communist Manifesto as much as possible. However, other leaders did not follow these same ideas, such as Stalin, who created his own brand of Communism. Although Communism today is largely regarded as a negative ideology, the Founding Ideas of the theory of Communism, were vastly different than the execution, in the past. The first communist powers rose under Lenin's influence in Russia, a country which later, in 1922, became a nation made up of multiple countries known as the USSR. The rise of Communism in Russian and the USSR is one of the most significant political movements in the 20th Century, not only ideologically but also how it impacted the social and economic structure of the USSR.

One of the many commandments of the Communist Manifesto was that a revolution or uprising was necessary to free the Lower class, which is exactly what happened. This revolution dramatically changed the course of all future events in the USSR. The aforementioned revolution would be The October Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and his political party the Bolsheviks. Vladimir Lenin, or Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, was born on April 22, 1870. He came from an impoverished background, which affected his motivations for the pursuit of a Communist society later in life. As a young man he became infatuated with the ideologies of Marx and his manifesto. This led to an affiliation with a political party known as the Bolsheviks, all of whom were revolutionaries strongly against the suppression of the Proletariat (working class). On October 8th, 1917, Lenin and his revolutionaries overthrew the government. The revolution ushered a new political party into power for the first time in the history of Russia and later the USSR. Lenin very much wanted to follow the ideas of Marx, which in essence were not evil. Most of the theories of the manifesto argued in favor of an equal society. He opted for a socialist dictatorship, eventually hoping to have a nation with enough excess goods and products to become fully Communist. Unfortunately, Lenin's reign brought previously unseen economical devastation. In January of 1924, Lenin passed, and stepping up to take his place was a leader the USSR was not prepared for.

The USSR experienced a enormous changed in identity after Lenin's death, which was all because of Joseph Stalin. Joseph Stalin was the polar opposite of his predecessor. He became one of the most feared men of all time and his name embodied this; Stalin means "Man of Steel." He certainly lived up to that name. Stalin operated under the guise of being a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. His ideas and how he executed them directly opposed the true ideas of Communism. He did not believe in an equal society sending many of his people to work camps, which defeated everything Lenin had strived to achieve. Stalin went against one of the basic communist principles of giving power to the lower class.

Arguably, Stalin built a nation with one of the mightiest economies, and had an almost unparalleled military. His goal was to build a strong economy, which was not a bad idea. He did this by creating work camps, mass industrialization and under-paying laborers. This led to a very negative view of Communism, because Stalin was masquerading as Communist when, in fact, everything he did while in power went against every “rule” of Communism.

The identity of the USSR was hugely changed by Lenin and Stalin. The most impacted was the economy. Lenin rose to power in 1917, one year before the end of World War I. After Lenin’s revolution, Russia drew out of World War I due to severe losses in population and resources. Immediately after that, Russia fell into a civil war, from 1918 to 1922. This almost completely destroyed the Russian economy. Two factors that are very important to remember and will help you understand this are A) the USSR, at the time, was an agrarian nation and 80% percent of the population were farmers, which led to an already unstable economy. B) Lenin was trying to follow the ideas of the Communist Manifesto and was steering away from a capitalist economy. The USSR was operating on a Free Market Economy system, which meant that the demand for supplies impacted the production of supplies, and would not be controlled by the government. The demand for supplies was high after the war and the revolution, but the USSR could not fill this need, that is where Stalin comes in. Stalin took over in 1924. His driving goal was to create a powerful society. Stalin began the mass industrialization of the USSR, which caused the economy to soar. But not for the people of the USSR themselves. Stalin was a dictator: he profited, while the people of the USSR lived miserably. The industrialization of the USSR has shaped its trades and exports even today, but it still remains a flawed economy.

We can attribute the Rise of Communism to three people: Marx, Lenin and Stalin, all of whom had significant impacts on the political, economic and social structure of the USSR.

Even just in comparing these three politically influential individuals we can observe how the theory of Communism was altered. The ideas themselves were not bad. However, they were almost impossible to execute without problems. Or, at least, they were very different than the execution. Communism provides a system that is easy to take advantage of. This is precisely what many leaders of the former USSR have done. This has had lasting impacts today, having created a corrupt political society in many nations that used to make up the USSR. Ultimately, the ideas and reigns of these three individuals shaped how the economy of the former USSR turned out. The political structure of the USSR was arguably forever changed by Lenin, Marx and Stalin, who made the political environment of places like Russia what they are today. Socially, the former USSR was altered, because there is now have a huge division in class. This difference can be observed between Communists, Socialists, Marxists and Leninists, supporters of Stalin, and now, the current president, Putin. This has created a unique collection of countries. What if it had been done differently? Would it have turned out better? Can the theory of Communism create an equal society? Will there ever be a functioning Communist society?

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