

As you read
Rise? Fall of
Communism,

Theme 5: Development and Transformation of Social Structures

Communist parties everywhere set out to construct socialist societies once they gained power. This meant, first of all, modernizing and industrializing, attacking long-standing inequalities of class and gender, and preventing the creation of new inequalities during the process of modern development. Mass organizations for women, workers, students, and various professional groups operated under strict party control. Global industrialization fostered a conflicting set of social outcomes: rapid urbanization, exploitation of the countryside to provide resources for modern industry in the cities, and the growth of a privileged bureaucratic and technological elite intent on pursuing their own careers and passing on their new status to their children. Thus, communist efforts to permanently eliminate differences between classes and between urban and rural life largely failed.

ANSWER

Communist regimes also made major efforts to liberate, educate, and mobilize women. The communist states initially declared full legal and political equality for women, including the following measures:

- Marriage became a civil procedure among freely consenting adults.
- Divorce was legalized and easier to obtain.
- Abortion was legalized.
- Illegitimacy was abolished.

Women were also actively mobilized as workers in the drive for industrialization. However, in neither the Soviet Union nor China did the Communist Party undertake a direct attack on male domination within the family. Thus, most women continued to be afflicted with the double burden of housework and child care (without many of the labor-saving devices available to their capitalist sisters) as well as work outside the home – whether in factories or on rural collective farms. Moreover, women rarely achieved the top leadership positions in either country.

Guided Reading Questions for Chapter 21

Seeking the Main Point What was the appeal of communism, both in terms of its promises and its achievements? To what extent did promises match achievements? (Page 930)

Description When and where did communism exercise influence during the twentieth century? (Page 930) p. 1030

Comparison Identify the major differences between the Russian and Chinese revolutions. (Page 933) p. 1032
make a chart

Change Why were the Bolsheviks able to ride the Russian Revolution to power? (Page 935) p. 1033

ANSWER on separate sheet as POR.

Change What was the appeal of communism in China before 1949? (~~Page 937~~) p. 1035

Change What changes did communist regimes bring to the lives of women? (~~Page 941~~) p. 1039

Comparison How did the collectivization of agriculture differ between the USSR and China? (~~Page 942~~) p. 1040

Change What were the achievements of communist efforts at industrialization? What problems did these achievements generate? (~~Page 943~~) p. 1041

Explanation Why did communist regimes generate terror and violence on such a massive scale? (~~Page 946~~) p. 1044

Practicing AP® Historical Thinking How did the Soviet Union and China differ in terms of the revolutions that brought communists to power and in the construction of socialist societies? What commonalities are also apparent? (~~Page 947~~)

Connection In what different ways was the cold war expressed? (~~Page 949~~) p. 1045

Connection In what ways did the United States play a global role after World War II? (~~Page 953~~) p. 1048

Description What were the strengths and weaknesses of the communist world by the 1970s? (~~Page 955~~) p. 1049

Change What explains the rapid end of the communist era? (~~Page 958~~) p. 1051

Comparison How did the end of communism in the Soviet Union differ from communism's demise in China? (~~Page 961~~) p. 1054

denial of basic democratic rights, or an opening to capitalist inequalities, corruption, and acquisitiveness? Passionate debate continues on all of these questions.

Communism, like many human projects, has been an ambiguous enterprise. On the one hand, communism brought hope to millions by addressing the manifest injustices of the past; by providing new opportunities for women, workers, and peasants; by promoting rapid industrial development; and by ending Western domination. On the other hand, communism was responsible for mountains of crimes—millions killed and wrongly imprisoned; massive famines partly caused by radical policies; human rights violated on an enormous scale; lives uprooted and distorted by efforts to achieve the impossible.

Studying communism challenges our inclination to want definitive answers and clear moral judgments. Can we hold contradictory elements in some kind of tension? Can we affirm our own values while acknowledging the ambiguities of life, both past and present? Doing so is arguably among the essential tasks of growing up and achieving a measure of intellectual maturity. That is the gift, both painful and enormously enriching, that the study of history offers to us all.

Second Thoughts

What's the Significance?

Russian Revolution (1917)	Stalin	Nikita Khrushchev
Bolsheviks/Lenin	Zhenotdel	Mikhail Gorbachev
Guomindang	collectivization	Deng Xiaoping
Chinese Revolution	Cultural Revolution	perestroika/glasnost
Mao Zedong	Great Purges/Terror	
building socialism	Cuban missile crisis	

Big Picture Questions

Should be done as a POR.

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