

History 101 - Communism



I'm a history nerd. I've been known to watch obscure docudramas about Grover Cleveland, the War of 1812, and Martin Luther King, Jr. all night long. Talk about boring.

I get that most people, from Boomers to GenZ and everyone in between, are not as obsessed as I am about the life and times of people who lived decades or centuries ago. However, some basic historical knowledge is required to understand current events.

Mark Twain argued, "History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme." A basic knowledge of history gives a person context and awareness, a foundation and lens to use to understand current events. That's why history is taught in public schools. Or at least that's why it was taught in public schools until the last couple of decades.

What's new about GenZ is that many believe studying the past has little value. They do not see history as a source of wisdom or reliable information. I'm baffled by how this sad, very dangerous, arbitrary dismissal of history came to be. But let's leave that discussion for another time.

Young people today are entranced by the idea of Communism and Socialism. Roughly 30% to 40% of GenZ view Communism and Socialism positively. Communism sounds "fair" and "just" and somehow "right." It just sounds good to them; it resonates on an emotional level.

Conversely, people under thirty are not favorably disposed to Capitalism, the economic system they live in. This is a significant shift in perception from generations before, especially from Boomers who lived through the Cold War and decades of threats from the "Red Menace."

I recommend everyone read Karl Marx's classic, *The Communist Manifesto*. Written in 1848, it describes the horrible conditions workers suffered through as the Industrial Revolution transformed societies. Class struggle was (and still is) very real. Much like Bernie Sanders of today, Marx correctly identified and

marvelously described the problem, but his “solution,” collectivism, led to human suffering on an unprecedented scale.

A positive offshoot of Marx’s work was the establishment of labor unions in the late 19th and early 20th century. Labor has every right to collectively bargain with management for improved working conditions, wages, and benefits. While the history of labor unions is a mixed bag in the United States, when they “stick to their knitting” and focus on increasing their members’ well-being, unions are a positive and much needed, force in our economy.

The negative result of Marx’s theory was the establishment of communist regimes in Russia, China, and elsewhere. I spent time in Russia in the early 1990s, just after the Soviet Union collapsed. People who lived through the Soviet nightmare from 1918 through 1987 will tell you that Communism is an inherently evil system.

Here are the historical facts. In Russia, from 1918 through 1987, over 60,000,000 people were murdered by the Soviet Regime. Something close to 40,000,000 people were slaughtered by the Chinese communists. That’s 100,000,000 souls killed by the two largest communist countries in about a century.

Why were these people killed? For the most part, because they resisted collectivism in one way or another. Communism does not allow for a variety of thought or the competition of ideas. An elite ruling class, those in charge of the communist state, dictate what is allowed to be spoken, where you work and live, what music you can listen to, and so on. Resist, and you become an enemy of the state; the penalty for that is often death.

How many GenZers know about Communism’s track record? Do they have any idea how brutal communists are to their populace? If you think Big Pharma, Google, Facebook, Wall Street, BlackRock, and all the capitalist megacorps are bloated and abusive (you’re right they are), they aren’t even in the same league with communist regimes when it comes to human cruelty.

Why are misguided souls drawn to domestic terrorist groups like Antifa? There are probably many reasons, but one is a lack of historical perspective. It’s cool to be woke, to rail against the oppressors, tear down statues and demand reparations for chattel slavery, which ended over 150 years ago.

But how many of these misguided kids would trade their lives for someone born in Russia in 1960? Do they realize what they are advocating? Cynically, perhaps some of them do. They want to be in charge, to decide who lives and who dies. Communism, in the end, is about the power of the state. If you’re in control, life is good. If not, you’re screwed.

We already live in a socialist state, or at least in a “mixed economy.” Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, and food stamps are programs that help ordinary people get through old age and tough economic times. Corporations also benefit from government largesse – on a scale that dwarfs the imagination.

So, the question is not whether we should have social programs to benefit society – we do. The question is, would a system of total state economic and cultural control benefit humanity? Even if well-intentioned, would it work?

A hundred million dead people will tell you it does not work.

But a GenZer would argue, "Communism has never been done the right way. We can safely ignore history because everything will be okay when we are in charge."

Me, well, I've been around the block (several times). The truth is that human beings aren't that different than they were 500, 100, or 50 years ago. So, if Communism failed in the 20th century, it would undoubtedly fail in the 21st century.

Communism sucks, GenZers. Google it.