

College Unbound!: The MRC's Liberty Learning Program

"Saving Liberty Requires Knowledge of Its Enemy"



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Series 1: Marxism-Collectivism

Episode 10: Leftist Mythology vs Reality: The Deadly Legacy of Marxism, Socialism, and Collectivism

Teaching Text

One needs to lay down intellectual stepping stones as we explore the hellish landscape created by people who embraced or espoused Marxism and collectivism.

The first stone is that this is a brief, but frightening and brutal, tour. As such, one must bear in mind that each of these real dystopian lands could be the subject of an investigation of its own. Then, each of *those* could be turned into thousands, hundreds of thousands, or *tens of millions* of personal memorials about the tortured, crushed, raped, robbed, murdered, or threatened innocents who became targets of the collectivists. We should firmly grip the awareness that all of these digits—all of these *statistics*—represent *people*, young and old, whose fates and hopes were crushed by collectivism.

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We best can begin this dark voyage into reality by acknowledging the fact that, long before the fecal appellations of “fake news” were thrown around by contemporary news propagandists who seem to attack anyone with an individualist will, the battle for truth about collectivist nations raged.

That compels one to acknowledge and praise the courageous western journalists and professors who told the *truth* about many of the nightmare nations. Foremost among them, is 20th Century British-American writer and poet Robert Conquest.

Ridiculed and reviled by tiny-minded media apologists for collectivism, Conquest stood tall, and ceaselessly reported the truth. As the Jacobin-clone jackals bit at his heels, he remained steadfast, pointing a rigidly accusatory finger at the collectivist criminals, their horrific crimes, and those apologists who constantly hid the truth or claimed his investigatory revelations weren't real.

They were real, and it's time for us to see some of what he chronicled.

For each of these countries, we'll split the troubles into:

- A. Terror and tyranny
- B. Economic deprivation, depression, hardship, famine, starvation, and death

But, as we learned earlier in our series, we have to remember that the political, tyrannical, actions are interwoven with the negative *economic* effects, and that, in the West, people suffer from softer forms of political collectivism that retard and harm their lives, their living standards, and liberty, even as Americans suffer under the delusion that they live in what still could be called “the land of the free.”

With that as context, we dive into world history, starting with the biggie, the Soviet Union.

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For decades, as Conquest tried to sound the alarm about the atrocities that generations of communist Soviet rulers were committing. Leftist intellectuals and media “elites,” such as the progressives’ darling I.F. Stone (the American so-called “journalist” ([later revealed to have been a Soviet-paid propagandist-spy](#))). Stone denied this accusation, telling Americans that such claims were the lies of conservative “fascists,” while never acknowledging that their own beloved left-collectivism was the sibling of fascism—both of which were scions of Marxist ideology.

After the 1989-1991 collapse of the USSR, when writers such as Conquest were proven right, when Stone was revealed to be a Soviet liar, and when the brutal despotism of Soviet Marxism became undeniable, one of the new great canards promulgated by western leftists was that the USSR was a tyrannical hellhole and economic basket-case—but that wasn’t “real communism” or “real socialism.”

For wider reference, take a look at the excellent two-part video productions John Stossel has done on this topic, and, as a way to whet your appetite for the great truths therein, we refer you to Stossel’s guest: [economist, author, and economics professor at Texas Tech’s Rawls College of Business, Benjamin Powell](#). When confronted by claims by leftist professor and author Noam Chomsky that the USSR was “about as remote from socialism as you could imagine,” Powell laid out the clear and devastating truth, observing:

“It’s absurd to say that the Soviet Union was ‘remote from socialism.’”

When the Bolsheviks under Lenin made private commercial exchange illegal, notes Powell:

“That’s about as close as the world ever saw to the pure socialist end of the spectrum.”

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Which is absolutely right. In fact, we sat down with Powell to expand on his world-ranging observations, many of which are spelled out in his book, “[Socialism Sucks](#)”, co-written with Professor Robert Lawson, of Southern Methodist University, and we’ll have more from Professor Powell in this lesson.

Right now, let’s explore the terror and tyranny employed when, in 1917, devoted Marxists, [with the financial backing of leftist-collectivists from the West](#), wiped out the provisional government that had replaced Russian Tsarist control.

On the *very day* that Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein), and their mob of Marxist Bolsheviks took power in Moscow (October 25, 1917), party bloc thugs also seized the printing press facilities of “Russkaia Volia” and many more. This was along with the October 28 Council of People’s Commissars edict banning so-called Bourgeoisie publications, which read, in part:

“Every one (sic) knows that the bourgeois press is one of the most powerful weapons of the bourgeoisie. Especially at the crucial moment when the new power, the power of workers and peasants, is only affirming itself, it was impossible to leave this weapon in the hands of the enemy, for in such moments it is no less dangerous than bombs and machine guns...”

Does that sound reminiscent of what [many contemporary US political leftists have said about free speech online?](#)

[Sure does.](#)

The Marxists also said:

“As soon as the new order becomes consolidated, all administrative pressure on the press will be terminated and it will be granted complete freedom within the bounds of

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legal responsibility, in keeping with a law that will be broadest and most progressive in this respect.”

Isn't that quaint? Indeed, a word-salad claiming that the armed closure of newspapers is “administrative pressure,” that “freedom” is something that the government “grants,” and to apply the typically exposing caveat of “within the bounds of legal responsibility.” All of this is said legality dictated by the state.

Is it any wonder that freedom of speech never returned to the USSR until the hammer and sickle flag fell on December 25, 1991?

Then there was the almost instantaneous Soviet collectivist seizure of firearms, [recounted by Nikolay Shevchenko, and printed in 2017 by *Russia Beyond the Headlines*:](#)

“In 1918, the Bolsheviks initiated a large scale confiscation of civilian firearms, outlawing their possession and threatening up to 10 years in prison for concealing a gun.”

And he added:

“The only exception was made for hunters, who were allowed to possess smoothbore weapons. Gun licenses, however, were strictly regulated and only issued by the NKVD, the police organization known for its role in Joseph Stalin's political purges.”

Ahh, yes, the NKVD, offspring of Lenin's original terror force, the Cheka, (aka “All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution and Sabotage”) the secret police tasked with “protecting the people's revolution,” given unlimited power to wipe-out those innocents termed “domestic, anti-government terrorists.”

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Does [that kind of rhetoric sound vaguely familiar, Americans?](#)

Well, after October, 1917 in Russia, Lenin used it a lot. Indeed, despite the years and thousands of leftists U.S. propagandists who lied claiming that the U.S.S.R. murder state was not a logical outgrowth of Marxism, and despite all those Western leftists who've lied claiming that the decades of terror and death weren't started with Lenin, he was, in fact, the man behind it.

Formed by Lenin's own decree in December, 1917, the [Cheka](#), popularly known as the “Sword and Shield of the Revolution” was granted the power to arbitrarily arrest and kill on sight. It grew from approximately 200 to over 100,000 members in just three years, all to “protect the state”—which, the rulers of the state plitudinously claimed (and still claim, in virtually every nation, where the claim is also, and alway, false) represented ‘the people/workers.’ Under its first iron-fisted, bloodthirsty, sinister leader, Felix Dzerzhinski, the Cheka became the model for the Nazi Gestapo, Germany's collectivist “National Socialist” secret police, which, of course, was tasked with providing, “Homeland Security.”

Writing for the Mises Institute, Scottish historian Antony Sammeroff notes:

“Lenin did not have to satisfy himself with assassinating the character of those who opposed him. As dictator he could wipe his opponents out, literally. Workers demonstrated against Lenin in Petrograd and [their leaders were shot by the Soviet police](#). Thousands of sailors who were former supporters of Lenin were massacred by the Red Army [for revolting in Kronstradt](#). Estimates of how many were killed by the Bolsheviks after the beginning of the Russian Civil War in 1918 range from ten thousand⁹ to over [ten times that number](#). Lenin's army used chemical weapons on farmers who resisted the confiscation of the grain they had grown in the Tambov Rebellion of 1920–21, where around one hundred thousand peasants were arrested and [fifteen thousand shot dead](#).”

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These are just a fraction of the innocent souls who would perish in Lenin's [Red Terror](#), a five-year campaign of terror, arrest, firing squads, imprisonment in work camps, destruction of homes, farms, and businesses, and outright mass murder that was created, instituted, and aptly named by Lenin.

Starting [in September, 1918, and running through much of 1922](#), the Red Terror was carried out under the command of Felix Dzerzhinski, his Cheka, and units of the Red Army, for, [as Dzerzhinski said at the time](#):

"Our Revolution is in serious danger. We tolerate too good-naturedly what is transpiring around us. The forces of our enemies are organizing. The counter-revolutionaries are at work and are organizing their groups in various sections of the country. The enemy is encamped in Petrograd, at our very hearth! We have indisputable evidence of this and we must send to this front the most stern, energetic, hearty and loyal comrades who are ready to do all to defend the attainments of our Revolution. Do not think that I am on the look-out for forms of revolutionary justice. We have no need for justice now. Now we have need of a battle to the death! I propose, I demand, the initiation of the Revolutionary sword which will put an end to all counter-revolutionists."

This "murder as justice" mentality started prior to the Revolution, in July of 1917, with [the assassination of then-imprisoned Tsar Nicholas II and his Romanov family on orders by Lenin](#), and it ran through Soviet history until 1991. In fact, shortly after the "people's revolution," in November of 1917, Lenin issued a decree dissolving all courts. Why bother with true justice and peace, with voluntary interaction and free will, when Marxist-collectivist so-called "justice" embraces envy, theft, control, aggression, and the purge of any and all non-conformists and undesirables who might stand against the collective?

As [Erin Blakemore writes for National Geographic](#):

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“We are not waging war against individual persons,’ said Cheka leader Martyn Latsis. ‘We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class.’ He [encouraged](#) his fellow Cheka members to lash out at people suspected of being sympathetic to the bourgeoisie instead of looking for evidence they had actually acted against the Soviets. Within months, the Cheka executed [at least](#) 10,000 people. Thousands more were placed in [camps](#) that were liquidated in frequent massacres. The death toll of the Red Terror may have been much larger—by [some accounts](#), up to 1.3 million may have been its victims. However, due to secrecy, censorship, and the summary nature of many of the executions, the [true extent](#) of the Red Terror will likely never be known.”

This episode of *College Unbound!* is not a discourse solely on Lenin, but, as we heard Benjamin Powell note, and despite Western apologists’ decades of denial, this is the true outcome of Marxism-collectivism instituted by Lenin and his partners at the time, Trotsky and Stalin. It was Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin—driven by Marxism-collectivism—who shut down free speech, who confiscated arms, who thought of and started the terror. It was Trotsky who dreamed-up, and Lenin who established the vast network of prison and Soviet slave labor camps described from first-hand experience [by Russian dissident writer Alexandr Solzhenitsyn](#)—the Gulag.

An Anglicanized acronym for Glavnoe Upravlenie Ispravitel 'noTrudovykh Lagerei, [the Gulag system grew like fungus across Russia](#), aka the newly named “Soviet Union” and the Captive Nations it attacked and absorbed, even seeing Soviet communists take over monasteries to fill them with prisoners and wring slave labor from them.

Literally, Lenin and his line of successors turned monasteries into murderous slave plantations. And it was Lenin’s crew that started it. [As author Richard Pipes noted in 2014:](#)

“...(T)he empire of concentration camps which Solzhenitsyn labeled the ‘Gulag Archipelago’ was the work not of Joseph Stalin, to whom it is usually attributed, but of

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Lenin and Trotsky. The first camps were established as early as 1918, during the Civil War. They were gradually expanded until by the early 1920's they numbered in the hundreds.”

And, as the [U.S. National Park Service observes](#):

“Beginning from its inception as one political prison, the former Solovetsky monastery, the Gulag grew to encompass dozens of major camp complexes with thousands of individual camps and millions of inmates.

- *The camp population grew from 179,000 in 1929 to 2,468,524 in 1953 (reaching its height in 1950 with 2,525,146 inmates).*

- *Perhaps 18 million persons in total were incarcerated in the Gulag in this period.*

- *While numbers are sketchy, of the much larger number of gulag inmates plus exiled “special settlers” and labor colonists (often youth detention facilities) that totaled 26 million in these years, perhaps 1.5 million perished.”*

And not only were there at least that many who were killed by Soviet collectivism *in* the Gulag, there were countless more innocent, God-given, lives extinguished by the forced marches and migrations of [prisoners headed to the Gulag](#).

One of the most important and educational texts about this horrific experience can be found in the book, [“The Long Walk,”](#) by Slavomir Rawicz. Rawicz, who was taken from Soviet-Occupied Poland and sent to Gulag in Siberia, then, teaming-up with two other prisoners in 1941, escaped, and walked 4,000 miles across Siberia, through China, the Gobi Desert, Tibet, and over the Himalayan Mountains to be free and reach India.

In the opening sections of the book, Rawicz recounts many of the horrific crimes he and others suffered on the journey *to* the camp, and I would like to offer part of his account of it, traveling over 1,000 miles in one of many rail boxcars, packed with other helpless,

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innocent men who had been captured and deemed disposable by collectivist ideology. This coming *before* he and the survivors of the rail trek were forced to march another 1,000 miles for over a month into winter-frozen Siberia.

Of the rail torment, on page 30, Rawicz writes:

“Towards the end of the first week, our sixty men (in their boxcar) had organized itself with rough community rules. A rota system was started to enable everyone to enjoy the close-packed body warmth of the middle of the truck (boxcar). Everyone in turn experienced the numbing cold of the truck walls. It was getting colder and colder, and those perimeter positions were grim.”

Later, he recounts:

“There were men, like me, who determined not to die. There were the others in whom the spark of hope had been almost crushed when they were first herded into these traveling coffins. They died without a whisper in the long nights when their turn came to stand out of the warmth of the ruck. They died standing, and we did not know they were dead until the door opened in the light of morning.”

Once locked into the Gulag, the inmates were called “zeks” often forced to build their own wooden sleeping shacks, and forced to labor for the collective.

The US Park Service offers a strong overview of the expansive evil:

“The inmates or “zeks” of the Gulag consisted of common criminals, political prisoners and simple citizens caught up in the government’s various “waves” of repression.

• Despite large numbers of political incarcerations by the secret police in this period (for instance, over 1.5 million were sent to the Gulag in the 1930s for “counter revolution”), the vast majority of inmates were incarcerated under non-political criteria

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(such as the draconian laws concerning “labor desertion” and “theft of socialist property”).

- *Some of the “crimes” that landed one in the Gulag included unexcused absences from work, petty theft, conveying an anti-government joke or being a prisoner of war.*

- *Gulag prisoners when released were often restricted to residency ‘in the zone’ (the camp complex) and were forced to continue working as ‘free laborers’ on much the same work they did as prisoners. The Gulag evolved into an economic empire as much as a network of forced-labor prisons (at its height, one in every fifty Soviet workers was a zek).”*

Recall [Plank Eight of Marx’s Manifesto](#), “Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture,” for this is the direct application of it. In the US, the force is applied through the extortion of taxes, fascistic regulatory edicts and threats of imprisonment for those who don’t comply, while in the USSR, the government went for direct enslavement.

Here’s more, from the Park Service:

- *Zeks were used as nearly dehumanized slave labor and toiled on such large scale projects as canal and railroad construction, gold mining, logging, the Soviet atomic project and myriad other tasks.*

- *The great camp complexes of Karaganda, Kolyma, Norilsk acted as mechanisms of forced colonization to open the Soviet Union’s frozen north and empty steppes.*

- *The forced labor of elite scientists in the so-called sharashkas or prison laboratories produced technological innovations, especially weaponry (Sergei Korolev, the father of the Soviet space program. was probably the most famous of the sharashka scientists).”*

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While the government-created terror escalated, and freedom declined, the economic consequences of the tyranny and bureaucratic central planning began to grow.

As George Mason University professor of Economics and Philosophy [Peter Boettke](#) writes in his book, [“The Four Pillars of Economic Understanding,”](#) by the time Lenin, Trotsky, and their Marxist Central Committee ally and *Pravda* writer [Nikolai Bukharin](#) thought to adjust their terroristic central plans, it was too late to save the economy. Boettke notes on page 75 that Bukharin authored what was called the “New Economic Policy” (1921-1928), or NEP, a series of proposed drawbacks of state planning and controls, and the reallocation of a small amount of property ownership and market exchange.

“As he (Bukharin) wrote in 1924, “The adoption of NEP was a collapse of our illusions. We thought then that our peacetime policy would be a continuation of the centralized planning system of that period.””

And Boettke goes on to observe:

“In perhaps his most famous essay of this period, ‘Concerning the New Economic Policy and our Tasks,’ written in 1925, besides encouraging the peasants to “enrich themselves,” Bukharin explicitly acknowledge Ludwig von Mises’s (free market) criticism of socialist planning and argued that Mises was ‘one of the most learned critics of communism.’ Bukharin went so far as to admit that Mises’s criticism of communism was correct -- at least for the historical epoch in which he wrote.”

But it was not to be. Lenin, Trotsky, and Bukharin would soon be dead, and Stalin would control the bureaucratic collectivist state they had imposed.

The results were even more nightmarish than what already had been visited upon the people of Russia and its growing circle of prisoner satellite states.

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They included the state-created famine in Ukraine, and the extermination of those called Kulaks.

As The History Place explains, after Lenin's weak attempts to allow for Ukrainians to recoup some of their stolen cultural and economic liberty.

"(W)hen Lenin died in 1924, he was succeeded by Joseph Stalin, one of the most ruthless humans ever to hold power. To Stalin, the burgeoning national revival movement and continuing loss of Soviet influence in the Ukraine was completely unacceptable. To crush the people's free spirit, he began to employ the same methods he had successfully used within the Soviet Union. Thus, beginning in 1929, over 5,000 Ukrainian scholars, scientists, cultural and religious leaders were arrested after being falsely accused of plotting an armed revolt. Those arrested were either shot without a trial or deported to prison camps in remote areas of Russia."

And as the pathological "Uncle Joe" filled more Gulags with more prisoners...

"Stalin also imposed the Soviet system of land management known as collectivization. This resulted in the seizure of all privately owned farmlands and livestock, in a country where 80 percent of the people were traditional village farmers. Among those farmers, were a class of people called Kulaks by the Communists. They were formerly wealthy farmers that had owned 24 or more acres, or had employed farm workers. Stalin believed any future insurrection would be led by the Kulaks, thus he proclaimed a policy aimed at 'liquidating the Kulaks as a class.'"

Because, of course, people who "have more" obviously are exploiters, capitalists, and enemies of the envious who adore Marxism.

"Declared 'enemies of the people,' the Kulaks were left homeless and without a single possession as everything was taken from them, even their pots and pans. It was also

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forbidden by law for anyone to aid dispossessed Kulak families. Some researchers estimate that ten million persons were thrown out of their homes, put on railroad box cars and deported to "special settlements" in the wilderness of Siberia during this era, with up to a third of them perishing amid the frigid living conditions. Men and older boys, along with childless women and unmarried girls, also became slave-workers in Soviet-run mines and big industrial projects.”

After all, the state will make the right decisions. The state will force people to work—and that’ll be great, just as Marx said.

“Back in the Ukraine, once-proud village farmers were by now reduced to the level of rural factory workers on large collective farms. Anyone refusing to participate in the compulsory collectivization system was simply denounced as a Kulak and deported.”

Those are just a few facts about the black history of Soviet Marxism-collectivism, as its goals to make everyone somehow economically “equal” saw the elimination of freedom, the death of subjective valuation, personal market choice, properly functioning division of labor, and peaceful market resource allocation and productivity. In order to “make people equal”, its state operators created a nightmare world of threats, robbery, arrest, murder, and famine. As collectivism doesn’t allow for proper resource discovery and market competition to make resources easier to afford, it sees resources as increasingly limited, places them under political control, and invades other nations to plunder them. Like a violent drug addict who can’t hold his own job, the collectivist nation-state must engage in more and more theft. [“The Black Book of Communism”](#) estimates upwards of 20 million people killed by Soviet Marxists.

Former [University of Hawaii professor RJ Rummel’s analysis](#) places the number much higher:

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“Probably 61,911,000 people, 54,769,000 of them citizens, have been murdered by the Communist Party—the government—of the Soviet Union.”

But that was just the beginning for the 20th Century collectivist harvest of death.

In China, the communists who had fomented to take control since the 1920s [seized power in Beijing under Mao Zedong starting in 1949](#), and, immediately, the terror, prepression, and starvation began.

Nationalist leader Chaing Kai-Shek [fled to the island of Taiwan](#) (fka Formosa) and was followed by as many of his supporters as could escape. Dissidents were arrested or shot. In 1953, so-called “Chairman Mao,” now head of the communist party and state, officially instituted his first so-called “Five-Year Plan,” a series of edicts that eliminated privately owned businesses, and instituted collectivization of Chinese agriculture. Writes [Lauren Ream](#):

“By 1956, 67.5 percent of all modern industrial enterprises were state-owned, and 32.5 percent were under joint public-private ownership. No privately-owned firms remained.”

The situation was similar for agriculture, by 1957, about 93.5 percent of all farm households were under state control, with former so-called “wealthy” owners killed or arrested and moved to other types of labor, while, similar to the moves made by Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin, the Chinese government placed people who had no agricultural skills or knowledge in charge of the farms.

The results were inevitable, and mirrored the Ukrainian/Kulak tragedy: years of starvation and death now known as The Great Famine. Of this 1958/59-1961 nightmare, [The Guardian's Tania Branigan wrote in 2013](#):

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"In an unremarkable city in central Henan province, more than a million people – one in eight – are wiped out by starvation and brutality over three short years. In one area, officials commandeer more grain than the farmers have actually grown. In barely nine months, more than 12,000 people – a third of the inhabitants – die in a single commune; a tenth of its households are wiped out. Thirteen children beg officials for food and are dragged deep into the mountains, where they die from exposure and starvation. A teenage orphan kills and eats her four-year-old brother. Forty-four of a village's 45 inhabitants die; the last remaining resident, a woman in her 60s, goes insane. Others are tortured, beaten or buried alive for declaring realistic harvests, refusing to hand over what little food they have, stealing scraps or simply angering officials."

The darkness, the abyss, of collectivism.

"When the head of a production brigade dares to state the obvious – that there is no food – a leader warns him: "That's right-deviationist thinking. You're viewing the problem in an overly simplistic (manner)."

When those horror stories are aggregated, as Branigan notes, "in his acclaimed book Mao's Great Famine, Frank Dikotter estimates that the (death) toll reached at least 45 million."

This first phase of the Maoist terror regime continued with his so-called "Great Leap Forward" also known as the "Second Five Year Plan," begun in 1958. Mao slightly pulled back central collectivist control of agriculture [in 1960, but reversed course in 1962](#), and, by 1966, he ramped-up the centralization and terror with what was called "The Cultural Revolution" (known in full as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution). As [History.com observes](#):

"(I)n August 1966, at a meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee. He (Mao) shut down the nation's schools, calling for a massive youth mobilization to take current party

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leaders to task for their embrace of bourgeois values and lack of revolutionary spirit. In the months that followed, the movement escalated quickly as the students formed paramilitary groups called the Red Guards and attacked and harassed members of China’s elderly and intellectual population... The population was urged to rid itself of the ‘Four Olds’: Old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas.”

All told, analysts working on “The Black Book of Communism” estimate that from 1949 to 1999, the number of casualties wiped out by Marxist Chinese collectivism is approximately 60 million.

Oh, and that title, “Great Leap Forward”—that also was adopted by Mao’s protege, [Pol Pot, the Marxist tyrant of Cambodia and head of the communist Khmer Rouge in Cambodia](#), which, from 1975 to 1979, wiped out private property in business, purged religion, and exterminated the so-called “educated.”

As [The BBC notes](#):

“Declaring that the nation would start again at ‘Year Zero,’ Pol Pot isolated his people from the rest of the world and set about emptying the cities, abolishing money, private property and religion, and setting up rural collectives.

Anyone thought to be an intellectual of any sort was killed. Often people were condemned for wearing glasses or knowing a foreign language. Ethnic Vietnamese and Cham Muslims in Cambodia were also targeted.”

All told, best estimates of the [death toll from Cambodian communism rose to 2 million](#).

Great Leaps Forward in slaughter and oppression, especially of belief in God. One of the key themes for all of the major collectivist murder nations is the government attack on the free practice of religion, be it the crushing of Polish Christians, the suppression of

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the Russian Orthodox Church, one of the purest forms of Christianity going back to the days of the Apostles, or numerous kinds of religious practice in China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and other socialist states. The collectivists see it as imperative that they stamp out religion, particularly Christianity, because it reveals that there is a higher moral order, a Natural Law, and that the state is not man’s master.

As a perfect example of this, I’d like to return to our conversation with broadcaster David Knight, whose family adopted a child from China, and who saw the stark difference between Chinese authoritarian collectivism and liberty as they traveled by train from China to relatively free Hong Kong.

“I could tell when we got into Hong Kong. You know how I could tell? We started seeing crosses. And for the first time, I realized, ‘Ya know, for the last two weeks, we haven’t seen any churches, or any crosses.”

He adds, “There’s a very big church, but it’s underground, in China. A very big church. There are probably a lot more Christians in China than there are in America, and they’re a lot more hardcore, because they’re serious about it... There’s real stakes involved there.”

The cultural, religious repression marches hand in hand with the economic depression for all but the collectivist controllers.

Take North Korea, for example. Since the Soviet-backed establishment of the North Korean collectivist regime in 1945, more than [3.5 million people have been wiped out through murder and forced starvation](#). Death camps, surveillance, torture, arbitrary arrest, and central control of economic activity rule, and the results are visible, despite the long line of authoritarians who’ve tried to hide them. As [National Geographic notes](#), nighttime satellite photos of North and South Korea show the stark difference between a collectivist “for the people” centrally-planned economy in the north and a much freer

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economy to the south. South Korea is lit like a Christmas tree, while the north is dark, energy deficient, and nearly black. Ben Powell offers an economist's view to us at *College Unbound!*:

“When it comes to comparing the difference between socialist and capitalist economic systems, there's probably no better natural experiment in the world than the Korean Peninsula. You have a place with, essentially, one geography, one history, one culture, one language—a place that was, pre-industrial in both the north and the south at the end of the Korean War—where one of them eventually adopts a capitalist economic system, and the other, a socialist economic system. And we see a massive divergence in living standards there, where, in South Korea today, you have per capita incomes over \$40,000, long life expectancy, great literacy... In North Korea you have starvation... Income statistics in socialist countries are, basically, made up, but, ballpark, somewhere under \$2,000 per capita. And a place that, when Soviet aid went away in the '90s, thousands upon thousands of people died of starvation.”

Again, as we stress, the collectivist attack on liberty cannot be decoupled from the disastrous effects that a lack of liberty visits on economic well being. As Professor Powell adds:

“It's an economy that can't feed itself. It illustrates all of the problems of the centrally planned economy—in terms of mobilizing information, in terms of incentivizing production, and in terms of just caring about the people. It IS real socialism, as in state ownership and control over the main factors of production.”

Refugees have fled, in their millions, year after year, from North Korea, from Vietnam, where, [according to RJ Rummel](#), the death toll from collectivism lies roughly at 3.8 million, to Cuba, which, upon the Soviet-backed communist Castro regime taking power, seems to have lodged itself in the 1950s.

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That’s Cuba, once a vacation paradise, now a place where communist control has decimated the economy and living standards of residents, and seen upwards of [1.3 million people flee to the US as of 2018](#). A place where NBC’s unreliable [Brian Williams in 2016 claimed](#) that many residents transport themselves and parcels on donkey carts because they *like to*.

“It’s still one of those nations where you see donkey carts alongside cars, trucks and buses in downtown Havana because that’s exactly what they’d rather have for transportation.”

Then there’s Venezuela, which saw Hugo Chavez nationalize industry after industry, including the nation’s biggest, oil drilling and exportation. As Professor Powell observes, Hugo Chavez was not installed as a communist dictator via bullets, he was elected, via the ballot box, perfectly embodying the Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez form of so-called “democratic socialism.”

“The world does have an example of something that starts out as democratic socialism. When Chavez came to power in 1998 in Venezuela, promising to implement his own unique version of socialism, he was democratically elected. International observers, including former US President Jimmy Carter, said that the elections were ‘fair’ and ‘democratic’, as these things go. He was then re-elected and put in a new constitution; he implemented his socialist policies.”

Powell reminds observers that this “Venezuean collectivism” brought on the typical downward spiral, even as the Venezuelan central bank kept printing money to hand out to favored political friends.

“At first, the world thought Venezuela was doing okay, but, really, the economy was collapsing and they were living off their earnings from high oil reserves. But, eventually, oil prices went down and so did production, because the state owned—remember

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‘government ownership of the major factors of production’ (i.e. socialism)—the state-owned-and-operated oil company couldn’t even keep quantity up, despite having the world’s largest reserves. And when things went bad, as they inevitably do if you have a planned, centralized, socialist economy, people usually vote the bums out of office. But Maduro (Nicolas Maduro, Chavez’ successor), has been re-elected with laughingly high margins because people are not free to vote against him. People who work for state firms are ordered to vote for Maduro or they’ll lose their jobs. They’ve put out food aid stations next to polling places, so that, if you vote correctly, you get awarded with food. The National Assembly, as it’s constitutionally allowed to do, voted for a new interim President, about a year and a half ago. He’s not been able to take power because the military keeps Maduro in charge. What started out as ‘democratic socialism’ became mere socialism.”

Malnutrition, starvation, unemployment, and despair. Is it any wonder that by November, 2018, nearly [2.3 million, or one-in-twelve](#), Venezuelans were reported to have fled the collectivist nightmare?

There are so many more tales of woe and terror, or lives lost and dreams destroyed. Lest we neglect the insight, we must remember that the socialist-collectivist problem can come not only via bullets and bombs, but by the ballot box, and to different degrees.

Even the former British-colonized nation of India saw its first leader after English rule, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru institute socialist-collectivist policies from 1947, his first year in office, until his death, in 1964, bringing the near-industrial Indian population the dark gift of economic disaster. Writes [Arvind Virmani, for The Times of India](#):

“So how did the socialist approach fare? In 1950 the welfare of the average Indian was 29% of that of the average world citizen. By 1979, it had reduced to 20%, or one-fifth, of that of the average world citizen.”

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By studying relatively hidden information like this, by being skeptical of the pop media who so often have covered-up or excused the truth, even as they derided those trying to reveal the moral and economic horrors of collectivism—which are truly connected, we must reiterate—all of us can learn a great deal about Marxism-collectivism in practice.

We can see that its negative effects are both shocking, in the form of torture, terror, of starvation and flight and tears, but its effects also are subtle, such as the negative effects of Western central command-and-control from endless government bureaus, licensing, regulations, centralized government education, and favoritism that warps what should be the proper flow of true economic choices.

We all suffer at the hands of authoritarian collectivists who would decide for us and our neighbors how to peacefully live our lives, and it is up to us to use what freedom we have left to teach people about the tragic history of these collectivist minds. It's up to us to change minds, here, before it's too late.

For better days, for better chances, for better lives, thank you for being part of the MRC *College Unbound!* experience. Please spread the word to fellow freedom-seekers, friends, family members, and neighbors who might want to explore these lessons as part of a home-school regime. It's all free.

Next, we'll offer our final lesson on this topic, looking at the history of America, and realizing that when commentators claim “real socialism” has never been tried here in America. They are monumentally wrong.

Quiz 10: <https://forms.gle/j9QdaXtCMhJAFHGz9>