

THE RISE AND DEMISE OF WORLD COMMUNISM

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Synopsis: The rise and demise of world communism was one of the great dramas of the 20th century, born in wars (World War I, World II), offering an alternative modernity to that of the capitalist world, and ultimately succumbing to the pressures of Cold War, capitalist globalization, and popular disaffection. The result was either systemic collapse (the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) or a fundamental alteration of key features of the communist system (China, Vietnam, Laos). Beyond that, a few hangers-on remain: North Korea and Cuba, while many non-ruling communist parties have transformed themselves in either a more-radical or more social-democratic direction. We will trace communism's origins in Marxism and Leninism, its victory in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, its construction of an international sub-system (the "world communist movement"), its spread throughout Europe and Asia (plus Cuba), and its ultimate demise or alteration. What did communist revolutions, states, and non-ruling communist parties have in common, in both their domestic and international orientations? How did they differ from each other? Why did international communism fracture into competing models of domestic and foreign relations? Why did the Soviet Union and, with it, the world communist system ultimately collapse? How, in retrospect, should we evaluate the century-long experience of communism?

Lectures:

- 1. Similarities and Differences among Communist States**
- 2. Marxism-Leninism as Heritage**
- 3. From Stalinism to Post-Stalinism: the Drive to Difference**
- 4. China under Mao**
- 5. China after Mao: from Deng to Xi Jin Ping**
- 6. Gorbachev and the Collapse of European Communism**
- 7. The Remains of Communism in a Capitalist World: Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, Cuba**
- 8. Evaluating the Communist Experience**