
The Policies of Capitalism in the Communism Ideology of Stalinism and Titoism

The 20th century marks one of the most dynamic times in recorded history. Plagued by two world wars, economic depressions, countless conflicts, and the ushering in of a nuclear age, by the turn of the century the world proved a completely different place in every aspect imaginable. However, perhaps nothing loomed as large as the development and spread of communism throughout Europe during this time. In particular, the role of Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito in the rise of communism as a system of political governance. By the end of their respective empires they, in addition to Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, held more influence over the world than anyone else on the planet. This paper will seek not only to explore these two leaders as individuals but to examine the differences between Stalinism and Titoism, their impact on the region, and the circumstances that led to the adoption of these belief systems. With this we can undoubtedly discern how the world has developed in the wake of these systems and which version of communism, if any, was more effective.

In contrasting Stalinism and Tito, not to be overlooked are the individuals behind the ideologies. Josip Broz Tito was born in the late 19th century in the village of Kumrovec, near Zagreb. He was unique in a number of ways during his childhood. First, he was born to a Croat father and Slovene mother, something uncommon of the time and a foreshadowing of his primary mission to rule a united Yugoslavia that looks beyond its racial tensions. Secondly, he was one of 15 children but only 7 survived. As a boy he had a keen interest in things like horseback riding and fashion, things not typical of boys his age at the time (Banac Encyclopedia Britannica). He loved his dog and even convinced his father to buy it back after selling it for firewood once (West 21). These qualities while seemingly arbitrary at face value, reflect more telling cultural norms that influenced the man he would become as time passed. His interest in fashion and finer things came likely as a result of his underprivileged upbringing and surprisingly is one of the first things that cultivated his interest in joining the military because of the uniforms (West 24). They also reveal an astonishingly human element to a life that for many years was one of an eccentric dictator and one of the most prominent people of the century.

In his biography *Tito Speaks*, we have a rare account of his life before he rose to the higher ranks of the Communist party and a much different view of him as a person. He talks at decent length of his military exploits in his younger military days. He was the youngest sergeant major in his regiment and was known for his passion for taking care of the men in his platoon ("Tito, Josip Broz: Rise to Power."). Less expected, however, is his tendency in the book to reveal a fallible, imprudent side detailing mistakes he made with money and judgment in his early years. You see a normal boy rather than an ambitious, determined youth with a plan from birth to unite Yugoslavia while rebelling against Western capitalism. As one author puts it, "In reality he was just an ambitious young man who used his army experience to better himself later in his civilian career" (West 25). In fighting the Serbs during WWI Tito saw firsthand many of the South Slavic tensions that pervaded the region long before WWI. Additionally, although it was not his life goals that drew him into the military his experiences there would prove critical during his rise to power in subsequent years.

Stalin was born in Georgia in 1879 with the surname Djugashvili. He took the name Stalin when

he was grown to mean “steel” (History.com). Like Tito, Stalin grew up poor but had no siblings. In his youth he attended the seminary briefly where oddly enough he was first introduced to the likes of Karl Marx and other communist doctrines despite the fact that practicing Communist countries have extraordinarily high rates of atheism (Nove 65). In this sense, he is one of the few people who can say that religion actually brought him to a revelation of communism. Also in a similar vein to Tito, Stalin had trouble with the law for reading and speaking about communist materials and served as a political agitator during his young adult years (History.com).

Stalin's rise to power was very much assisted by Russia's predisposition to accept communism. Equally as important as Stalin's communist revolution are the circumstances that brought it about. Russia's roots trace all the way back to the chaotic vikings. They relied on plundering and the land required discipline and order to be kept from total anarchy. It was for this reason the first major ruler, Rurik, took power (Nove 12). This planted the seeds of communism early in Russian land and would continue to be cultivated all the way up to Stalin's rule. Throughout its history, the theme of a threatened society by vikings or other bandits propagated the idea that Russia needed a strong central authority and had an irrational fear of disorder. Ivan the Terrible also prevented feudalism from developing in Russia by preemptively killing off nobles, strengthening the power of the king while increasing the size of wealth disparity and peasant class. Peter the Great built on this by enlisting all citizens to work their whole lives serving the state (Nove 13). Thomas Hobbes in *The Leviathan* describes that mankind left to his own devices is destined for a life that is “nasty, brutish, and short” (“Thomas Hobbes: 'Solitary, Poor, Nasty, Brutish, and Short.'”). This political philosophy, despite coming from a man who also strongly supported many capitalist policies like property rights, was the cornerstone of Russian tradition that prompted such strong centralization. The deep tradition of authority and autocracy made the willingness to accept Lenin and then Stalin into absolute rule easy. After Lenin fell from power Stalin went on to lead the Bolshevik party and eventually became the Secretary General, which was critical in aiding his ability to grow influence (History.com). When the roaring twenties ended Stalin had climbed up the mountain and was dictator of the Soviet Union, jumpstarting a long, strict rule.

The adoption of communism in Yugoslavia began on a much different route than the Russian adoption. While the Hobbesque need for autocracy developed up north, religious and historical differences festered in the South Slav lands. Lines began to form as early as the 8th century with Slavens endorsing the Pope and Bulgars Constantinople (West 3). The Great Schism in 1054 broke the Church apart over issues of the inclusion of the Son in the Holy Trinity as well as smaller differences like clergy celibacy. These tensions continued to build along ethnic and religious lines as countless acts of brutality and hate tormented the region. It was not until after WWI, however, that communism began to take shape in the region. The breaking up of empires like the Austro-Hungary and Ottoman among others led to the creation of 9 independent states in the wake of the war (History.com, Versailles). These states, dubbed “Versailles states” because of their artificial creation, were disliked by the losers of the war because of the winners hand in creation. Yugoslavia after its creation fell under this artificial category which contributed not only to a lack of national pride but hatred towards the Serbian people in particular who fought on the winning side and were therefore rewarded generously under the terms of Versailles. Serbs in fact suffered more casualties than France, Britain, or America (Casualties, WWI). The carnage caused by this ethnic tension as well as the forced union of the Yugoslav states set the table for Tito to eventually come in riding promises of unity and order. His actual rise to power though was not so black and white as that of Stalin in Russia and took many years of being an outlaw.

Tito's rise to power began by riding the wave of discontent after WWI. There were peasant revolts against "foreign landlords", meaning people who lived in Yugoslavia but were not from that particular area. Tito's hometown was one of these places and he was an activist against these wealthy landowners, garnering support from peasants in the surrounding areas. Like any good communist ruler, he would keep the support of the poorer classes all the way up to the height of his power. Tito, like Stalin studied works like The Communist Manifesto at an early age and leveraged his face recognition and the respect garnered from his service in the war to preach communist ideals.

In Yugoslavia this was considered a crime that Tito was arrested and tried for in 1925. Although he was sentenced to 5 years in jail, his eloquence and passion during the trial gained him support, more facial recognition, and a martyr status with communist supporters. His sentencing came most likely due to the fact that Yugoslavia was still budding in its communist sentiment. According to author Richard West in 1920 the communist party in Yugoslavia had 12% of votes, but in 1921 the party shrank from 120,000 to a pathetic 700 (West 38). It was in 1925, after these faltering numbers, Tito was arrested and gave some spark to the dying Communist party. That spark turned into a wildfire while Tito was imprisoned. Massive stock market crashes threw the world into a depression and turned people sour to the idea of the free market and capitalism. These external factors provided the system shock needed by Communist hopefuls like Stalin and Tito to begin to swing the pendulum their way. Stalin especially was able to use the catastrophic events beginning in the late '20s to implement mass cultivation, deportation, and a tight communist regime.

While Stalin was tightening his fist around the throat of Russian dissent, Tito fled to Moscow and witnessed Stalinism in full effect. He spent some time in Russia working before he came back and continued his rise to power. Tito's ascendance from fugitive to leader in a few short years can only be described as incredible. Upon returning to Yugoslavia Tito came back to a more sizable Communist party that now in 1941 believed that Communism really meant liberation from Axis occupation (West 65). The ethnic and religious carnage committed by groups like the Ustasha and NDH against Serbs resulted in unspeakable horror in extermination camps and other mass killings. Serbs retaliated, but a less foreseen consequence was the driving of persecuted Serbs into the ranks of Tito who promised unity and peace in the land (West 292).

The terror and agony rendered within warring groups of Yugoslavia during this time cannot be overstated. The Banja Luka massacre in 1941 is just one example of the brutal killings that took place during this time. The Bishop of Mostar around this time wrote a letter describing people being buried alive, women and children thrown off cliffs, and groups shot in the hills by the hundreds. Eventually the turmoil became such a front to humanity that Germany and Italy, two dictatorships, stepped in to stop the killing ("Tito, Josip Broz: Rise to Power."). It was this terror and carnage that Tito used to fuel the expansion of his support base. Tito by the late 1930's had crafted a strong platform that he used to gain enough support to begin ruling. His public figure status, message of unity, defiance of the West, ousting of the Axis occupation, and paternal presence proved strong enough to carry him to Secretary General in 1939 and create a strong Yugoslav Communist Party.

Once in power, the two men originally had very similar systems of governance. Stalin as big brother was a role model for Tito during his time in Moscow and Tito's brand of communism was very much modeled in his fashion. Stalin's communism was based on the traditional teachings of Karl Marx. Marxism was a system of governance meant to be an evolution of

capitalism that would naturally occur as a result of free market greed. He argued that profit incentive would cause business owners to compete away the profit margin at the expense of the workers leaving them with less and less. The few at the top would continue to have an increasingly larger slice of the pie leading to the “working class”, or those who must work in order to survive, to become united in a class revolt that would lead to socialism and eventually communism. It would take another paper to describe in the necessary detail a more solid outline of Marxism and the reason his theory of it as an evolution of capitalism is inaccurate, but for now we will focus back on Russia’s Marxist adoption.

Despite Russia’s desire to adhere to the principles of Marxism, it was an imperfect adaptation to begin with. Marx envisioned it as an evolution of capitalism, relying on the many to overthrow the few at the top. It also surmises an abundance of wealth. Russia quite to the contrary enforced Communism from the top down through leaders mentioned earlier like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great. When Stalin came Russia was mostly peasantry that through tradition were readily willing to accept the strong authority communism entailed. He was viewed as infallible and the embodiment of what Communism was meant to be (History.com). Russia’s adaptation was therefore imperfect and forced to begin with, despite the Soviet Union’s reputation as the “textbook” implementation of Marx’s theory in a real world system of governance. Imperfect adaptation aside, however, Stalin did rule with all the hallmark policies one would expect from a Communist dictatorship. Industrialization, absolute rule, agricultural collectivization, propaganda, and strict disallowance of dissent. It was in the early years of Yugoslavia that Tito implemented similar policies to these in an attempt to reach the idyllic Stalinism form of communism (“Tito, Josip Broz: Rise to Power.”).

Tito’s rule quickly took its own shape as time passed. Communism was implemented and adopted for different reasons than Marx detailed yet again but ran into issues that the Soviet Union did not necessarily have to. The people in Yugoslavia accepted Communism as a blanket that would lay over the region and help maintain peace. Tito also wanted independence from foreign occupation and even reliance on other countries. Additionally, Tito when in Moscow disapproved of the terror the people felt and disappearances that would occur often (West 46). His unwillingness to rule as brutally as Stalin in that regard also pushed him into a more liberal style of communism. These and other key differences warranted a different kind of rule than Stalin’s. Maintaining the communist shell and centralized power, “Titoism” developed as a new alternative to traditional communism and was the first dissension within the ranks of communist countries (“Tito’s Last Secret.”). The values demanded by Titoism, “Sound much like those required of a British boy scout” (West 46). Titoism still has communist beliefs but acknowledges that countries may use different policies to achieve them (Titoism: Collins English Dictionary). This reveals resemblances to democracy in which no two systems are alike and yet can still function. Titoism therefore might be an evolution of Stalinism given Marxist theory and democracy in real world practice. Titoism also was symbolic in that it challenged the standard Marxist theory of governance which was rooted in rigidity and certainty. The whole world was predicted to eventually succumb to communism and the emergence of Titoism turned that on its head.

In comparing Titoism and Stalinism, we see Titoism with a much more open society and free market (“Tito, Josip Broz: Rise to Power.”). The circumstances of adoption were also critical in foreshadowing the development of policy. Yugoslavia wanted internal peace and independence while Stalin and Russia hope to expand and indoctrinate other countries with its blend of Communism. This expansion ideal reared its ugly head when Tito broke from Stalin. In

response Russia released Tito propaganda, denounced Yugoslavia to other communist countries, and even sent spies to wreak havoc on the nation (West 167). Yugoslavia's defiance and maintenance of a moderate communist state set an example for other communist countries to follow. Poland and Czechoslovakia implemented more moderate policies after Tito but still not as effectively ("Tito, Josip Broz: Rise to Power."). Other countries that followed however, like China and North Korea, still adhere to the Stalinist blend of strict enforcement. Communist Yugoslavia's ability to maintain its system was likely partly due to its economic necessity of toleration, and partly due to the paternal rule of Tito himself that healed the wounds of the many wars waged internally and externally.

Stalinism set the example for what a communist nation is and his example remains in tact today in countries like North Korea that continue strict enforcement. His rapid industrialization gave Russia the power to fight Nazi Germany and brought the rest of the world's technology up with it. Titoism fell apart rapidly after Tito's death and a return to private business as well as collectivisation of agriculture (History.com). It serves today as an interesting case study of the merits of a more moderate communist government and one of the few real world systems of governance in the 20th century besides socialism and capitalism that worked for a time. Tito's death was met with impressive attendance from 122 states ("Tito's Last Secret.").

Both men left a truly lasting impact on their respective regions. Stalin took power using the predispositions of Russia, closely abided to Marxist-Leninist theory, and actively tried to expand the reach of the iron curtain around Europe and the world. Stalinism is still practiced today in places like North Korea and is one of the only working alternatives to capitalism and democracy. Tito's ascendance on the heels of terrible conflict and the need for unity brought him to the forefront. The underlying nationalism that he ruled on proved even more powerful than the universal idea of Stalin's communism. He had more free market policy and was less concerned with spreading his brand of politics than keeping peace within the borders and foreign occupation away from them. While Stalinism arguable had the more lasting effect on the world as a whole and was greater in scope, Tito's paternal rule gives one cause to reevaluate communism entirely and shaped the Balkan region for many years to come.

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Both men left a truly lasting impact on their respective regions. Stalin took power using the predispositions of Russia, closely abided to Marxist-Leninist theory, and actively tried to expand the reach of the iron curtain around Europe and the world. Stalinism is still practiced today in places like North Korea and is one of the only working alternatives to capitalism and democracy. Tito's ascendance on the heels of terrible conflict and the need for unity brought him to the forefront. The underlying nationalism that he ruled on proved even more powerful than the universal idea of Stalin's communism. He had more free market policy and was less concerned

with spreading his brand of politics than keeping peace within the borders and foreign occupation away from them. While Stalinism arguable had the more lasting effect on the world as a whole and was greater in scope, Tito's paternal rule gives one cause to reevaluate communism entirely and shaped the Balkan region for many years to come.

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