

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 2 - ©

# The Rise and Fall of Communism

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Seed  
Learning



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## The Beginnings

Would you like to live in a world where everyone is equal—men, women, old and young? Where everything is shared by everyone; and where everything is owned by everyone?



Equality



A symbol of freedom

Many people would call this a golden age, a utopia—a place of perfection. This is the idea behind communism.

Sharing



North Korea

The ideas of communism are not new. The Greeks talked of a Golden Age 2,000 years ago. Sir Thomas More wrote a book called *Utopia* in 1516 setting out many of these ideas.



Beijing, China



Sir Thomas More  
(1478-1535)

You may have heard that North Korea, Russia or China are, or were, communist or socialist. What does this mean, and how did they become that way?

## Power in the Hands of a Few

Since the beginning of time, societies have been controlled by a ruler, often a chief, a king or a queen. Power and money were in the hands of a few. Most

people owned very little and had little, or no, power.



A queen on her throne



A man working hard on a farm



The power of a king



A cartoon of a capitalist

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe was a time in history when people left their farms. They went to live in cities and work in factories.

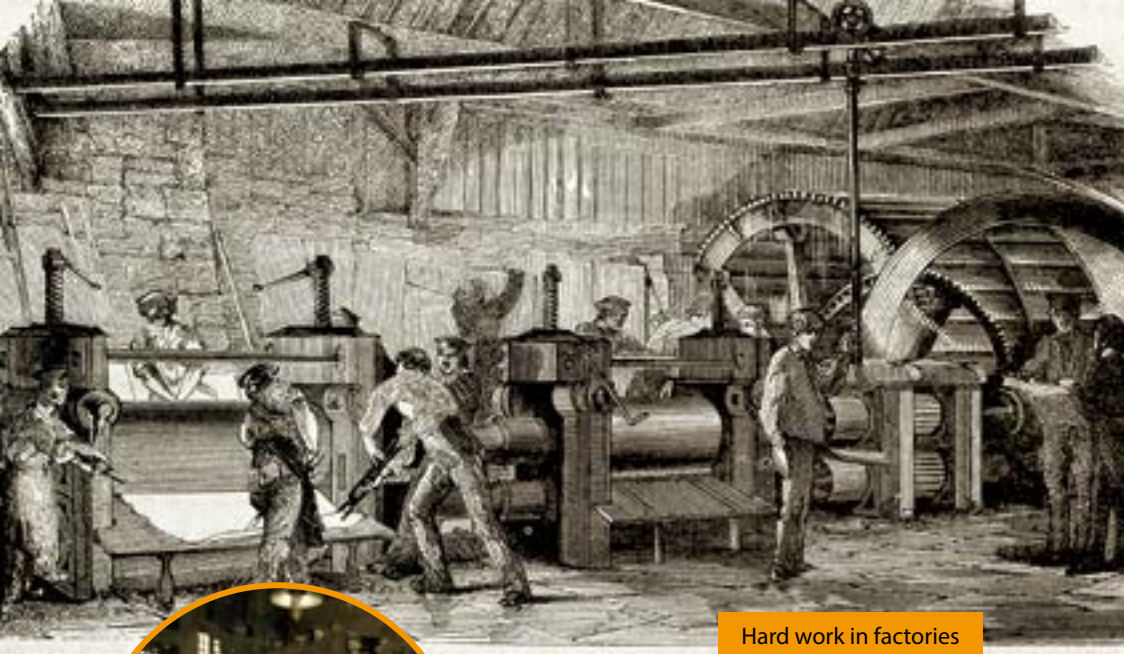


Life on a farm

This made factory owners very rich. The owners' aim was to make money for themselves while paying others to work for them. This is how a capitalist society works.



An industrial machine



Hard work in factories



Workers during a break

But the power was still in the hands of a few. Many factory owners became rich by forcing the workers to work long hours in dirty factories and by paying them very little. The workers were unhappy and began to protest.

Mine workers,  
1867



## The Communist Manifesto

In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels put forward the idea that capitalism would end because the workers would take control of society and establish a new society based on equality. This idea was called “communism.”



Karl Marx  
(1818-1883)



The Communist  
Manifesto, 1848



Equal and fair

## Comprehension Questions

1. According to the text, the idea of communism is...
  - (a) perfect.
  - (b) new.
  - (c) old.
  - (d) good.
2. Traditionally, the power in society was held by...
  - (a) no one.
  - (b) a small group of people.
  - (c) most people.
  - (d) everyone.
3. The Industrial Revolution made...
  - (a) some people very rich.
  - (b) farmers rich.
  - (c) farmers poor.
  - (d) the king poor.
4. A society in which people can own property and make more money off the work of others is called...
  - (a) communism.
  - (b) socialism.
  - (c) capitalism.
  - (d) moneyism.
5. Karl Marx believed in...
  - (a) the king keeping power.
  - (b) the people having complete power.
  - (c) a few people having power.
  - (d) no one having power.
6. The first communist country was...
  - (a) Germany.
  - (b) The USA.
  - (c) China.
  - (d) Russia.
7. The Cold War was a time when...
  - (a) people had freedoms.
  - (b) the US and the Soviet Union fought for influence.
  - (c) China controlled the world.
  - (d) capitalist systems were strongest.
8. The Berlin Wall...
  - (a) cut Berlin in two.
  - (b) was an example of the Cold War.
  - (c) went up in 1961.
  - (d) All of the above
9. Communist systems failed because...
  - (a) standards of living were not going up.
  - (b) people had few freedoms.
  - (c) the governments controlled everything.
  - (d) All of the above
10. Many of the communist countries are now...
  - (a) forgotten.
  - (b) capitalist.
  - (c) socialist.
  - (d) communist.

## Glossary

- **capitalism** an economic, political, and social system where the economy is privately run and owned
- **communism** an economic, political, and social system where the government controls the production of all goods, and where the people are treated equally
- **communist** a person who believes in communism
- **democracy** a system of government where all the people choose their leaders
- **equality** being equal and having the same rights
- **factory** a building where things are made or put together
- **freedom** the right to live in the way you want without being controlled by others
- **influence** the power to affect people, actions, or events
- **protest** to show that you disagree with something by shouting, carrying signs, etc.
- **reject** to disagree or say no to something
- **socialism** an economic, political, and social system where the government controls the economy, but the people can own property
- **superpower** a country that is extremely powerful
- **utopia** a perfect society where everyone is happy
- **wealth** a large amount of money or property someone has

Key 1. (c) 2. (b) 3. (a) 4. (c) 5. (b) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (d) 9. (d) 10. (c)