

An Investigation into the Ideological Facets Involved in Western Interpretations of the History of Communism

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Abstract : With the rise of the so-called 'new left' within the United States, marked by social democratic figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, significant questions have been raised in response to those who would identify with the term 'socialist'. These queries typically revolve around the negatively perceived legacy of past and present countries that share the term in question, with the stark conclusion that not only is socialism a structure that does not work economically, but that it also tends to inflict more harm on those living under it that would be endured in a country functioning under capitalism. In order to examine these claims, the goal of this paper is to examine the legacy of anti-communist historiography in a western context, with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, China, and modern Venezuela used as case studies for how this phenomenon operates. Not only will key portions of each nation's history be re-examined, but there will also be a critical analysis of source cultivation and usage among western historians. The intent of this paper is not merely to deride previous attempts at historicizing and reporting on the events of the nations, but rather to attempt to glean a clearer picture that is free from anti-communist sentiments. Theoretical works that will be consulted in order to define this project are 'The Historiography of Communism' by Michael Brown, as well as 'Beyond Philosophy: Ethics, History, Marxism, and Liberation Theology' by Enrique Dussel. The latter will provide insights concerning why these questions are relevant in a larger context, namely by articulating how the means of liberation understood through an analectic method can be achieved structurally. For a majority of leftists, this question is integral, and by using history as a tool, the ways that political organizing can be used can be better understood, bridging the gap between the common assumption that the communist legacy is a dire one and the idea that it is something which needs to be completely lauded.

Keywords : anti-communism, history, ideology, Marxism

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