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Why Stalin Was Not a Good Marxist

Karl Marx had a vision for nations to follow his *Communist Manifesto* when the proletariat had enough of the bourgeoisie and was advanced enough to transition to a classless society. Vladimir Lenin took Marx's ideas and ran to Russia in order to establish a powerful nation. After Lenin ousted the Tsar and all his men, he brought in ideas from Marx, along with his own. One of Lenin's greatest contributions to history was bringing Josef Stalin to accompany him on his mission to restructure Russia as a society. Stalin, as much as he followed Lenin, showed his true colors after Lenin's death. He proved to Russia and to the world that his rule was not to be one written by Marx, but one he created in order to give him the most power within his nation.

As a boy, Stalin was an intellectual who studied Russian and prepared for seminary. Behind that veil was a man who led a street gang and a revolutionist. After dropping out of seminary school, he was a part of bank robberies and labor strikes in the name of societal freedom. Stalin, being from the proletariat, knew the struggle that came with being so far down the class system in Russia. Stalin was picked up by Lenin to write in the newspaper as Lenin was still in exile. Through this work, Stalin gained his surname, respect amongst the Marxist followers, and elevated status in the eyes of Lenin. After assuming power and leading Lenin back into Russia to start the revolution, Stalin was installed as the General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee. With this title, Stalin made sure that he watched moves from both his friends and enemies. This allowed for Stalin to set the path for his hostile take over of the government that he helped build with Lenin.

After Lenin's death, the power struggle became real within Russia, but Stalin was ready for it. He made sure he had enough support and took out his rivals in extreme swiftness. After a series of triumvirates, Stalin dispatched anyone who may have been able to lead the country or get in his way. This allowed for Stalin now to become the "ruler" of Russia.

One of Stalin's greatest moves in order to give himself more power was his, *Revolution from Above*, in which he structured the government to install new initiatives in the industry and agriculture sectors. By doing this, he put himself above the government, and by taking himself out of the shake up, he placed himself at the top of the newly restructured government in which he would not be moved. This is Stalin at his purest form, one who would chase power for both himself and his country. In this sense, Stalin is not a good Marxist as he put himself above everyone else with this calculated move. For a country to follow in Marx's ideas, it needs to be run by the proletariat. That is not what happened in Russia, and Stalin would never have allowed it, as he was now elevated into a class even above the bourgeoisie.

Stalin also pulled this tactic again in his work, *Dizzy with Success*, as he puts critics and his opposition to shame as he put the blame of the failure from his agricultural shake-up during collectivization. This was necessary as most of the countryside of Russia were starving and having to slaughter their farm animals in order to stay alive. By passing the blame, along with making himself look like a passionate and leader for the people, Stalin was able to turn a position of disgust into a position of power. This strengthened his bond with the proletariat as they now viewed him as a God which, again, is not the version of Communism that Marx had drawn up within the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx intended for “Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.” As Stalin moved closer to the bourgeoisie, I find it harder to call him a good Marxist, as his vision to gain power does not line up with the workers of the times.

Stalin’s backstory and rise to power called back to another powerful leader in history, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon helped topple the king of France with a revolution, and when the smoke cleared, he rose to power, more than that the king previously had control of. Stalin and Napoleon’s paths to power look extremely similar when looked at in a broad sense. Both men were more worried about trying to chase power, and not about how the society was fair for the classes. The *Communist Manifesto* was not written and would not be written for 21 years after Napoleon’s death. As Stalin gained power, he moved further away from Lenin’s vision, allowing historians to see that Stalin was more of a power chaser more comparative to Napoleon than Lenin who was trying to install a Marxist society in Russia.

Stalin was a powerful and intelligent man who knew how to navigate into places where he could gain the most capability within the government. The reason I do not believe Stalin was a good Marxist, is because after Lenin’s death, Russia moved away from Marxism, and instead put Stalin as the “new Tsar.” If Karl Marx was to come back from the dead, and look at the Soviet Union under Stalin, I do not think he would have been impressed. Stalin’s communism was not Marx’s communism, as Stalin was still bourgeoisie in the eyes of the public. Stalin put himself above the working class and by doing so, denounced Marx and his ideas written inside of the *Communist Manifesto*.

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