Communism Essay, Research Paper

Communism has failed in Europe because of its lack of care for the individual, its corrupt leaders and also because it went against human nature. Two novels that demonstrate this statement are the semi-autobiographical We the Living by Ayn Rand, and Julian Barnes’ The Porcupine.

According to Ayn Rand, Communists were pitiless. When Kira, the protagonist of the story, begged for help to save her lover’s life, the only answer she received from the general was “Why – in the face of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics- can’t one aristocrat die?” (216). Communists say that they want everyone to be equal and have a good life, yet they contradict themselves in that they don’t acknowledge each individual, which is the make-up of their so-called “collect.” Since individuals didn’t matter, people lived poorly. In Maria Petrovna’s words, “‘These are hard times, God have pity on us, these are hard times’” (27). Communism crushed people’s hopes and it also broke them down. ” ‘We have no future,’” (27) said Simon.

Barnes showed how people didn’t matter in a Communist society by showing how people were exhausted. “People had been too busy, or too tired, to make love; that was another thing that had broken down?During the last statistical year, the number of live births had been exceeded both by the number of abortions and by the number of deaths” (63). Individual lives just didn’t matter. Because people were so unhappy, they did not support the government. To maintain its standing, the government had to make sure that everyone lived in fear. This would decrease the chance of rebellion. In one of his articles, Steven Morewood talks about Gorbachev, a Communist leader. “Gorbachev concedes ‘The totalitarian model had relied on dictatorship and violence, and I can see that this was not acceptable to the people’” (33)

Neglect of the individual was not Communism’s only fault. Corruption among its leaders was also very common. In We the Living, Pavel Syerov, a high ranking Communist, gets involved in a corrupt business. This was the kind of business that he himself might have to seize and break up. The Communist party itself, especially its high members, became the new-hated bourgeois class. “The system was so corrupt and decayed as to be unreformable,” explains Morewood (33). They lived well off while the rest of the people suffered. “Pavel Syerov bought a new pair of boots” (134), while “Vasili sold the last shade off the lamp in the drawing room” (135). Andrei Taganov, a “Commie,” had more money than he knew what to do with, while Kira’s family could barely get food because they were once bourgeois.

Corruption among Communist leaders is the major issue in The Porcupine. The novel’s main character, Stoyo Petkanov, was the President of a Communist Balkan state. His government was overthrown and Petkanov was on trial for various things, including

Theft. Embezzlement of state funds. Corruption. Speculation. Currency offenses. Profiteering. Complicity in the murder of Simeon Popov?.Complicity in torture. Complicity in attempted genocide. Innumerable conspiracies to pervert the course of justice. (15)

His corruption was so great that his own people hated him immensely. Atanas and Vera, common people, accuse him of “mass murder” and “genocide.” They also refer to him as “the bastard.” This ironic thing about the trial is that Stoyo Petkanov was not the only guilty of the crimes. Almost everyone in the courtroom was guilty of one thing or another. The Presidents of the Court and the attorneys had nice cars and apartments while the common people were jobless and starving. Everyone was a hypocrite. Communists wanted everyone to live equally, yet they didn’t mind being above the people.

Another reason that Communism failed in Europe was that people couldn’t automatically change. It is very hard to change one’s instincts and the ideas that have governed our society for hundreds of years. Our instincts are selfish, one may say, because we’d do anything to ensure our survival. In a life and death situation, the “collect” is the last thing that we have on our minds. Everyone works for himself or his family, not for the rest of the people. This is not necessarily wrong. The strong and able should be able to rise to the top. That’s the surest way a person can perform to their fullest potential; if they know that there’s something rewarding for them. Kira says

Don’t you know that there are things, in the best of us, which no outside hand should dare to touch? This sacred because, and only because, one can say: This is mine? Don’t you know that there is something in us which must not be touched by any state, by any collective, by any number of million? (Rand, 80)

Andrei, the Communist, said ” ‘No.’” (80). At the end of the novel, however, he finally understands why people do things. Even the “Reds” do the things that they do because they believe in their cause. The bottom line is that it is their cause.

Barnes expresses the absurdity of the Communist regime through the questions of an innocent child. Angelina, a little girl, asks her father “Why were there so many soldiers when there wasn’t a war? Why were there so many apricot trees in the countryside but never apricots in the shops? ” (26). If this little girl had enough logic to question the conditions of her environment, then there was definitely something wrong in the society. The little girl’s curiosity represents our nature, and Communism clearly went against it.

Communism did not give people equality and justice. It only gave them “instability and hopelessness” (Barnes, 69). Ye Albatz states “The use of cruelty and violence by Communists to establish equality and justice really justifies its extinction” (7). There are still countries today that have a Communist government. North Korea and Communist China have virtually no relations with other countries. The Korean government wants to “To spur the people to harbor the spirit of self- reliance in coping with the economic difficulties after the suspension of aid from the Soviet Union.” (

http://www.koreascope.org/english/sub/2/1/nk1\_4.htm). Their people are imprisoned and unhappy. Communism will probably fail there for the same reasons it failed in Russia. The ideals of this regime might have the people’s good in mind, but people are people and they get carried away. The leaders became corrupt, they didn’t care about the individual people, and the whole idea of Communism goes against human nature. It was virtually impossibly for Communism to survive.

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