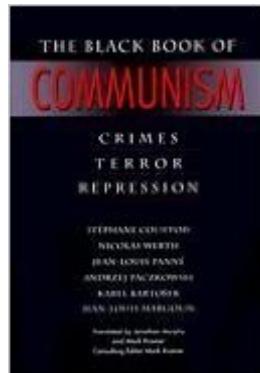


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The Black Book Of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression



Synopsis

Already famous throughout Europe, this international bestseller plumbs recently opened archives in the former Soviet bloc to reveal the actual, practical accomplishments of Communism around the world: terror, torture, famine, mass deportations, and massacres. Astonishing in the sheer detail it amasses, the book is the first comprehensive attempt to catalogue and analyze the crimes of Communism over seventy years. "Revolutions, like trees, must be judged by their fruit," Ignazio Silone wrote, and this is the standard the authors apply to the Communist experience in the China of "the Great Helmsman," Kim Il Sung's Korea, Vietnam under "Uncle Ho" and Cuba under Castro, Ethiopia under Mengistu, Angola under Neto, and Afghanistan under Najibullah. The authors, all distinguished scholars based in Europe, document Communist crimes against humanity, but also crimes against national and universal culture, from Stalin's destruction of hundreds of churches in Moscow to Ceausescu's leveling of the historic heart of Bucharest to the widespread devastation visited on Chinese culture by Mao's Red Guards. As the death toll mounts as many as 25 million in the former Soviet Union, 65 million in China, 1.7 million in Cambodia, and on and on the authors systematically show how and why, wherever the millenarian ideology of Communism was established, it quickly led to crime, terror, and repression. An extraordinary accounting, this book amply documents the unparalleled position and significance of Communism in the hierarchy of violence that is the history of the twentieth century.

Book Information

Hardcover: 858 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (October 15, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674076087

ISBN-13: 978-0674076082

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 2 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (148 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #209,453 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #236 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Political Ideologies #239 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Communism & Socialism #320 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Political History

Customer Reviews

Many people who do not like this book attacked that the statistics or estimations are inflated. Take Cambodia as an example. I visited S21 a few years ago. Some said 2 millions were killed by Pol Pot, some said 1.7 millions. Some Chinese scholars estimated that 80 millions died of non-natural causes under Mao's rule; 50 millions were killed or oppressed to death during the Cultural Revolution alone. But some people dispute these figures. Let's say we give the preceding estimations a 90% "discount" : Only 20 thousands (= 2 millions X 10%) were massacred by Pol Pot and only 8 millions (80 millions X 10%) by Mao. But, these "discounted" figures are still horrible! The only way to explain "away" these crimes is to argue that anti-right movement, Great leap forward, cultural revolution, Gulag, S21... and many others never happen. If a girl was raped by a gang, it doesn't matter whether she was raped 5 times or 50 times. The only way to dismiss the case is to say that the girl is a liar. But, I am not a liar. And many Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians... who experienced the suffering are not liars. Unlike some anti-Capitalist or anti-American critics who are enjoying luxury and freedom in the Capitalist America, those people who speak the truth spent many years in jail or lost virtually everything, including their home. I keep remembering in 1989 right after June 4, my parents told me not to come home... Please don't just focus on quantitative methodology (numbers). Numbers alone cannot tell the whole story.

First, understand that this is not a popular or literary work, but an accounting ledger of the casualties of 20th century communism. Once you understand that this is not Darkness At Noon or Dr. Zhivago, you can accept it and its horrifyingly high numbers as intended. The authors have taken advantage of the opened KGB archives to track down the details of hundreds of repressions and atrocities committed by the Soviet power in the name of their ideology. They do the same for other communist regimes like Cuba and China without the benefit of archival materials. The fact that they still have to round the death tolls to the nearest thousand in many cases firmly makes the authors' controversial point: Communism is the most murderous idea ever devised. One of the authors asserts that communism is not one whit a lesser evil than nazism. It lasted longer, immiserated and killed more people, and had more friends in influential western institutions, no matter that the repressions and killings were class-based rather than race-based. The book has two generous photo-inserts, to make the text's point more immediately. The arrival of this book, along with Venona, The Haunted Wood, and The Shield and The Sword, gives heartening evidence that the murderous truth about the Communist era may finally seep into the general consciousness, if not yet into the politically correct recesses of tenured radicalism. Here are the facts--hereafter, ignorance about communism is strictly voluntary.

This book could have been a lot longer. It could not have been any shorter, though: it takes a brick of a book to really provide the crushing scope of this murderous ideology, and the authors have slowly, methodically, relentlessly added example after example to put in display, naked, a monster that killed tens of millions in the 20th Century and that will continue to kill (one hopes in a far smaller scale) in the 21st until it wastes itself out and vanishes. Communism became religion and state and proceeded to murder away as if the body count meant better chances of achieving that utopian society it pretended to aim at. We now know the absolute disasters that all Communist societies were -and are-, but this book is necessary as a ready reference work on evil that should be next to to William Shirer's "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich." Communism has managed to kill more than 100 million people, and this estimate is actually quite conservative: Solzhenitsyn puts the figure at 60 million in the former Soviet Union alone; Roy Medvedev opts for 40 million dead just under Stalin, not counting those who died because of World War II. Nobody really knows how many millions were murdered by Mao. Many historians and writers had told us parts of this sad tale: Milovan Djilas, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Robert Conquest, W.S. Kuniczak, Aino Kuusinen, Armando Valladares, Roy Medvedev, Dmitri Volkogonov, and others, so many, indeed, that a complete list would require several pages. But the authors of "The Black Book of Communism" do what none of the other authors had done before: they provide us with a total view of malignity, proving that, from Russia to Korea, from China to Cuba, from Africa to Europe, Communism was, indeed, a cancer. An excellent and necessary work.

Anyone who harbors delusions that communism/socialism, if only applied correctly, would solve all ills, should read this book. In every instance communism/socialism results in the gulag and extermination camps. I heard Kurt Vonnegut speak at U.C. Irvine a few years ago, and he said, "communism is a good system, it just happens that in the Soviet Union, the system was run by a bunch of crooks." Vonnegut--whose books are published by a capitalist conglomerate--is a first-rate novelist, but I hope he reads this book, and gets it through his head that the communist SYSTEM ITSELF is what is rotten. This book wears on the soul after a bit, because SO MUCH death and torture and incarceration resulted in all communist systems. But one should feel a bit worn down when reading this book, because it means you are feeling the impact of what millions upon millions have suffered.

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