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Why Communism Didn't Work

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The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski offered a profound refutation of Marxism/Communism. Essayist and cultural critic Roger Kimball considers Kolakowski's legacy in [Leszek Kolakowski and the Anatomy of Totalitarianism](#), published in the June 2005 edition of [The New Criterion](#). A sample:

Marx further predicted the inevitable revolution of the proletariat. This is the very motor of Marxism. Take away the proletarian revolution and you neuter the theory. But there have been no proletarian revolutions. The Bolshevik revolution, as Kolakowski points out, "had nothing to do with Marxian prophesies. Its driving force was not a conflict between the industrial working class and capital, but rather was carried out under slogans that had no socialist, let alone Marxist, content: Peace and Land for Peasants." Marx said that in a capitalist economy, untrammled competition would inevitably squeeze profit margins: eventually—and soon!—the economy would grind to a halt and capitalism would collapse. Take a look at capitalist economies in the hundred and fifty years since Marx wrote: have profit margins evaporated? Marx thought that capitalist economies would hamper technical progress: the opposite is true. No, Marxism has been as wrong as it is possible for a theory to be wrong. Addicted to "the self-deification of mankind," it continually bears witness to what Kolakowski calls "the farcical aspect of human bondage." Why then was Marxism like moral catnip—not so much among its proposed beneficiaries, the working classes, but among the educated elite? Well, beguiling simplicity was part of it. "One of the causes of the popularity of Marxism among educated people," Kolakowski notes, "was the fact that in its simple form it was very easy." Marxism—like Freudianism, like Darwinism, like Hegelianism—is a "one key fits all locks" philosophy. All aspects of human experience can be referred to the operation of a single all-governing process which thereby offers the illusion of universal explanation.

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