



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on May 13, 2011

West Bengal Set to Vote Out Communists

For instance, liberal historians over the years have often claimed that the Bolsheviks improved the lot of the Russian people when they ended the reign of the Romanovs. However, author Eugene Lyons has revealed a completely different picture. In his masterpiece, *Workers' Paradise Lost*, written on the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Lyons compares the rule of the Romanovs with that of the Bolsheviks, and shows that in every way imaginable, the realm of the Tsars was better than — and often far superior to — that of Bolshevik Russia. Industrial production in pre-war Tsarist Russia was increasing more rapidly than in any other modern nation in the world — about 10 percent each year. But this superiority was not simply a matter of economic and technological achievement, although the Tsarist economy was much more efficient and productive than the Bolshevik command economy. Russians under the Tsars enjoyed much greater personal freedom and a vastly richer cultural and academic climate.



The same sort of comparison is made today in any country where the “evil” previous rulers have been replaced by a communist regime. In Cuba, for instance, when Fidel Castro seized power, his propaganda machine railed on for decades that the previous ruler, Fulgencio Batista, was a friend of the mob, a crude political boss, and a toady of America. Castro was cast as the liberator of the Cuban people, the vanguard of a better future for all Latin America. More than 50 years later, however, Castro's Cuba has yet to return to the high standards of living enjoyed by citizens under Batista. Before Castro, Cubans enjoyed a diverse and healthy diet, read many newspapers, and boasted an infant mortality rate lower than in most of Western Europe. Now Fidel's brother Raúl rules over a poor and sickly people who will risk their lives in the ocean to escape the brutal reign of communism.

The people of West Bengal, a state in the eastern region of India, have embraced communism for the last 34 years. They were so desperate and poor that they felt that things could get no worse under communism. In 1971, when East Pakistan — the eastern half of the Muslim state created after Indian partition — broke away from West Pakistan, the resulting new nation was named Bangladesh, and the rump of old West Pakistan became what is known today as simply Pakistan.

West Bengal was the other half of the Bengali people, and for some time after the 1971 war there was speculation that a Bengal nation, composed of the old East Pakistan and the Bengal state government of India, might join. That never happened, although India remains more a polyglot of different peoples



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than a single nation; however, strong state governments in India provide a measure of decentralization that makes the country work.

The Bengali remain, as they have for decades, a poor people subject to monsoons and other weather disasters. Since 1977, the inhabitants of West Bengal have elected communists to run their state government. In the state capital of Kolkata, a statue of Lenin — covered with rose garlands and encircled by the notorious hammer-and-sickle flag of Marxism — hangs in the tropical sun.

However, today — for the first time in the lifetime of many Bengalis — the ruling Communist Party appears destined to lose power. The blunders of the party's politicians have been colossal. The government banned computers from banks because it claimed computers would take away jobs. The communists also ended English classes in public schools, depriving the Bengali of one of the few major advantages that Indians have in the information age — proficiency in the primary global language.

"We are conscious of our weaknesses, the lackadaisical approach, and the arrogance. We are learning from our mistakes," announced Communists Party leader Mohammed Salim. In the next breath, however, he added, "Since we first won in 1977, the opposition has been harping on the Leftists going out. The people know better. The future of India is not safe without the Left."

Government mismanagement is only part of the problem. As is true of virtually all Marxist regimes, corruption and cronyism are rampant. Tata Motors, a major Indian automobile firm, at one time had planned to build a factory in West Bengal; however, the government's forcible seizure of farmers' land for Tata to build its factory caused mounting protests in West Bengal, and now Tata has chosen another state for its site.

West Bengal has seen its share of Indian industrial production fall from 13 percent 20 years ago to only two percent today. One reason for the steep decline is that 60 to 80 percent of all industrial strikes in India during the last few years of the prior decade occurred in this one state. The "capitalist exploiters," so heavily prominent in Marxist rhetoric, have shown little interest in opening business in a state which — though desperate for industry and jobs — keeps computers out of banks, takes English out of public schools, and incites a hugely disproportionate percentage of India's strikes.

The polls indicate that when the votes are all counted in West Bengal — and the voting began weeks ago — the Communist Party will be out of power. If so, it will end the longest reign of a democratically elected communist regime in history.

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