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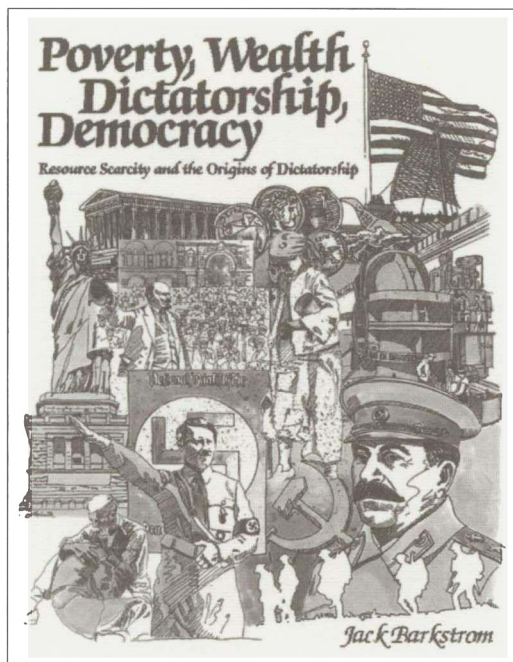
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# Was communism the cause of economic failure in the Soviet Union, or was Bolshevik policy a response to widespread poverty and the harsh economic conditions existing in Russia?



## The experimental variable...

Communism has long been considered the key to any understanding of the Soviet Union. Communism, it was believed, is the experimental variable which explains the failures of the “economic experiment” which the Soviet Union became.

Changing the variable in any experiment is expected to change the results, if the variable has been correctly identified. The elimination of communism in the Soviet Union did change the experimental outcome, but not in the way predicted. Rather than a miraculous turnaround, the Russian economy has experienced a downward spiral. Market advocates have offered excuses rather than explanations – Russian political

leadership is weak or market reforms have not been carried out. The problem may be that communism has been incorrectly identified as the experimental variable responsible for Russia’s problems. Resource availability may prove to be more reliable, as a variable. Russia is a poor country and poor economic performance may be better explained by poverty than by bad governmental policy.

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