



Were Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin Marxists?

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ДОЧИВ СПОНЯНИЙ 中国的民商语 ✦

Matrix to measure the level of Marxism

Capitalism → Socialism → Communism

Assumptions:

- Consider only the **policies taken or not taken** by the leaders and their consequences on the society to measure their Marxist level,

Marxist Step Criterion	Leader's score (.../7)	Explanation
Abolition of old classes	7/7	Facts: Landlords eliminated; Collectivization of agriculture etc...
Building socialism	5/7	...
Workers' democracy	2/7	Facts: Authoritarian regime but in place, not democratic ...
Withering away of the state	...	
Abolition of wage labor	...	
Internationalism	...	
Human emancipation	...	



Josef Stalin

Historical context:

- Stalin took power in 1924 after the death of Lenin
- End of the Russian Civil War
- USSR declared as the first socialist state

Stalin's main policy :

- Collectivization (1929-1933): abolition of the Kulaks
- Multiple five-year plans to rapidly industrialize the country
- Great Purge (1936- 1938): Elimination of opposition
- « Socialism in One Country » emphasized by the assassination of Trotsky. Break with Marx's internationalism



Josef Stalin Scorecard

Marxist Step	Leader's score (/7)	Explanation
Abolition of old classes	7/7	Landlords, capitalists, kulaks eliminated; class enemies suppressed.
Building socialism	7/7	Full nationalization, collectivization, and central planning
Workers' democracy	0/7	No workers' control; one-party dictatorship; purges
Withering away of the state	0/7	State becomes stronger, more repressive, more centralized.
Abolition of wage labor	1/7	Wage labor continues; workers remain subordinated to state managers.
Internationalism	1/7	"Socialism in one country"; Comintern subordinated to Soviet interests
Human emancipation	0/7	Gulags, censorship, repression contradict Marx's emancipatory vision.

Stalin's total: 16/49

Average: **2.3/7**

Interpretation: Stalin achieved **socialism in property relations**, but moved **away** from Marx's political, democratic, and humanistic goals.

Mao Zedong

Historical context:

- Mao emerged as the undisputed leader of the CCP after surviving the « *Long March* »
- CCP gains major legitimacy during WW2 using guerrilla warfare
- CCP defeats the nationalists in the Chinese civil war
- In 1949, Mao proclaimed the « *People's Republic of China.*»

Mao's main policy :

- Land Reform (1950–1953) → elimination of landlords
- Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) → attempt to leap to communism
- People's Communes → abolition of private kitchens, wages
- Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) → attack on “new bourgeoisie”



Mao Zedong Scorecard

Marxist Step	Leader's score (/7)	Explanation
Abolition of old classes	7/7	Landlords eliminated; class enemies targeted; radical restructuring.
Building socialism	6/7	Collectivization, state industry, planning; some decentralization.
Workers' democracy	3/7	Mass mobilization (Cultural Revolution) but still authoritarian.
Withering away of the state	1/7	Brief weakening during Cultural Revolution, but CCP remains dominant
Abolition of wage labor	3/7	Communes attempted to abolish wages; failed but ideologically aligned.
Internationalism	4/7	Supported global Maoist movements; later nationalist turn
Human emancipation	1/7	Famine, purges, repression contradict Marx's humanistic goals.

Stalin's total: 25/49

Average: **3.6/7**

Interpretation: Mao believed **deeply in Marxism** and attempted radical leaps toward communism, but his experiments failed catastrophically, and China remained an authoritarian state socialist system far from Marx's stateless, classless ideal.

Final Results



Average on the Marxist scale: **2.3/7**

Marxist **Not Approved**



Average on the Marxist scale: **3.6/7**

Marxist **Approved**



Bibliography

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