

How we survived communism and even laughed

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



The book *How we Survived Communism and Even Laughed* is written by Slavenka Drakulic. Based in 1990, Drakulic shares her journey about traveling to various Eastern European countries to converse with women about their lives in their communist countries. This essay will be discussing and exploring the hardships men and women had to face under their communist countries, specifically the lack of goods/products, the challenges/burdens women faced, and the authors reasoning on why she believed communism failed.

The book discusses the author's personal experiences she has endured in a communist country, but primarily focuses on the stories of other women's personal journeys, feelings, opinions, and hardships they had to face.

Throughout the book Drakulic maintains a huge dislike for her communist country. A huge problem that people had to face was the lack of goods and products they could obtain. A considerably important product Drakulic discusses in her book is the shortage of toilet paper. In the United States, we see toilet paper as a necessity, a day to day product used by the whole nation. However, the citizens of these communist countries are denied to this necessity and are forced to accommodate with what they have. In these European countries toilet paper is considered a luxury item, and if that is the case we know there is a huge problem. Drakulic states Progress in communism was marked by better and better quality toilet paper. (Drakulic 72) People were forced to use other items such as newspaper in replace of toilet paper thus revealing the way these people had to survive and be resourceful. Aside from this dire necessity women were denied the basic products they should be provided, and therefore humiliated. Tampons and <https://assignbuster.com/how-we-survived-communism-and-even-laughed/>

sanitary were luxury items and many did not have access to them.

Ultimately leading women to a state of humiliation and feeling degraded.

Alongside the lack of these necessities came along with the undesirable living situations. Drakulic goes into detail about how families were forced to live in cramped apartments with their family members and sometimes people they didn't know. Families who were lucky were the ones who had grandparents/parents whom already obtained an apartment. The outrageous price of the apartments and the lack of them made it difficult for families to move on with their new families or out of their parents' home. Again, showing how limited and impossible it was for people of communist countries to explore the possibility of freedom and life on their own.

The lack of privacy was another huge disadvantage for the people of communist countries. Everywhere people went, their lives were monitored from their phone calls to eating out at a restaurant. They were always being watched. Their only escape was at home. And although they wanted their own freedom, the citizens did not desire such thing because of the principles placed upon them. Overall, the lack of children's toys, privacy, food, and apartments to the lack toilet paper, men, women, and children were denied important, normal, and crucial items and products they needed to live a healthy/normal life.

It appears that in a communist country, all are said to be equal both men and women.

However, though they semi- accomplished this by making it hard for women to access cosmetics and create their own sense of style, women were often degraded, humiliated and treated as less than. Cosmetics were luxury products to women and an ideal way to separate your looks from the rest. Women had a huge desire to create an identity for themselves. Women not being able to feel different led to low self-esteem and depression. Drakulic states Without a choice of cosmetics and clothes .. it wasn't at all hard to create the special kind of uniformity that comes out of an equal distribution of poverty and the neglect of people's real needs. There was no chance for individualism " for women or men (Drakulic 23).

Sexism was huge problem in communist countries, because though the government tried to create equality between the two there was question about who would do what type of work ex. house work, office work. Drakulic states What is one supposed to call hand-washing of laundry, scrubbing floors, or ironing? The answer is: just women's work (Drakulic 46). This quote shows that although equality was the goal, their standards would never be met because of deep-rooted sexism towards women. Overall women were faced with many challenges and burdens. They were denied the ability of individualism, were treated as less then, and denied the necessities a woman needs.

Lastly Darkulic discusses why she believes communism has failed. A variety of reasons were believed to have caused such failure. One being the lack of consideration and support for the people. Darkulic states it failed because of distrust, because of a fear for the future. True people did collect out of

povertya poverty in which the whole country is deprived, everybody is poor a state of life that hardly changes...because deep down nobody believed in a system that was continuously unable to provide for its citizens basic needs.

(Drakulic 189)