

Socialism Has Failed Everywhere.

Mamdani's NYC Will Be No Different.

By Victor Davis Hanson

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Editor's note: This is a lightly edited transcript of today's video from Daily Signal Senior Contributor Victor Davis Hanson.

Hello, this is Victor Davis Hanson for The Daily Signal. Socialism is in the news. Zohran Mamdani did the unthinkable. He was elected to be mayor of New York City, the financial capital, not just of the United States, but of the world at large. And he's a devout socialist. But he has admitted—he likes to deny it—that he's really a communist because he's advocated “seizing the means of production.”

And almost every day, a quote from his past comes out that suggests that he's not just a socialist who wants the government to control utilities or housing, but he wants to “seize the means of production.” That means the industrial base and private property itself.

Why is that scary? Because we have a whole generation who have gone through K-12 and higher education and heard about the glories of statism, socialism, communism in the universities and our school system, but not the merits of capitalism. It's not really socialism versus capitalism. It is socialism has nothing to offer. And we know that for two reasons.

If we look at the contemporary world, in the recent past and in the present, everywhere a socialist paradigm has been implemented, it has done two things: It has destroyed the economy and made people poor, and two, it has deprived people of their civil liberties.

I should add, it also has created greater inequality, at least in terms of the ruling elite, who feel they're not subject to the ramifications of their socialist ideology, and they live a very refined and affluent lifestyle.

Take a look, for example, at the Soviet Union when it collapsed. Mao's China collapsed. Cuba is in free fall since the Castro brothers took over in 1959. Venezuela was, at one time, the wealthiest country in Latin America. It's

collapsed. You can ditto the other countries that are collapsing, to a lesser extent, Peru, Colombia.

Anybody who adopts it, it has not done well. China is doing well—better than it did—because it has an odd mixture of a communist authoritarian government, but it allows free market principles to save the economy from itself. The same thing is true of President Vladimir Putin’s Russia. It achieved levels of gross domestic product, oil production that were superior to the communist past, just simply because it had elements of a market economy. Some market economy is better than none.

Why, then secondly, does socialism fail? It is contrary to human nature. All of us want to be rewarded for our own efforts. We’re unique individuals. We don’t wanna be like a tessera in just one large mosaic.

There’s a famous anecdote—I have no idea if it’s true or not—that when Karl Marx had people, and Friedrich Engels, over to their parlor to discuss the principles of socialism in mid-19th-century Europe, he had the idea that he’d have a tray of money. And these poor intellectuals would come in—and of course, as you remember from “Das Kapital”—each, according to their own need, would be rewarded for their labor. So, he said, if you’re poor, just take what you need.

Well, you know how that would work out. Humans, being what they are, one person or two people or three people would take it all and say that they had greater need than somebody else, even if they didn’t, given that there would be no deterrence from being dishonest as long as you cloaked your selfishness in a larger ideological veneer.

And that’s what socialism does. It tries to say that we’re all brothers and we all love each other, and we all want the same thing. That’s what Mamdani is saying. But look at Mamdani himself. He comes from one of the more affluent families in New York. His father is an endowed professor. He’s very well compensated. Hardcore Marxist. Pro-Hamas. His mother is a multimillion-dollar filmmaker. He grew up in affluence. He lives in a rent-controlled apartment, even though, by any standard, he would be qualified as a wealthy person and doesn’t need a state subsidy and could do better to give that apartment to someone with less means.

So, my point is that socialism destroys private initiative. If you think the harder you work, the better ideas you have, the more efficiency you can create in your

business or in your own life but you're not going to be compensated more than someone who does not either show those traits or doesn't want to show those traits or just simply says, "Live and let live. I just wanna stay in my house, watch TV, and get pizza," and he will get the same amount as you do, in terms of cars or housing or federal supplements—it doesn't work.

We have one last, more controversial proof that it doesn't work. Since the Obama age, the rate of socialist practices, policies, agendas in the United States have vastly accelerated. And after the Obama presidency, the rather esoteric political term "red state," "blue state" became commonplace. And it basically denotes those states who are more socialist and those states that are more free market.

California is a socialist state, in the sense that we're talking, like New York, a 13%+ income tax rate at the highest rates. We have the highest gas and oil prices—natural gas and oil. We have the highest energy prices. We have some of the highest housing prices. The same is true of New York. The same is true of Minnesota, Michigan, all of these states.

Why? Because the central government, first of all, it goes after the opposition. And most of these states are one-party state, without a viable opposition to keep it in check. No. 2, the people who have created this socialist system are not subject to it themselves.

If you look at the California, it's the Nancy Pelosis, the Barbara Boxers, the late Dianne Feinsteins, the Jerry Browns, the Gavin Newsoms. They all have one thing in common. They were very, very wealthy. They live lives completely distinct, separate from the masses, whom they said would benefit from their socialist policy. And the result is they took a paradise, like California, and turned it into purgatory. So, there's no empirical evidence whether, within the United States or abroad, that there's a socialist cure for what socialism has done.

Mamdani has, basically, taken a New York under Bill de Blasio and prior mayors that was a socialist paradigm and is in dire straits, and he thinks more socialism will cure it.

One final observation. In the Western world, we say that the Europeans are more advanced. Some people, naively, think that. They were socialists. They had the VAT tax. They had higher inheritance taxes and income taxes, at one time, than we did. I'm not sure that's still true. But they governed every aspect of the economy.

And of course, if you object to socialism or communism—and who wouldn't—the state then has to come in and restrict free speech.

So, what we're seeing in Europe today is disastrous policies, importing poor illegal aliens with antithetical political, religious, cultural, social views than the Europeans themselves, and then suggesting that if anybody complains, they're guilty of racism and suppressing their free speech. And meanwhile, the idea is everybody is going to get a flat and a high-rise, take mass transit, and be about the same.

Are people happy? No. As we speak, there are right-wing—if I could use that term—conservative, free market governments in places like Hungary, the Czech Republic, Italy and growing in places like Britain, the Netherlands, Austria, in France itself. The opposition, who opposes socialism, is gaining and the people are behind it. Why? Is it because they don't know socialism? No. It's because they know it all too well.