

# What Americans Must Know About Socialism

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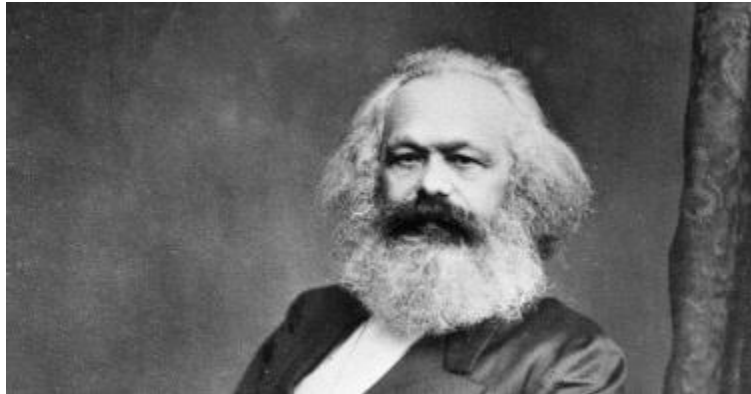


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Portrait of Karl Marx (1818-1883), before 1875. Fine Art Images Heritage Images/Newscom

## Key Takeaways

Socialism is no longer a parlor game for academics but a political alternative taken seriously by millennials.

“They don’t recognize that much of what they enjoy in life is a result of capitalism and would disappear if socialism were to be implemented.”

This is the reality of socialism — a pseudo-religion grounded in pseudo-science and enforced by political tyranny.

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Is a specter of socialism haunting America, especially among our millennials? There is disquieting evidence of many young Americans' sympathy for socialism. Exhibit A: 2.052 million people under the age of 30 voted for democratic socialist Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Democratic primaries and caucuses. Exhibit B: Polls find that, not only do a large majority of millennials have a favorable opinion of socialism, a near majority would prefer to live under socialism rather than capitalism. Exhibit C: The no-longer sleeping Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) now boasts 30,000 members, most of them in their twenties and eager to follow the socialist banner.

We've come a long way since the 1988 presidential race when George H. W. Bush buried his Democratic challenger Michael Dukakis by labeling him a "liberal." Socialism is no longer a parlor game for academics but a political alternative taken seriously by millennials who are not put off by the radical DSA platform.

DSA believes in ending the private ownership of industries whose products are viewed as "necessities." The production of such products, it argues, should not be left to "profiteers." It also believes that government should "democratize" private businesses — that is, give workers control over them — to the greatest extent possible. "Socialism," explains a member of DSA's national steering committee, "is the democratization of all areas of life, including but not limited to the economy."

What is happening in America, once the apotheosis of capitalism?

The first part of that answer lies in two words, not "Karl Marx," but "Bernie Sanders." The senator from Vermont captured the hearts and the votes of many millennials with his call for single payer health care, free public college, campaign finance reform, and racial, economic, and climate justice. The prime target of his animus was the top 1 percent in America who own, it is true, some 40 percent of the nation's total wealth — as much as the bottom 90 percent. What Bernie rarely pointed out was that the same top 1 percent paid 39.5 percent of the individual income taxes. Sanders had a ready explanation for how to pay for all of the freebies: increase the taxes on the rich and their corporations. In Bernie's world, there is such a thing as a free lunch because the bill will be paid by those at the top.

According to one CNN analyst, millennials rallied in the many thousands behind Sanders because they are socially liberal — especially on LGBT rights — saddled with mountains of student debt, disillusioned with the status quo, "and eager to break with traditional [political] models." Bernie provided solutions to all their problems — without detailing the price or conceding the lessening in individual liberty. Such details were swept aside by the revolutionary spirit of the millennials who "felt the Bern." As one Bernista said, "You can build a powerful political movement with a base of 2 million true believers."

The second reason for the shift toward socialism was the Great Recession of 2008. It tore a huge hole in the American people's belief in capitalism as the way to a better life and sent them

looking for alternatives. Many of them, especially younger Americans, found it in a “soft socialism” that was part welfare state, part administrative state, part socialist democracy.

The most startling poll was the YouGov survey that reported that given a choice, 44 percent of young people between the ages of 16 and 29 would prefer to live in a socialist nation rather than a capitalist country. Another seven percent would choose communism. However, the same poll revealed that only 33 percent of the respondents could correctly define socialism as based on the common ownership of economic and social systems as well as the state control of the means of production. What most millennials mean by “socialism” seems to be a mix of our welfare state and what they perceive to be Swedish democratic socialism. But Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries including Denmark favor the free market and are content with private rather than government ownership of their major industries. However, Danish domestic spending including comprehensive health care has a high price — a top personal income tax of 57 percent.

The millennial trend toward an acceptance of socialism is not new. A 2014 poll by Reason-Rupe, a libertarian group, reported that 58 percent of those aged 18 to 24 had a favorable view of socialism. A 2016 Gallup survey found that 55 percent of those 18-29 had a “positive image” of socialism. But 90 percent were favorable to “entrepreneurs” while 78 percent favored “free enterprise.” How can a group be 55 percent socialist and 78 percent entrepreneurial? Either through cognitive dissonance or plain ignorance. In any case, it is critical for advocates of free enterprise to make the case against socialism because acceptance of socialism by any name places millennials on a slippery slope. Another recession and/or a well-run presidential campaign by a charismatic demagogue could move America farther down the road to serfdom.

A 2016 Harvard poll determined that 33 percent of Americans under 30 wanted socialism. In January 2016, YouGov asked millennials whether they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of socialism. Eight percent replied “very favorable,” 35 percent “somewhat favorable,” for a total of 43 percent, almost the same percentage as in their 2017 survey.

But would these same millennials choose socialism, if in exchange for “free” education and “free” health care, they would have to give up their personal property, such as their iPhone? Would seven percent of millennials declare their willingness to live under communism if they knew the real costs of communism as practiced in some 40 nations over the past century — the denial of free speech, a free press, and free assembly, the imprisonment and execution of dissidents, no free and open elections, no independent judiciary or rule of law, the dictatorship of the Communist Party in all matters and on all occasions?

For the first time in decades, socialists are taking advantage of the Bernie Sanders phenomenon to organize, raise funds, and field candidates from New York City to Oakland, California. A major instrument is DSA — the Democratic Socialists of America — about which the liberal *New Republic* asked, “Are the Democratic Socialists for America for Real?”

The most dramatic proof of socialism’s new-found political clout was Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s upset victory over veteran Rep. Joseph Crowley of New York, the number four Democrat in the House of Representatives, in the June Democratic primary. Ocasio-Cortez received 57 percent of the vote — to Crowley’s 42 percent — while pledging to back Medicare

for all, free college tuition, legalization of marijuana and the elimination of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Attractive and articulate, the 28-year-old socialist announced she would support progressive candidates who challenged Democratic incumbents in primaries. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi cautioned Ocasio-Cortez not to oppose liberal Democrats who had a proven record of results. Former Sen. Joe Lieberman, the Democratic Party's vice presidential nominee in 2000, warned that "the policies Ms. Ocasio-Cortez advocates are so far from the mainstream, her election in November would make it harder for Congress to stop fighting and start fixing problems." He noted that Republicans were already referring to Ocasio-Cortez as "the new face" of the Democratic Party. But an ideologue like Ocasio-Cortez is unlikely to be ruled by conventional politics.

The same can be said of Democratic Socialists. Over 700 elected delegates from around the country attended DSA's 2017 national convention in Chicago, the historic site of many political beginnings from the 1860 presidential nomination of Abraham Lincoln to the riotous 1968 Democratic National Convention. Veterans of the organization were "blown away" by the enthusiasm of the younger DSA members whose priority is to win elections that advance socialism. Chicago City Councilman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, aged 28, is one of DSA's elected officials. He advised an ecumenical approach for socialist candidates — to run on the Democratic ballot line because it offers access to people who want single-payer healthcare and a \$15 minimum wage. As part of its demographic outreach, Bianca Cunningham, the African-American chair of New York City's DSA labor branch, helped to form a national Afro-socialist caucus.

Until Ocasio-Cortez's startling win, DSA and its leftist allies concentrated on elections at the state and local levels; they have had success such as the victory of Councilman Khalid Kamau in South Fulton, Georgia. Kshama Sawant of the Socialist Alternative Party won a seat on Seattle's city council and pushed through an increase in the city's minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Running as a socialist, thirty-four-year old Franklin Bynum was elected a criminal court judge in Houston. In Pittsburgh, eight Democrats sought the endorsement of the local DSA chapter in this year's primary. Even in Tulsa, Oklahoma, one of the reddest of states, four Democrats ran as democratic socialists. "It's not a liability to say that anymore," commented DSA activist Jorge Roman-Romero.

As proof of their expanding influence, socialists point to the radical magazine *Jacobin*, which has about 1 million page views a month, and the leftist podcast *Chapo Trap House*, which delights in ridiculing politicians and journalists on the center left. Following the 2016 election, for example, a *Chapo* co-host compared Hillary Clinton to race car driver Dale Earnhardt, joking that both had crashed because they "couldn't turn left." (Earnhardt was killed in a 2001 racing accident.) It was unvarnished commentary but no rougher than the frequent media comments about (or by) Donald Trump. Socialist publications like "n+1" and the "New Inquiry" have attracted younger readers with their unremitting attacks on capitalism.

After Trump's victory, commentators such as Michael Kazin, editor of the leftist magazine *Dissent*, thought that the Left would be on the defensive as "when Reagan and George

W. Bush were in power.” Instead, there is a renewed interest in the radical left and the possibility that DSA “might be able and will certainly try to take advantage of it.”

What does all this — the Sanders candidacy, the national polls, the political organizations like DSA, the intense media focus — add up to? Are they the makings of a national movement or merely a passing fancy temporarily fueled by young people who will soon get caught up in the next political fad? Let’s judge them by the five essential elements of a successful political movement: charismatic leadership, a national constituency, adequate financing, media proficiency, and a relevant philosophy.

In some ways, the “new” DSA is reminiscent of Young Americans for Freedom in the early 1960s. Then YAF claimed a membership of 20,000, backed Sen. Barry Goldwater and his promise to offer a conservative choice and not a liberal echo, raised money with the help of OAFs (Older Americans for Freedom), convinced the media (led by the *New York Times*) that YAF was the wave of the future, and hoisted the anti-communist flag high at every rally and meeting. It was the height of the Cold War and America was engaged in a deadly struggle with the forces of evil.

Like DSA, YAF leaders were mostly white, male, well-educated, and from middle-class families. They were young men in a hurry, certain they could change history, and so they did — first, with the presidential nomination of conservative Goldwater in 1964, and later the election of conservative Ronald Reagan as president in 1980. Bill Buckley was YAF’s luminous hero, the St. Paul of the conservative movement who went where no conservative had gone before — into the belly of the liberal beast, Harvard.

As for DSA, it has a national constituency, principled if aging leaders like Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, fund-raising potential, strong media interest, and a philosophy attractive to Americans tired of sliding down the economic ladder and wondering what happened to the American Dream. Before dismissing the Democratic Socialists of America — and its compatriots — as idealistic and naïve, it should be remembered that the Tea Party had only 60,000 members in 2010 but won 47 seats in the House of Representatives that fall.

On the road to socialism, DSA and its fellow socialists will seek to convert industries like health care into public utilities; regulate coal mines out of existence; subsidize sectors of the economy like solar energy; and operate corporations like Amtrak and Freddie Mac. They will present socialism as the reasonable alternative to the unchecked greed of the captains of capitalism.

However, as it grows in numbers and influence, DSA will encounter a critical discrepancy — the telling difference between its pure socialism and the soft socialism of popular opinion. DSA purists seek public ownership of the means of production as well as centralized control of goods and services. Soft socialists see a limited role for the private sector *à la* Sweden. Will DSA be able to fuse the two kinds of socialism as conservatives like Frank Meyer and William F. Buckley Jr. blended traditional conservatism and libertarianism in the 1960s and 1970s?

Which brings us to the urgent need to depict the realities of socialism to Americans who have never heard of the Berlin Wall, the Gulag, the killing fields of Cambodia, the Tiananmen Square massacre, or the daily bread lines in Moscow.

According to the YouGov survey, one-third of all Americans would prefer to live under socialism rather than capitalism. Why? Is it idealism — the desire for a classless society in which everyone is equal and envy does not exist because everything is owned in common? Is it a lack of knowledge? When asked how many people have died under communism, only 31 percent of Americans could provide the correct answer — “Over 100 million.” About seven in ten Americans could not define communism.

Commented one millennial about his peers, “They don’t recognize that much of what they enjoy in life is a result of capitalism and would disappear if socialism were to be implemented. They haven’t seen socialism’s failures firsthand.”

Here are the realities of socialism and its grandmaster, Karl Marx.

### 1. *Socialism has never worked anywhere.*

Socialism in all its forms — Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union, Maoism in China, “state socialism” in India, “democratic socialism” in Sweden, National Socialism in Nazi Germany — has never come close to realizing the classless ideal of its founding father, Karl Marx. Instead, socialists have been forced to adopt a wide range of capitalist measures, including private ownership of railroads and airlines (United Kingdom), special economic zones (China), and open markets and foreign investment (Sweden).

Mikhail Gorbachev took over a bankrupt Soviet Union in 1985 and desperately tried to resuscitate “socialism” (i.e., communism) through *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). He failed abjectly and was forced to preside over the dissolution of the once mighty Soviet empire on Christmas Day, 1991, seven decades after Lenin mounted a truck in St. Petersburg to announce the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution.

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping abandoned the rigid excesses of Maoist thought and adopted a form of communism with “Chinese characteristics” that was more capitalist than socialist in several ways. Deng, however, also ensured the Communist Party’s control of any new homeland enterprise or foreign investment.

After decades of sluggish growth and bureaucratic inefficiency, India rejected state socialism in the 1990s and shifted to a capitalist approach that spawned the world’s largest middle class of more than three hundred million (nearly equal to the entire U.S. population). Sweden is often described as a “socialist” country, but is not and never has been socialist. It is a social democracy in which the means of production are owned primarily by private individuals. Among the proofs of its commitment to a market economy is that Sweden ranked number 19 worldwide in the Heritage Foundation’s *2017 Index of Economic Freedom*.

Socialism's failure to deliver on its promises of bread, peace, and land to the people is confirmed by the repeated, open resistance of dissidents: in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1980 with the formation of Solidarity, China's Tiananmen Square in 1989, and in present-day Cuba with the resolute Ladies in White who parade every Sunday after mass to call attention to the many jailed dissidents including their husbands and sons.

Socialism failed in America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the English philanthropist Robert Owen launched New Harmony, a "village of cooperation" on the banks of the Wabash River in Indiana. Volunteers flocked to the socialist experiment, but most were better at sitting in a chair than making one. Within a few years, New Harmony collapsed, and Owen went home.

## 2. *The founding father of socialism is the messianic Karl Marx.*

Marx was an atheist socialist who insisted that his was the only "scientific" socialism based not on wishful thinking but the inexorable laws of history. The whole of history, declared Marx and his close collaborator and friend Friedrich Engels, is the history of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The inevitable collapse of capitalism and the victory of the proletariat would end the conflict and usher in a classless society and pure socialism or communism (Marx used both terms interchangeably). He listed 10 necessary measures as steps along the way to his utopia, including a progressive income tax, the abolition of private property, free education for all, and centralization of the means of communication and transport in "the hands of the state."

Much of the appeal of Marxism was its scathing critique of capitalism and its 19<sup>th</sup> century excesses, which included 16-hour work days and Dickensian working conditions. It was the early days of the Industrial Revolution when exploitation of workers, young and old, was widespread and horrific. By the end of the century, much had changed. Capitalism was not breaking down under the pressure of industrial concentration as Marx had predicted. To the contrary, economies were expanding and the lives of workers were slowly but demonstrably improving. Rather than developing into revolutionaries (as predicted by Marx), the workers were becoming reformers and even bourgeoisie.

The core philosophical weakness of Marxism was the founder's insistence that his version of Hegelian dialectic — thesis, antithesis, synthesis — was scientific and without flaw. He asserted that feudalism had been replaced by capitalism which would be replaced by socialism in an irreversible process. But it is now close to 200 years since the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, and capitalism rather than socialism dominates much of the global economy. In the Heritage Foundation's *2018 Index of Economic Freedom*, 102 countries, many of them less developed or emerging economies, showed advances in economic growth and individual prosperity. Economic freedom improved globally for the sixth year in a row.

Marx was not the first utopian. Plato had his *Republic*, and Thomas More his *Utopia*. They were centrally ruled and devoid of individual choice. More's Utopia was a highly regimented "paradise" in which all citizens dressed alike and lived in identical houses and where private discussion of public affairs incurred the death penalty. Marx insisted that his socialist Utopia would be different because it would be classless and free of all nationalist sentiment because the

nation state would have withered away. Ever melodramatic, he called on the “workingmen of all countries” to unite against the ruling classes — they had “nothing to lose but their chains.”

It was powerful rhetoric, but was Marx’s socialist world any more possible than the utopias proposed by Plato and More and other central planners? How good a historian and how accurate a prophet was Karl Marx?

Contrary to Marx, feudalism broke down, not because of economic contradictions, but because of the new trade routes which helped England and other countries move from a land-based to a money-based economy. Capitalism did not emerge naturally as the antithesis of feudalism but through a series of events including the emergence of the Puritan ethic, inventions like the cotton gin, the individualism of the Enlightenment, and the emergence of classical liberalism in the writings of thinkers like Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill.

Nor did Marx anticipate that workers would become increasingly affluent, independent, and even bourgeois. He did not foresee that capitalists would address problems such as unemployment and inflation, monopolies, Social Security and health care, and the proper balance of private and public control over the means of production.

Furthermore, the working class has not fallen into greater and greater misery. The industrial nations have seen a dramatic rise in the standard of living of the average worker. The middle class has not disappeared but expanded. As the esteemed economist Paul Samuelson wrote: “As a prophet Marx was colossally unlucky and his system colossally useless.”

### 3. *Socialism forbids the age-old right of private property.*

In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx says, “The theory of the communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.” He knew that depriving individuals of this basic freedom would not be easy and that dictatorship by the proletariat — and violence — would be required. However, the abolition of private property is necessary, Marx argued, because it is the central cause of the perennial clash between the classes.

But private property is not just any right; it is integral to civilization. There never was a time or place when all possessions were collectively owned. There is no convincing evidence, writes the Harvard historian Richard Pipes, that there were societies that knew “no boundary posts and fences” or ignored “mine” and “thine.”

It is often argued that socialism is a secular version of Christianity, referring to Acts 2-5, which describes the early Christians as having “all things in common.” It is true that following Pentecost, Christians sold their possessions and property and shared the results with “any [that] might have need.” But there is a critical distinction between Christians and socialists: Jesus urged his followers to give up *their* possessions while socialists want to give away the possessions of *others*. St. Paul is sometimes quoted as saying that “money is the root of all evil.” What he actually wrote in a letter to Timothy was that “love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” His indictment, as the former AEI president Arthur Brooks has pointed out, was of an inordinate *attachment* to money.



More secular sources about the consequential role of private property can be cited. In *The Constitution of Liberty*, Nobel Laureate Friedrich Hayek writes that the recognition of private property is “an essential condition for the prevention of coercion.” He quotes Lord Acton as saying that “a people averse to the institution of private property is without the first element of freedom” and Henry Maine as asserting: “Nobody is at liberty to attack [private] property and to say at the same time that he values civilization. The history of the two cannot be disentangled.” In view of the alleged lack of individual liberty in classical Greece, writes Hayek, it deserves mention that in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece the sanctity of the private home was so recognized that even under the rule of the “Thirty Tyrants,” a man could save his life by staying at home. The power of private property indeed.

#### 4. *Socialism insists that human nature is malleable, not constant.*

Karl Marx’s attitude toward human nature flows from Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who challenged the traditional idea of a fixed human nature bestowed by God. Rousseau wrote, “We do not know what our nature permits us to be.” Locke saw human nature as a *tabula rasa* —a blank page. Hobbes famously described man’s natural state as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Marx borrowed from the Enlightenment to say that human nature is intrinsically malleable. The Communist state established by Lenin in Russia in November 1917, wrote Richard Pipes, was “a grandiose experiment in public education” to create an entirely new type of human being — Soviet Man.

Christian theology with its idea of a fixed human nature infuriated Marx, who was not just an atheist but a God-hater who denounced religion as “the opium of the people.” His disciples, led by Lenin, always targeted the churches when they came to power. They initiated without apology a campaign of terror, shutting down churches, executing priests and bishops and violating nuns. The horrors were justified as part of the class-cleansing Marx envisioned.

The Founders of the American Revolution rejected those who believed that man was born without any imprint and sided with those who accepted that man was born in the image of God. As the Declaration of Independence states, all men “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” The Founders disagreed with those who thought man was perfectible and instead took the Christian position that man’s nature was fallen.

As Madison famously observed, “If men were angels there would be no need for government” and “ambition must be made to counteract ambition.” It is a reflection of human nature, Madison said, that “such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government.” George Washington summed up the Founders’ realism: “We must take human nature as we find it, perfection falls not to the share of mortals.”

The essential difference between the visions of Karl Marx and George Washington, aside from the question of human nature, is that in Marx’s socialist world there is a dictatorship of the Communist Party, while in a liberal democracy like the United States “We the People” tell the government what to do, the government does not tell the people what to do.

## 5. *Socialism depends upon dictatorship to attain and remain in power.*

Without exception, every socialist leader from Vladimir Lenin to Fidel Castro promised to initiate basic political freedoms such as free elections, a free press, and free assembly. None fulfilled those promises.

Personal experience with this common falsehood has been eloquently provided by six famous intellectuals in *The God That Failed*. They describe their journey into Communism and their exit when they encountered the gigantic gap between their vision of a socialist Utopia and the totalitarian reality of the socialist state. All of them, points out editor Richard Crossman, chose Marxist socialism because they had lost faith in democracy and were willing to sacrifice “bourgeois liberties” in order to defeat Nazi Germany. Their socialist conversion was rooted in despair with Western values that produced the Great Depression and permitted Fascism.

Their conversion was greatly strengthened by what Crossman calls “the Christian conscience” even among those who were not orthodox Christians. The emotional appeal of Marxist socialism lay in the sacrifices, material and spiritual, which it demanded as well as the unswerving obedience to the socialist line no matter how radically or quickly it changed. A case in point: Communists condemned Adolf Hitler throughout the 1930s until the summer of 1939, when Joseph Stalin and Hitler signed a non-aggression pact. Immediately, all “true” socialists were obliged to reverse course and hail the agreement as a major step toward peace. It was, in fact, a cynical deal that allowed the Nazis and the Soviets to invade and divide up Poland, thereby precipitating World War II.

With the Hitler-Stalin pact, scales fell from the eyes of the six intellectuals, starting with the Hungarian novelist Arthur Koestler, who now condemned the infamous show trials ordered by Stalin: “At no time and in no country have more revolutionaries been killed and reduced to slavery than in Soviet Russia.” The American black writer Richard Wright wrote, “At that [socialist] meeting I learned that when a man was informed of the wish of the Party he submitted, even though he knew with all the strength of his brain that the wish was not a wise one, was one that would ultimately harm the Party’s interests.”

After visiting the Soviet Union, the French Nobel Laureate André Gide said bluntly, “I doubt whether in any country in the world — not even in Hitler’s Germany — have the mind and spirit ever been less free, more bent, more terrorized and indeed vassalized — than in the Soviet Union.” Gide said that “the Soviet Union has deceived our fondest hopes and shown us tragically in what treacherous quicksand an honest revolution can founder.”

The American journalist Louis Fisher, once an enthusiastic chronicler of Soviet economic advances, recounted how much the Soviet Union had changed: “Ubiquitous fear, amply justified by terror, had killed revolt, silenced protest, and destroyed civil courage. In place of idealism, cynical safety-first. In place of dedication, pursuit of personal aggrandizement. In place of living spirit, dead conformism, bureaucratic formalism, and the parrotism of false clichés.”

So it was in the Soviet Union under Stalin; so it has been in every socialist experiment since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The Soviet-Nazi agreement was the cracking point for many

intellectuals in the West, including the American Louis Fisher, who accused Stalin of building an imperialistic militaristic system in which he is, and his successor will be, “the Supreme Slave Master.” How then, Fisher asked, can anyone interested in the welfare of people and the peace and progress of humanity support such a system? “Because there is rottenness in the democratic world?” he asked and answered, “We can fight the rottenness. What can Soviet citizens do about Stalinism?”

It took decades, but the citizens of all the nations behind the Iron Curtain finally threw off their chains in 1989, and wrote *finis* to Soviet communism. Tragically, there are still more than 1 billion people living today under the Marxist socialist regimes of China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, and Laos.

#### 6. *Socialism is responsible for the deaths of more than 100 million victims.*

If you were asked how many Jews died in the Holocaust, you would probably respond, “Six million.” We learned the correct answer in our schools and universities, through the books and articles we have read, the movies and television programs we have watched, our conversations with families, friends, and colleagues. There is a continuing campaign to remind us of the Holocaust and to declare, “Never again.” And rightly so. The holocaust carried out by the Nazis — their deliberate campaign of genocide — was the greatest evil of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But if you were asked, “How many victims of communism have there been?” You would probably hesitate and respond — “Five million? Twenty million? Fifty million?” Few of us would know the right answer: at least 100 million men, women, and children, more than all the deaths of all the major wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Communism committed the great crime of the last century.

It is a number difficult to comprehend, let alone accept. Surely, you might say, there could not have been that many. But we can be certain of saying that there have been at least 100 million victims of communism because of the painstaking research of the editors of *The Black Book of Communism*, published by the Harvard University Press. They document that each and every Marxist socialist regime has prevailed by way of a pistol to the back of the head and a death sentence in a forced labor camp.

There is no exception whether in China under Mao Zedong, North Korea under Kim Il Sung, Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, Cuba under Fidel Castro, Cambodia under Pol Pot, or Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam.

According to Stephane Courtois, the editor in chief of *The Black Book of Communism*, the leading mass murderer is Pol Pot, whose attempt to communize Cambodia resulted in the deaths of one fourth of the country’s population. His closest rival is Mao, under whom as many as 40 million Chinese died in just one socialist campaign — the grossly misnamed Great Leap Forward. Of the Soviet Union’s first two dictators, Lenin and Stalin, Courtois says, “The blood turns cold at its venture into planned, logical and ‘politically collect’ mass slaughter.”

What price socialism? We must not limit ourselves to numbers.

The Chinese philosopher Lin Yutang listed the “little terrors” that prevailed in China — making children of 12 subject to capital punishment, sending women to work in underground coal mines, harassing workers during their lunchtime with threats of prison if they were late returning to work.

There were the costs in terror. One Soviet defector wrote about Soviet life: “We lived in a world swarming with invisible eyes and ears.”

There were the costs in thought control. The content of everything in print and broadcast was limited to authorized “truths.” The Soviet press dismissed the 1932-33 forced famine in Ukraine that took the lives of seven million innocents as an anti-communist myth. One Western apologist for the regime, Edouard Herriot, wrote: “I have crossed the whole of Ukraine, and I can assure you that the entire country is like a garden in full bloom.”

There were the costs to the world. There was no crisis anywhere in the world from Southeast Asia to the Caribbean, from sub-Saharan Africa to the Middle East, in which the ideological ambitions of Moscow and its imitators, driven by Marxist-Leninist thought, were not involved throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is the reality of socialism — a pseudo-religion grounded in pseudo-science and enforced by political tyranny. This is the case against socialism — a god that failed, a science that never was, a political system headed for the ash heap of history.