

# THE REAL FACE OF SOCIALISM

*39 Experiments. 100 Million Dead. You and Your Children Could Be Next.*

by Sergei Matveyuk

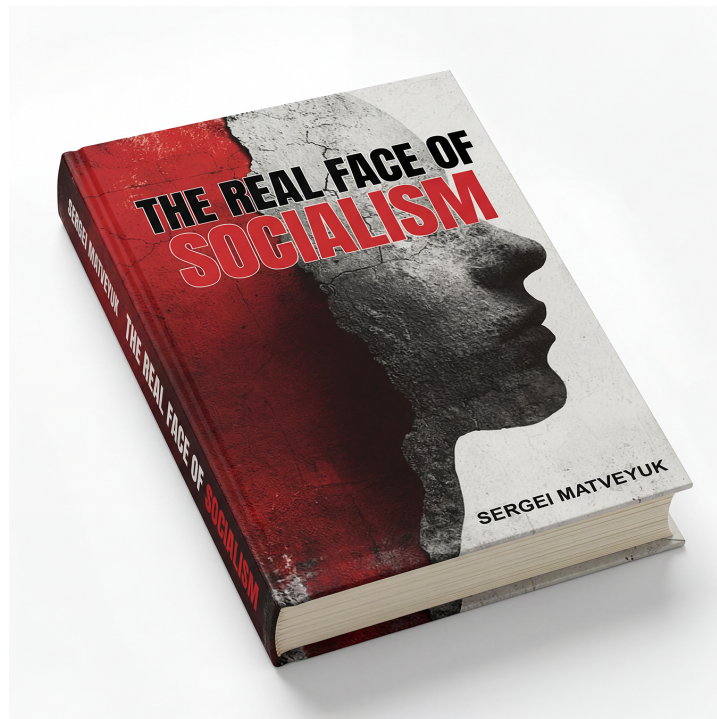
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## Reader's Guide & Book Club Companion

“When it comes to defending freedom, silence is complicity.”

— Sergei Matveyuk

**Lumenix Freedom Press**  
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## A Note to Reading Groups

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The Real Face of Socialism is not a conventional policy argument. It is a testimony — from a man whose father and grandfather were imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag, whose uncle was murdered by the state, whose family's farm, flour mill, and last cow were confiscated by the regime, and who waited fifty years across generations for permission to emigrate.

Sergei Matveyuk arrived in the United States in 1989 with \$90 in his pocket. He built a business, raised a family, earned a degree, and eventually ran for Congress in Colorado's 4th Congressional District — all because, as he writes, he believes that when it comes to defending freedom, silence is complicity.

This guide is designed for readers who want to engage seriously with the book's evidence and arguments — whether they agree, disagree, or are still deciding. The questions are organized by section and theme, and are intended to generate genuine conversation rather than predetermined conclusions.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide includes: a structural overview, chapter-by-chapter summaries, thematic discussion questions, Matveyuk's ten questions to socialists (with discussion prompts), a comparison table of socialist experiments, creative activities, and a further reading list. You do not need to use all sections — let your group's interests guide you.

## About the Author and the Book

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### ***Sergei Matveyuk: A Personal Stake***

Matveyuk's authority in this book is not academic — it is biographical. His father and grandfather were both imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag for refusing to support the regime. The state confiscated his family's property, leaving his grandmother to raise children with no resources. Matveyuk himself experienced systematic discrimination and oppression throughout his life in the Soviet Union.

What makes his voice distinctive is the directness with which he connects the abstract — ideology, economic theory, political psychology — to the concrete: a dead uncle, a confiscated farm, a grandmother with nothing, a man who waited half a century to be free. He is not writing about socialism from the outside. He lived inside it.

### ***The Book's Structure***

The book is organized in four parts, each building on the last:

Part	Focus
Part One: The Evidence (Ch. 1–5)	Five case studies: Venezuela, the Berlin Wall, Armando Valladares, the Holodomor, and the wealth of socialist leaders
Part Two: The Psychology (Ch. 6–10)	Karl Marx's biography and ideas; Gramsci's "long march through the institutions"; campus capture; cognitive biases; billionaires; the corruption algorithm
Part Three: The Stakes (Ch. 11–13)	Socialism's growth in America today; the national debt bomb; the two paths forward
Part Four: What You Can Do (Ch. 14–15)	How to talk to a socialist; the Socratic method; ten unanswerable questions; a five-point action plan

### ***The Central Argument***

Matveyuk's argument rests on a single, repeated observation: socialism has been attempted in 39 countries across a century, and it has failed in all 39. He estimates the death toll at 65–100 million. His core question is simple: if a medicine failed 39 clinical trials, would you take it?

The book then asks a second question: if the evidence is so clear, why do intelligent, educated people still believe? Part Two answers this — not by dismissing believers as stupid, but by mapping the psychological, institutional, and cultural mechanisms that make the belief persist despite the record.



## Chapter Summaries

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### ***Chapter 1 — The Elephant in the Room (Venezuela)***

Opens with Ruperta, an African elephant at Caracas' Caricuao Zoo who by 2017 had starved from her normal seven tons to four. Venezuela — which holds the world's largest proven oil reserves, more than Saudi Arabia — could not feed a zoo. Citizens who brought food were turned away on "security concerns." Animals were slaughtered for meat by desperate citizens. President Maduro called the reports "psychological warfare."

Matveyuk frames Venezuela as socialism's most recent demonstration of a consistent pattern: Ukraine 1932–33, China 1958–62, Cambodia 1975–79, North Korea in the 1990s. As of 2023, 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled — the largest displacement crisis in the Western Hemisphere. The chapter closes: "They're not fleeing an invasion. They're fleeing socialism."

### ***Chapter 2 — "Help Me! Why Won't You Help Me?" (The Berlin Wall)***

The story of Peter Fechter, an 18-year-old East Berlin bricklayer who on August 17, 1962, attempted to cross the Berlin Wall at Zimmerstrasse with a coworker. His coworker made it. Peter was shot in the pelvis and fell in the death strip, half a meter from the wall. He lay bleeding for fifty minutes, screaming for help in plain view of hundreds of witnesses, while East German guards waited for orders and American soldiers at Checkpoint Charlie were told to "stand fast." JFK received the call in Colorado and did nothing. Peter died shortly after guards finally carried him away.

Matveyuk's central question: if socialism is so good, why do you have to build walls to keep people from leaving? The traffic at the Berlin Wall was always one-way: out. At least 140 people died trying to cross it.

### ***Chapter 3 — Twenty-Two Years for Refusing to Say "I'm with Fidel"***

Armando Valladares was 23 when he refused to display a small "Estoy con Fidel" placard on his desk at his Havana government office in 1960. Within a week he was arrested. Within days, sentenced to thirty years. His crime: "a different point of view."

Matveyuk details what followed: tiger cages with steel-mesh ceilings where guards prodded prisoners awake; dousing with excrement; years of total darkness; starvation for forty-six days straight; refusal of political "rehabilitation." Valladares refused to wear the assigned blue uniform and spent years naked. He wrote poetry on cigarette papers in his own blood, smuggled out word by word. After Amnesty International, French PEN, and eventually French President Mitterrand intervened, Castro released him in 1982 after 22 years. Valladares walked — despite near-paralysis from malnutrition — onto and off the plane because the Cuban government refused photographs of him being carried. Reagan appointed him U.S. Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Commission.

### ***Chapter 4 — The Children Who Ate Grass (The Holodomor)***

At the height of the Holodomor — June 1933 — Ukrainians were dying at 28,000 per day. Matveyuk connects this chapter personally: he is of Polish descent, grew up in Soviet Belarus. “The hands that starved Ukraine are the same hands that imprisoned my father and grandfather.”

Stalin’s collectivization seized land, animals, tools, and seed grain. Brigades swept villages house-to-house taking everything. The Five Stalks of Grain decree made it a capital offense for a child to pick up a fallen stalk. The Soviet Union sealed Ukraine’s borders to trap the dying inside — then exported over a million tons of grain to foreign markets during the famine. At least 2,500 people were convicted of cannibalism; the actual number was far higher. Rigorous demographic research estimates 3.9 million dead, with total losses including unborn children reaching 6.5 million.

Matveyuk’s verdict: “This was not incompetence. This was not an accident. This was murder.”

### ***Chapter 5 — Caviar for Comrades (The Leaders’ Wealth)***

Every socialist leader who preached equality accumulated extraordinary personal wealth. Gaddafi: \$200 billion in frozen assets at death. Castro: estimated \$900 million, twenty mansions, a private island kept secret for fifty years. Chávez: \$2 billion, while his daughter became the richest woman in Venezuela — a country where the average citizen lost 24 pounds from hunger. Kim Jong-il: the world’s largest single purchaser of Hennessy cognac. Ceaușescu: a palace with 1,100 rooms requiring one-third of Romania’s national energy output to heat, while Romanians shivered in unheated apartments and stood in bread lines.

Matveyuk’s explanation: this is not corruption of the system. This is the system. Under capitalism, wealth requires producing value that others buy voluntarily. Under socialism, wealth requires controlling access to what people need — and the official with control sets the price.

### ***Chapter 6 — The Parasite’s Gospel (Karl Marx)***

Marx never held a real job. He was supported for decades by Friedrich Engels, whose family owned the textile factories Marx condemned. Marx’s family lived in poverty while Engels sent checks; three of his six children died in childhood partly because of financial instability. Marx fathered a child with his housekeeper — a working-class woman in his own home — denied paternity, and had Engels claim the boy. Matveyuk’s point: the champion of the proletariat exploited the proletariat in his own household.

The chapter then traces Gramsci’s strategy of the “long march through the institutions” — the recognition that Marxist revolution failed in the West because workers believed in religion, family, and nation. The solution: capture schools, universities, media, and arts first. Change what people believe, and political power follows. The Frankfurt School brought this strategy to American universities in the 1930s–40s, giving birth to Critical Theory and ultimately to identity politics as the successor to class struggle.

### ***Chapter 7 — The Campus Factory***

Mitchell Langbert’s 2016 study of faculty voter registration at 51 top liberal arts colleges found a 10.4:1 Democrat-to-Republican ratio overall — and 133:0 in anthropology departments. Matveyuk’s argument: this is not diversity. It is the near-total capture Gramsci planned. The self-reinforcing feedback loop — radicals hire like-minded faculty, who train the next generation — has produced a

system that teaches capitalism is exploitation while never teaching about the Holodomor, the Great Leap Forward, or the Killing Fields.

### ***Chapter 8 — Why Smart People Believe Stupid Things***

Five cognitive mechanisms explain why intelligent people hold socialist beliefs despite the evidence: (1) The Availability Heuristic — capitalism's failures are vivid and daily; socialism's catastrophes are invisible in the curriculum. (2) Zero-Sum Thinking — the false belief that wealth is a pie to be divided rather than created. (3) Moral Licensing — supporting socialism feels virtuous regardless of outcomes. (4) Tribal Loyalty — holding the correct beliefs is a membership marker in the educated class; questioning them is apostasy with social consequences. (5) The Nirvana Fallacy — comparing real capitalism to theoretical socialism, rather than to actual socialist experiments.

### ***Chapter 9 — The Billionaire They Need to Exist***

Matveyuk argues that the socialist demand that billionaires not exist misunderstands how wealth is created. Bezos didn't steal \$200 billion — he built a company that employs 1.5 million people and delivers packages in two days. Every voluntary purchase is proof of value created, not extracted. The chapter uses tax data to show that the top 1% already pay 42.3% of all federal income taxes; the bottom 50% pay 2.3%. The real question is not whether billionaires should exist, but whether you want to live in a society where extraordinary success is possible.

### ***Chapter 10 — The Corruption Algorithm***

Corruption is not a bug in socialism — it is the operating system. Under capitalism, if you want something, you earn money and buy it; the transaction is transparent and competitive. Under socialism, you go to the bureaucrat who controls what you need, and there is no alternative. Power, uncheckable by competition or exit, becomes wealth. Matveyuk provides the algorithm: (1) Concentrate power. (2) Eliminate competition. (3) Destroy accountability. (4) Get rich. Transparency International data confirm the pattern: economic freedom and low corruption correlate at near-perfect levels across countries.

### ***Chapters 11–13 — The Stakes***

The DSA grew from 6,000 members in 2015 to 95,000 by 2021 — a 1,500% increase. Multiple polls show a majority of Americans under 35 prefer socialism to capitalism. A 2020 Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation survey found only 57% of Millennials believe the Declaration of Independence better guarantees freedom than the Communist Manifesto. Matveyuk calculates the national debt (\$34 trillion official, \$100–200 trillion in unfunded liabilities) against annual GDP (\$28 trillion) and concludes: the math is already impossible. Every socialist policy proposal makes it worse. The children will pay.

### ***Chapters 14–15 — What You Can Do***

The final section is a practical guide: how to have conversations without lecturing or arguing (questions, not statements); the Socratic method; ten questions that socialists cannot answer well;

and a five-point personal action plan: Educate Yourself, Educate Your Children, Speak Up, Get Organized, and Live Your Answer.

## The 39 Experiments: A Discussion Framework

Matveyuk builds his case around five anchor stories, but the book's claim covers 39 socialist experiments. The table below summarizes the five case studies in depth, and can serve as a discussion reference.

Case Study	Matveyuk's Focal Image	Death Toll / Scale	Key Mechanism
Venezuela (1999–present)	Ruperta the elephant: 4 tons, starving in the world's largest oil state	7.7M fled; avg. citizen lost 24 lbs; zoo animals slaughtered for meat	Nationalization + price controls = scarcity + flight
East Germany (1961–89)	Peter Fechter, 18, dying in the death strip, screaming for help	140+ killed at the Berlin Wall; 3.5M fled before the Wall was built	Wall built inward — to trap citizens, not repel invaders
Cuba (1959–present)	Armando Valladares: 22 years for refusing a 3-word sign	Thousands imprisoned; tens of thousands drowned fleeing to Florida	Dissent as crime; psychiatric and prison “rehabilitation”
Ukraine (1932–33)	Children eating grass; mothers eating children; 28,000 dead/day	3.9M–6M dead; total losses ~6.5M; recognized genocide	Forced collectivization + sealed borders + exported grain
Libya / Cuba / Venezuela / North Korea	Gaddafi (\$200B), Castro (\$900M), Chávez (\$2B), Kim (cognac collector)	Leaders worth billions; people starved, fled, imprisoned	Power → wealth; corruption is the system, not a bug

## Major Themes

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### ***1. The Direction of Traffic***

Matveyuk's most recurring argument: under every socialist state, the traffic is always one-way — out. No one was scaling the Berlin Wall to get INTO East Germany. No one builds rafts from inner tubes to reach Cuba. No one crosses jungles to enter Venezuela. The flight of people tells the truth that official statistics deny. And capitalist countries, meanwhile, build walls to keep people from coming in.

### ***2. The Calculation Problem***

Ludwig von Mises proved in 1920 that socialist economies cannot function because they lack price signals. In a market, prices carry information: rising prices signal scarcity, directing resources where they're needed. Under socialism, bureaucrats set prices by decree — prices that carry no real information. The planners are flying blind. This is why socialist economies always produce shortages of things people need and surpluses of things no one wants. Matveyuk argues this is structural and inherent — not fixable by better leaders or better intentions.

### ***3. The Gramsci Strategy***

Antonio Gramsci understood that Western workers wouldn't revolt because they believed in religion, family, and nation. His solution: capture the culture first. The "long march through the institutions" — schools, universities, media, arts — would transform what people believe before they ever vote. The Frankfurt School brought this strategy to American universities in the 1930s and 40s. Matveyuk argues this has been spectacularly successful: 133:0 faculty ratios in some departments, speech codes, trigger warnings, and graduates who know nothing about the Holodomor but can articulate every grievance against capitalism.

### ***4. Corruption as Operating System***

The book's most counterintuitive argument: corruption is not what happens to socialism despite the system. Corruption is what the system produces by design. When all access to goods, services, education, and permission flows through state officials, those officials have power. Power without competition, transparency, or exit becomes wealth. Every socialist experiment has produced a ruling class that lives like the kings they claimed to overthrow — not because of individual moral failure, but because the structural incentives guarantee it.

### ***5. The Psychology of Belief***

Part Two is perhaps the book's most original contribution: an explanation of why intelligent people believe in a system with a 100% failure rate. The five mechanisms — availability heuristic, zero-sum thinking, moral licensing, tribal loyalty, and the Nirvana fallacy — together explain how capitalism's

visible failures are compared to socialism's invisible catastrophes, how supporting socialism feels virtuous regardless of results, and how questioning it risks social ostracism in elite circles.

### ***6. Personal Testimony as Evidence***

The book's most distinctive feature is its insistence on the first person. Matveyuk does not write "families in Belarus experienced confiscation." He writes: "The hands that starved Ukraine are the same hands that imprisoned my father and grandfather. That is what killed my uncle." This is not rhetorical decoration — it is the book's central epistemological claim: that lived experience under the system is a form of knowledge that no amount of theoretical education can replicate.

## Discussion Questions

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### ***Opening the Conversation***

1. Before reading this book, what did you know about the Holodomor, the Berlin Wall's death toll, or Armando Valladares? Why do you think these stories are not more widely taught?
2. Matveyuk opens with an elephant, not a statistic. Why does he make that choice? What does a starving elephant communicate that a death count does not?
3. The author's personal losses — imprisoned father and grandfather, murdered uncle, confiscated property — are present throughout the book. Does his personal experience strengthen or complicate his argument? In what ways?

### ***On the Evidence (Part One)***

4. Chapter 1 ends with the question: "If a medicine failed thirty-nine clinical trials, would you take it?" How does this analogy hold up under scrutiny? What are its strengths and limitations?
5. The Berlin Wall was built to keep citizens in, not enemies out. Matveyuk calls this single fact sufficient to understand the system. Do you agree? What does the direction of the traffic tell us that other evidence might not?
6. Armando Valladares spent 22 years in prison for refusing to display a three-word sign. He says his crime was "a different point of view." What is the relationship between this story and the book's argument about freedom of thought under socialism?
7. The Soviet Union exported over a million tons of grain from Ukraine during the Holodomor — while children starved and ate each other. Matveyuk says this proves the famine was "murder" not incompetence. Is this distinction important? Does it change how we should think about socialist famines?
8. Every socialist leader Matveyuk profiles — Gaddafi, Castro, Chávez, Kim, Ceaușescu — accumulated vast personal wealth while preaching equality. He argues this is structural, not individual moral failure. Do you find this argument convincing? What would it take to be a non-corrupt socialist leader?

### ***On the Psychology (Part Two)***

9. Matveyuk says: "Smart people are not immune to bad ideas. In fact, smart people are often more vulnerable — because they're better at rationalizing." Do you agree? Can you think of historical examples where intelligence and education reinforced a disastrously wrong belief?
10. The Nirvana Fallacy compares real capitalism to theoretical socialism. Is this a fair critique of how most people evaluate economic systems? Do critics of capitalism commit the reverse error — comparing theoretical capitalism to real socialism?

11. Moral licensing: supporting socialism makes people feel virtuous, regardless of outcomes. Matveyuk argues this is psychologically rewarding in a way that distracts from actual results. Where else do you see moral licensing at work in political belief?
12. Tribal loyalty: questioning socialist beliefs in elite educational and cultural circles risks ostracism. If this is true, what are the implications for academic freedom and public discourse? How does an idea protected from scrutiny by social sanction differ from a religion?
13. The availability heuristic: capitalism's failures are vivid and daily; socialism's catastrophes are invisible in the curriculum. If you were redesigning high school history curricula, what would you add or change to correct this asymmetry?

### ***On the Stakes (Part Three)***

14. The Democratic Socialists of America grew from 6,000 to 95,000 members between 2015 and 2021 — a 1,500% increase. Multiple polls show a majority of Americans under 35 prefer socialism to capitalism. What explains this growth? What is capitalism failing to offer this generation?
15. Matveyuk's fiscal argument: \$34 trillion in official debt, \$100–200 trillion in unfunded liabilities, against \$28 trillion annual GDP. He calls this a debt bomb that will detonate on the next generation. Is he right that every socialist policy proposal makes this worse? What, if anything, could make it better?
16. The book argues there are only two paths: the socialist path or the American experiment continued. Is this a false binary? Are there genuine third options that preserve markets while addressing inequality more effectively?

### ***On Action and Engagement (Part Four)***

17. Matveyuk's ten questions to socialists (see next section) are designed not to win arguments but to plant seeds of doubt. Have you ever changed your mind through a conversation? What made it work — what did the other person do or not do?
18. He argues that silence is complicity: "Every time you stay silent, you signal that the socialist view is the only acceptable view." Do you agree? Are there costs to speaking up that the book underestimates?
19. The book closes with the Franklin quote: "A republic, madam — if you can keep it." What does it mean to "keep" a republic in 2026? What are the specific threats Matveyuk identifies, and do you think he has correctly identified the most serious ones?

### ***Challenging the Argument***

20. Matveyuk acknowledges that Scandinavian countries are often cited as socialist successes, and counters that they are market economies with strong safety nets, not socialist. Is this distinction meaningful? Where is the line between a strong welfare state and socialism?

21. The book focuses on countries that implemented full state control. Are there examples of partial socialist policies — public healthcare, public education, public infrastructure — that have succeeded within capitalist frameworks? Does this complicate Matveyuk's argument?
22. Matveyuk argues that capitalism is uniquely capable of lifting people out of poverty. Critics of capitalism argue it has also produced historic inequality, environmental destruction, and colonial exploitation. How does the book address these critiques? Does it address them adequately?
23. The book is explicitly persuasive — Matveyuk's goal is to change minds, not to present both sides. What are the intellectual obligations of a reader when engaging with an openly persuasive work? How do you read it differently than you would a balanced academic analysis?

## Matveyuk's Ten Questions: A Discussion Tool

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Chapter 14 provides ten questions that Matveyuk argues socialists cannot answer well. For book clubs, these make excellent discussion prompts — both to engage with the questions themselves, and to consider what strong counterarguments might look like. Each question is followed by Matveyuk's framing and a prompt for your group.

### How to Use This Section

Read each question aloud. Ask: (1) How does Matveyuk answer it? (2) What is the strongest possible counterargument? (3) Does the counterargument hold up? This is the Socratic method applied to the book itself.

#### **Q1: “Can you name a socialist country you'd want to live in?”**

Matveyuk anticipates the Scandinavia answer and preempts it: Denmark's Prime Minister explicitly said Denmark is not socialist — it is a market economy with a strong safety net. Private ownership, free markets, and billionaires all exist in Scandinavia. When pressed for an actual socialist country — one where the state controls the means of production — believers typically cannot name one they'd choose.

*Group prompt: Is the Denmark counter-argument persuasive? What is the strongest version of the Scandinavia defense?*

#### **Q2: “If a medicine failed 39 clinical trials, would you take it?”**

The question treats socialism as a testable theory. Each experiment is a trial; each collapse is a failed result. By normal standards of evidence, 39 failures should falsify the hypothesis.

*Group prompt: Are historical experiments a valid form of “trials”? What makes a fair test of an economic system?*

#### **Q3: “Why do socialist countries build walls to keep people in, not out?”**

The direction of traffic is always out: East Germany, Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela. No one is building rafts to reach Havana. Meanwhile, capitalist countries build walls to manage the inflow of people trying to get in.

*Group prompt: Does this argument prove what Matveyuk claims it proves? What other explanations exist for why people flee socialist states?*

#### **Q4: “If socialism is about equality, why do socialist leaders always end up rich?”**

Gaddafi: \$200B. Castro: \$900M. Chávez: \$2B. Kim: \$5B. All while preaching equality and their people starved. Matveyuk's explanation: concentrated power becomes wealth; this is structural, not personal.

*Group prompt: Does the corruption argument prove socialism is irreformable? Or does it prove that the wrong people implemented it?*

**Q5: “What happens to people who disagree under socialism?”**

Valladares: 22 years for a sign. Solzhenitsyn: Gulag for a private letter. Millions: imprisoned, tortured, killed. Matveyuk's contrast: under capitalism, you can be a socialist, write books, run for office. Under socialism, can you be a capitalist?

*Group prompt: Is the treatment of dissent a defining feature of socialism, or of the specific states that implemented it?*

**Q6: “How do you explain the calculation problem?”**

Mises' 1920 proof: without market prices, central planners cannot allocate resources efficiently. This is why socialist economies always produce shortages and surpluses simultaneously. Has anyone ever refuted this argument?

*Group prompt: Can modern computing and artificial intelligence solve the calculation problem? Has Mises' argument been addressed by subsequent economic theory?*

**Q7: “What's the difference between ‘democratic socialism’ and regular socialism?”**

They vote for it first? The Soviet Union had elections. Cuba has elections. Venezuela had elections. Voting for socialism doesn't change what socialism does when it has power.

*Group prompt: Is there a meaningful constitutional or structural difference between democratic socialism and authoritarian socialism? What safeguards, if any, could prevent the slide?*

**Q8: “At what point would you admit the theory is wrong?”**

39 failures. 100 million dead. If this evidence is insufficient to disprove the theory, what evidence would be? If no evidence could disprove it, is it a scientific theory — or a faith?

*Group prompt: What would falsification of socialism look like? Is Matveyuk's framework for evaluating ideologies appropriate?*

**Q9: “Who decides?”**

Under capitalism: you decide what to buy, where to work, where to live. Under socialism: the government decides. The more power government has, the less you do. The question is whether you trust any government with that power.

*Group prompt: Is there a level of government involvement in the economy that is appropriate? Where does Matveyuk draw the line, and do you agree?*

**Q10: “Would you be willing to live under the system you're advocating?”**

Not theoretical socialism. Actual socialism. Would you move to Cuba? To Venezuela? To North Korea? If not, why are you asking others to live under it?

*Group prompt: Is this a fair question? What does it prove or fail to prove about the advocacy of socialist policies?*

## Creative Activities for Reading Groups

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### **Research & Presentation**

- Select one of Matveyuk's 39 experiments — one not covered in depth in the book — and prepare a 5-minute presentation for the group. Include: what the system promised, how it was implemented, what happened, and the death or displacement toll.
- Research Ludwig von Mises' calculation problem in more depth. Prepare a one-page summary and present it to the group. Then discuss: does modern AI and big-data planning address Mises' argument? Why or why not?
- Research the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Look up the ten least and ten most corrupt countries in the most recent report. Map their economic systems. What patterns do you find?

### **Writing Exercises**

- Write the speech Armando Valladares gives when he walks out of Cuba in 1982 — the one he couldn't give publicly, the one he had composed in his mind across twenty-two years.
- Write a letter from Matveyuk's father, imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag, to the son he knows will someday be free. What does he want him to know? What does he warn him about?
- Write the scene in which Matveyuk, at the airport in 1989 with \$90 in his pocket, first sets foot on American soil. What does he see? What does he feel? What does he promise himself?
- Write a response to Matveyuk's book from the perspective of a sincere democratic socialist who has read it carefully and takes its evidence seriously. What do they concede? What do they contest? What do they still believe, and why?

### **Structured Debates**

- Debate: "Socialist policies — universal healthcare, free university education, a strong safety net — can coexist with free markets and individual liberty." Assign sides; prepare arguments; allow rebuttals.
- Debate: "Billionaires should not exist." Use Matveyuk's Chapter 9 arguments on one side; prepare the strongest counterargument on the other.
- Simulation: Conduct Matveyuk's ten-question conversation. One group member plays a sincere democratic socialist; another uses only Matveyuk's method — questions only, no statements. Debrief afterward: what worked? What didn't?

### **Personal Reflection**

- Matveyuk asks: "If America falls, there is nowhere else." Do you agree? What does this claim assume about the nature of American exceptionalism? What would you add or contest?

- The book ends with a direct challenge to the reader: “Which future will you choose?” Write a private response — not for sharing unless you choose — answering this question honestly.
- Identify one belief you held before reading this book that the book complicated or challenged. What would it take to change your mind on that belief? What additional evidence or argument would you need?

## Further Reading

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Matveyuk's recommended reading list emphasizes primary sources and rigorous scholarship. The following extends that list.

### ***Primary Historical Evidence***

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* — the essential first-person account of the Soviet labor camp system; Matveyuk explicitly recommends it
- Frank Dikkötter, *Mao's Great Famine* — the definitive scholarly account of the Great Leap Forward; estimates 45 million dead
- Armando Valladares, *Against All Hope: A Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulag* — Valladares' own account, referenced in Chapter 3
- Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism* — comprehensive country-by-country accounting of communist death tolls
- Andrea Graziosi, research on the Holodomor — cited by Matveyuk; foundational demographic scholarship on the Ukrainian famine

### ***Economic Theory***

- Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth* (1920) — the paper Matveyuk cites; available free online; the foundational argument against socialist planning
- F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* — Matveyuk recommends this; the argument that central planning logically leads to tyranny
- Milton Friedman, *Free to Choose* — accessible case for market economics; also Matveyuk's recommendation
- Thomas Sowell, *Basic Economics* — systematic introduction to economic thinking; particularly clear on price signals and unintended consequences

### ***Psychology and Persuasion***

- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* — the foundational text on cognitive biases, including the availability heuristic Matveyuk cites in Chapter 8
- Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind* — on moral psychology and why people hold political beliefs for tribal rather than evidential reasons
- Philip Tetlock, *Superforecasting* — on expert judgment and why credentialed experts are often wrong; relevant to Matveyuk's Chapter 8 arguments

### ***Also from Lumenix Freedom Press***

- MOTHERLAND by J. Carter Stone — a novel imagining a near-future American socialist transformation; a powerful fictional companion to Matveyuk's nonfiction argument
- The Hidden Laws by Walter Freeman — on the invisible principles that govern human success and the costs of ignoring them
- The Real Face of Socialism: Ideologies Examined — the companion volume; contact [LumenixPress.com](http://LumenixPress.com) for availability

## A Final Word

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Sergei Matveyuk waited fifty years across generations for permission to be free. His father and grandfather waited in prison. His uncle never got the chance.

He arrived in America in 1989 with \$90. By the time this book was published, he had built a business, raised three children, earned a degree, run for Congress, and written the warning he believes his adopted country needs.

Whether you agree with his conclusions or not, the evidence he presents demands engagement: 3.9 million dead in Ukraine in two years. A poet writing in his own blood for twenty-two years because he would not put a sign on his desk. An elephant starving to death in a country with more oil than Saudi Arabia.

The best reading groups will not simply validate what they already believe. They will ask the questions that are hardest for their own position to answer. They will follow the evidence where it goes, even when it goes somewhere uncomfortable.

“I came to this country with \$90 in my pocket. I came because America was the place where freedom lived.

**If America falls, there is nowhere else.**

So I ask you one last time: Which future will you choose?”

— Sergei Matveyuk, *The Real Face of Socialism*

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