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# Was the Soviet Union Socialist?

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Segment Length: 3:04 minutes; 2:31 minutes

## **Videos:**

“Noam Chomsky - The Soviet Union vs. Socialism”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06-XcAiswY4>

“The Soviet Union Was Socialist”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT3a1qDN0Yc>

## **Guide:**

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

## **Analysis Questions:**

1. Noam Chomsky says that the Soviet Union was a labor army under the control of its government, which is not socialism. How would John Stossel respond?
2. Ben Powell says that the Soviets were socialists because they made private business illegal. How would Noam Chomsky respond?
3. Noam Chomsky says that while the Soviet Union called its system socialism, it also called it a democracy, and that if the fall of the Soviet Union is a blow to socialism, it's also a blow to democracy. How would John Stossel respond?
4. John Stossel says that while socialism might intend to give power to working people, it inevitably takes their power away. How would Noam Chomsky respond?
5. Noam Chomsky says that the core of socialism involves working people taking control of production, which did not occur in the Soviet Union. How would John Stossel respond?
6. Ben Powell says that socialism involves abolishing private property in the major things that go into production, and replacing it with collective ownership. But he says that in practice, this means state ownership. How would Noam Chomsky respond?
7. Noam Chomsky says that the Soviet Union is associated with socialism as a way of defaming socialism. Have you found this to be true?
8. John Stossel says that socialism is as popular as capitalism among young people. Have you found this to be true?

9. Noam Chomsky argues that the Soviet Union was not true to the fundamentals of socialism, while John Stossel says that's the inevitable result of socialism. Could both sides be right in this case? Why/Why not?
10. Is there common ground between these two sides? Noam Chomsky and John Stossel both seem to agree that government taking over the means of production is a bad thing, and both seem to disapprove of the Soviet Union in general.
11. Have these videos changed your thoughts on the Soviet Union? If so, how?
12. Have these videos changed your opinion of socialism? If so, how?