

Something for Nothing: The Mamdani Experiment

Replaying the Communist Dream in New York City

by Lev Neymotin, PhD

For me, coming from the Soviet Union, Zohran Mamdani's platform reads unmistakably clear. New York City, once the capital of pragmatic ambition and immigrant self-reliance, has chosen to replay the script of the Russian Revolution — this time in a metropolitan theater, with social media as the orchestra and slogans instead of rifles.

How embarrassing.

And how tragically familiar.

I have seen this movie before. The names and the language change, but the plot remains the same: a frustrated but comfortable population, persuaded by slogans of "justice" and "equality," decides that *something for nothing* is not just desirable, but morally superior.

Then and Now: A Tale of Two Revolutions

The Original: Pre-Revolutionary Russia

Let's recall what actually stood behind the first Communist revolution. In the early 1900s, the Russian Empire was a society of immense contrasts: illiterate peasants, urban workers living in misery, and a narrow class of wealthy elites controlling land and industry. The working people — the main audience for Marxist propaganda — were *truly* oppressed, impoverished, and largely uneducated.

Lenin and his ideological predecessors, like Plekhanov and Herzen, saw a desperate, malleable crowd ready to believe that paradise could be achieved through destruction. They promised bread, peace, and land. And when those promises failed, they offered fear, prison, and silence instead. Millions perished. Generations were broken. An empire of thought and culture was turned into a gray, suffocating laboratory of slogans and suspicion.

The Replay: New York City Today

Now look at New York City — not Petrograd, but spiritually close enough. The new "revolutionary class" that Mamdani and his movement court is not starving in the streets. They are not slaves in factories, nor denied access to education, nor forbidden from speaking. They are, in truth, the most materially secure and socially protected population in history. But they are told — endlessly, and effectively — that they are victims: of capitalism, of inequality, of unseen systems and invisible enemies.

This is the genius of neo-communism in the twenty-first century: It manufactures victimhood to justify power.

The people Mamdani appear to are educated — yet miseducated.
They are privileged — yet convinced of oppression.
They are free — yet enslaved by the idea that freedom itself is unfair.

In Soviet times, ignorance was imposed by lack of access to truth.
In New York, ignorance is voluntary — chosen from abundance.

The Seduction of “Everything for Nothing”

Communism is not evil because it promises too little, but because it promises *too much*. The idea that society owes you everything, while you owe society nothing, is seductive. It feels compassionate, progressive, humane. Until, of course, it has to be enforced — and enforcement always comes with coercion, confiscation, and control.

Marx and Lenin were intellectuals of the highest caliber. Their followers — Trotsky, Bukharin, Lunacharsky — were sincere believers in the idea of building heaven on earth. Yet their paradise required purges, informants, and a gulag system to sustain itself.

Now imagine that same delusion, stripped of intellectual discipline, amplified by social media, and placed in the hands of bureaucratic mediocrities whose only skill is organizing outrage.

That is the movement Mamdani represents — an imitation of a tragic past, without even the tragic grandeur of its original authors.

A Vaccine Called New York

The good news — if any — is that this experiment will not end with much blood in the streets. America is too large, too resilient, and too constitutionally inoculated for that. But just as a weakened virus can be used as a vaccine, a dose of “Mamdani-ism” may serve to remind the nation what communism looks like when repackaged as compassion. It may even help younger generations see that moral righteousness without personal responsibility leads only to decay.

Still, I worry that the lesson will be local, not national — that the rest of the country will watch New York’s decline with sympathy yet fail to recognize the same ideological infection growing quietly elsewhere. We may need a series of small, contained ideological outbreaks — a few “mini-Mamdanis” across the states — before America develops full immunity.

Conclusion: The Show Must Go On

So yes — relax and enjoy the show. History, it seems, insists on comedy after tragedy. And this time, New York City is staging the sequel to 1917 with influencers instead of commissars, hashtags instead of decrees, and handouts instead of hard labor.

But remember: every utopia begins with a promise and ends with a price. And the price of *something for nothing* is always — and forever — **everything**.