

PROGRESSIVES TAKE A PAGE OUT OF MAO'S LITTLE RED BOOK

To help better understand the current cancel culture, I draw from the file entitled "History Doesn't Repeat Itself, But It Rhymes." It's Red China in 1962. A reformist group had just wrestled power away from the political cult surrounding Mao Zedong, aka Chairman Mao, the charismatic founder of the Chinese Communist Party, war hero and until then, the absolute leader of over 600 million people.

But he was out. Four years earlier, in an attempt to speed the industrialization of China, he had decreed the Great Leap Forward (GLF), a plan to reorder Chinese society based on communist principles. It demanded an immediate upending of prevailing Chinese social and economic systems and since Mao was in total control, he could ensure it was executed with extreme prejudice but unfortunately for him, it would also magnify the inherent flaws of collectivist economics. Under GLF, peasant farmers were ripped from their land and sent to work on communal farms. Business owners, professionals and intellectuals were forced from their jobs and sent to join them. Agricultural workers were redirected to build forges in their backyards to smelt iron that turned out to be worthless.

GLF had its greatest impact on the Chinese agricultural sector. There, these centralized "reforms" triggered a major crop failure, the Great Chinese Famine of 1959-61, the deadliest famine of all time. Responsible for the deaths of 30 to 40 million Chinese, the GLF stands to this day as a poster child for the harm that can be inflicted by a government imposing a dysfunctional economic system on its populace. The reformist group that was pushing Mao aside was courageously trying to save Chinese lives by restoring social and market sanity.

But Mao was not resigned to his demotion and needed a strategy to regain power. His options were limited because he couldn't count on the military or the Communist Party infrastructure. But there was one time honored strategy he could use to bypass the political showdown he would most likely lose. Moreover, it leveraged the allies he still had, a far left press who could be counted on to trumpet his propaganda and a passionate youth corps, brainwashed by the Chinese school system to worship Communism. He would flip the script and ignite a public fervor over the religion of Communism, turning what was a political struggle into a spiritual crusade.

Here's the formula. Instead of debating real issues, you smear your opponents for their sinful behavior and use their "so called" transgressions to both demonize them and trigger your true believer allies.

There's an inherent genius to this approach. Those accused have no ability to clear themselves! How do you prove you're not a racist, a woman hater, or for that matter a witch? And, in high visibility cases, if more proof is required, there's always a torture-initiated confession. This strategy is not new. Inciting human passion in the service of seizing power has been a winner throughout history. Think of the Spanish Inquisition, the Russian Revolution, Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Iran, the list goes on. They are all based on leveraging public mania in the pursuit of power,

What was the sin in this case? His opponents were not pure enough communists. In their attempt to right the economy and save Chinese lives, they had crossed the line. They were “gasp!” capitalists, guilty of espousing capitalistic economic solutions and thus trying to undermine Communism in China.

Soon after launching a media campaign branding his opponents as “capitalistic roaders”, traitors to the sacred Communism, Mao unleashed his shock troops, youthful minions who at his command spilled into the streets hurling insults and threats and demanding confessions from Mao’s foes for their capitalistic sins. This verbal abuse descended into assaults and physical beatings. Those attacked were helpless because no one would dare stand up for the accused because they’d be next.

Mao’s campaign was a huge success. His opponents were all imprisoned, tortured and killed. His youth corps organized into the Red Guard and operated above the law. Mao was back in power and about to lead China into another nightmare, the Cultural Revolution, a government assault on “feudal” traditions. It doubled down on the failures of the GLF and introduced even more atrocities. Schools and universities were closed. Intellectuals and academics were persecuted. Chinese historical sites and private homes were destroyed. It spawned massacres in the cities where thousands of so-called counter-revolutionaries were killed and it saddled China with an additional 10 years of turmoil, bloodshed, hunger, stagnation with an added death toll of up to 20 million.

So here’s the rhyme: Today’s cancel culture is a political strategy lifted directly out of Mao’s playbook: The sin: Racism/White supremacy. The propaganda machine: Newspaper and broadcast news companies, social media companies and a compromised educational establishment. The Red Guard paramilitary: Antifa, Black Lives Matter, Internet trolls. The fear: Those seeking intelligent solutions are demonized as a white supremacist, lose their job and their voice. Those who speak out in support are tarred by the same brush, disrespected and fired. The disastrous programs: At the top of the list is the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) effort, an aborted attempt to replace merit in our society and the Green New Deal, a premature push into renewable energy based on shaky economic and scientific assumptions. Other programs that come to mind include open borders and the “defund the police” movement.

So in this analysis, who’s Mao? It’s not a single man but an unholy alliance of entrenched, entitled government bureaucrats, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, a power hungry Democratic Party, a compliant media, a shopping list of crony capitalistic companies, a compromised justice system, a far left educational establishment, race hustlers and the progressive lawmakers who enable them. Together they work to cancel opponents because they expose the complicit government systems and entitlements they use to entrench and expand their power.

So what’s to be learned and what’s the path forward? First off, we must recognize the con. In the Godfather, the Don tells Michael, “the man who comes to you with this meeting, he is a traitor”. In the same vein, name calling is the obvious tell. Be vigilant for those hurling “ist” at their opponents: Communist, Fascist, Zionist, Capitalist, racist, white Christian nationalist, etc. Those hurling these “ist” taunts are exercising a time honored strategy they employ whenever they have no answers. It shuts

down the voice of political opponents while simultaneously stoking the public passions necessary to get their true believers out into the street.

The people pushing this approach are dangerous because power is more important to them than the common good. Having power without opposition allows them to implement programs that ignore common sense, logic and economics and that can have catastrophic results. And when their power becomes absolute, they eventually breed a Mao, a Hitler, a Stalin, a Pol Pot or a Jim Jones, ready and willing to take it to the next step.

We are all on the hook for the future. We must have the courage to stand up. If we are silent, the rude, the bullies, the thugs, the criminals and the murderers triumph!

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