

The Essence of Today's Leftism



Youths at a rally during the height of the Red Guard upheaval waving copies Mao's Little Red Book and carrying a poster of Karl Marx on Sept. 14, 1966.

by Roger L. Simon

When I was a kid in the 1950s, I thought I knew what the left was—and I did, up to a point.

The Communist Manifesto appealed to my 14-year-old self because, in a way, it's written on that level. When you think about it, it's pretty simplistic, especially about human psychology.

Nevertheless, in those days, it was clear to me and to many others what the left was—socialism, the working class owning the means of production and so forth, no more chauffeur-driven

Cadillacs for my parents' stuffy, imperious neighbor.

I even remember reading that this "scientific" socialism would, according to Karl Marx anyway, lead to the "withering away of the state." Hurray, I thought. I wasn't sure what that would be like, but it sounded good.

And, yes, I was pretty precocious reading this stuff, but I wasn't alone; some of my friends read it, too. We wanted to be cool. We also listened to Miles Davis records and went to see an Ingmar Bergman movie, even though we weren't sure what was going on.

All this was, of course, long before any of us knew of such things as the Chinese communist Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, or the Soviet gulags or Stalin's mass starvation of Ukraine and all the many millions that died from these, and how socialism/communism was the greatest mass murder machine in human history by exponential amounts.

We did know that Hitler was evil, obviously, but we didn't realize that he and Mussolini actually began as socialists.

But we do now—or should.

There isn't much excuse for believing in this anymore, or even in that tired nostrum about this time "getting socialism right." How many times does that need attempting?

Of course, that "should" part is key because given the state of the American educational system, it's easy to imagine that the majority of our young people have no idea what any of the foregoing mass murders were—an enquirer would get blank stares—making those same people equally easy pickings for today's version of leftism.

But what is it? What has happened to the ideology of Engels, Zhou Enlai, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, and all the others? How

has it morphed?

To begin with—and importantly—it has only a distant, if any, similarity to Marx's left, except that it seeks to achieve or maintain power.

The original *raison d'être* for Marxism, the exploitation of the working class, is no longer part of the equation and hasn't been for some time now.

Bye-bye, the once all-important dictatorship of the proletariat or even that transitional dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

The working class is, in fact, hated and reviled by the left, except occasionally at election time to fatten the coffers of union executives. Otherwise, they are "deplorables."

We have in its place a dictatorship of elites, otherwise known as an oligarchy, covered over with neo-Marxist rhetoric—in China quite obviously so—under the mask of "woke" or similar supposedly politically correct prevarications, ESG, and the rest.

This came down to us through Antonio Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and their replacement of that failed working-class revolution with a "march through the institutions" (media, academia, entertainment, and so forth). It has succeeded to a degree but created an elitist oligarchy, rather than a worker state.

Consequently, today's "left" is really about being rich or staying rich. It's also, quite strongly, about the fear of being left out: ostracism.

The working man or woman is nowhere to be found.

What we have instead is a Democratic Party suffused with this kind of faux leftism.

It's no wonder then that so many of them are horrified by the candidacy of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The only thing they carry over from the old left, besides that will to power, is an abhorrence of freedom of speech.

Kennedy speaks up for the First Amendment and they go—to be blunt—crazy, as we saw again and again in congressional hearings.

What this new form of leftism can't deal with in any way is being questioned. It's ironic since they stand for very little and what little they stand for changes almost weekly, but perhaps this lack of substance makes them all the more defensive.

So when we discuss the left in our culture, what we are referring to essentially is an empty shell. To modify Gertrude Stein, there's not much there there, a religion without substance and, needless to say, God.

What remains of their policies are pretty much clumsy destructive fads that come and go, currently transgenderism, previously the misbegotten defunding of the police when our major cities have turned into violent garbage heaps under their stewardship.

They have no idea what to do about it. On a certain level, they don't care since elites are so rich, they are able to live in cordon sanitaires, away from the squalor and urban decay around them, while making pronouncements about their own supposed goodness.

That's the essence of today's leftism.

We are at a point when many are beginning to see this. It's hard to imagine that those who are lining up to watch "Sound of Freedom" or applaud Jason Aldean's latest hit aren't completely fed up with what has transpired.

That group is expanding.

There's reason for optimism beyond the natural exasperation of the daily crises or even contemporary politics.

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