
Are Our University Professors a Fifth Column?¹

By Philip Carl Salzman

Western Civilization and liberal democracy are under siege. This is not new. We have been challenged historically, looking only at the last century, by fascism and communism, by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Soviet Russia and Red China. The Allies, primarily the English-speaking countries (with the assistance of Russia) defeated the Germans, and the Allies, primarily the Americans, defeated the Japanese. Both Germany and Japan were militarily occupied by the victors, and were drawn into liberal democratic governance. Soviet Russia opposed the West until it crumbled under its own contradictions of economic incompetence, and imperial expansionism, and Communist China, having suffered economic disasters in “The Great Leap Forward,” the Regional Communes, and “The Cultural Revolution,” rejected its failed economic ideology in favour of modified capitalism. Both liberal democracy and capitalism were briefly triumphant.

One might have expected--and many did--that the ideology of these failed societies would remain in its grave, but, astonishingly, it has climbed out of the cemetery, zombie like, and was welcomed and adopted by North American university professors, and, latterly by their students who became school teachers, social workers, and professors themselves. Marxism failed in the world, but won in Western academe.²

In anthropology, for example, two of the most influential books during the second half of the 20th century were *Cultural Materialism* by Marvin Harris, and *Europe and the People Without History* by Eric Wolf, both explicitly marxist, the latter leninist, with an emphasis on European imperialism and colonialism (but of course with no mention of Soviet or Chinese Communist imperialism and colonialism). Although many anthropologists explicitly identified with marxist anthropology, quoting and citing Marx and Engels at the beginning of their articles, others, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, pursued marxist approaches under more neutral labels, such as “political economy” and “critical anthropology.”³

Elsewhere in academia, the geographers labelled their marxism “political ecology,” while sociologists prefer the more explicit “marxist sociology.” A section of the American Sociological Association is the Marxist Sociology Section.⁴ The marxist approach is also pursued under the label “critical sociology.”⁵ Political science too has adopted marxism.⁶ One political scientist at McGill University was a forthright champion of Communist Albania, until it fell, and then North Korea (so misunderstood!).

Currently dominant in the social sciences and the humanities is the neo-leninist postcolonial theory, which offers the keen insight that history began in the 17th century with European imperialism, when evil was first introduced to the world. Prior to Western imperialism, everyone in the world got along beautifully, mixing and

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fifth-column>

² <http://www.meforum.org/5781/marxism-academia>

³ <http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php?culture=Marxist%20Anthropology>
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0308275X12449105>

⁴ <http://marxistsociology.org/>

<http://www.asanet.org/asa-communities/sections/marxist-sociology>

⁵ <http://criticalsociology.org/>

⁶ <https://polisci.duke.edu/courses/marxism-and-society-1>

mingling in an egalitarian and sharing fashion. It was the Western imperialists who divided mankind, inventing the caste system in India and tribes in Africa in order better to control the natives.⁷ I suppose that the Iranian Balochi tribes I studied, who were entirely independent of Western imperialism, divided themselves up into tribes so that they might attract Western imperialists.

Most professors in the Anthropology Department at McGill University, even some archaeologists, identify themselves as post-colonialists, and teach postcolonialism to their students. This is not surprising, because postcolonialism is the dominant theoretical paradigm in contemporary anthropology. But their interest is not only theoretical; they also advocate for oppressed, subaltern, and marginalized colonial peoples. Nor are they only limited to advocacy, because they engage in anti-colonial activism. One example is their championing of Palestinians against the Israelis, on the grounds that Palestinians are indigenous, and Jews are colonial settlers. Another example is their “decolonialization” plan, fully supported by the McGill Administration, to hire First Nations professors who will represent the subaltern and colonial subject, and offer students native wisdom. Racial hiring is back in fashion.

Highly influential in the spread of postcolonialism was *Orientalism* by the English professor Edward Said, a compendium of naive Freudianism and dubious sociology of knowledge, lacking in historical and anthropological foundation, probably the worse influential book of the century, second only to *Mein Kampf*. Said was writing about his place of origin, the Middle East, which happens to be my anthropological specialization, and he had nothing to offer but condemnation of the West, much of which was factually wrong, and a denial that you could really know anything about the region other than the misdeeds of the West.⁸ I thought that anthropologists above all would know better than to take this baseless political tract seriously, but I was wrong, because I had underestimated to what extent anthropology had become more politicized, more anti-West, more radical, the extent to which it had been corrupted by marxism.

The basic principle of marxism is that capitalism is bad because it supports a class hierarchy of capitalists and proletariat, the production of the proletariat being stolen by the capitalists. The ideal utopian model of society for marxists is absolute economic equality of all people. In historical reality, communist societies did advance economic equality, although what was shared equally was poverty rather than prosperity, because the highly centralized economy failed at production.⁹ But not everything economic was shared equally. Members of the Communist Party had access to scarce resources such as autos, countryside villas, luxury food, etc. The economic differences were not as important as the political inequality, with a small elite having captured power, supported by a bureaucracy, secret police, and military, and the great bulk of the population having no say in leadership or policies. In practice this meant that large sectors of the populace who were considered “anti-social elements” were wiped out through exile, famine, execution, or transportation to labour camps, the infamous “gulag.” Tens of millions of citizens were murdered.¹⁰ Dissidents were deemed to be acting against their own interests, and thus considered insane, and forced into mental asylums where they were permanently drugged.¹¹

And, yet, notwithstanding the total failures of all historical communist societies to deliver anything but tyranny, poverty, and death, Western academics continue to advocate socialism and communism, to denounce

⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271633479_Perspectives_on_Post-colonial_Theory_Said_Spivak_and_Bhabha

⁸ <http://www.meforum.org/2069/defending-the-west>
https://www.amazon.ca/Defending-West-Critique-Edward-Orientalism-ebook/dp/B003D7LXR6/ref=sr_1_2?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1514498496&sr=1-2&keywords=critiques+of+orientalism
<https://www.amazon.ca/Dangerous-Knowledge-Orientalism-Its-Discontents/dp/1590200179>

⁹ <https://fee.org/articles/the-collapse-of-communist-economic-theory/>
<https://fee.org/articles/why-communism-failed/>

¹⁰ <https://hawaii.edu/powerkills/COM.ART.HTM>
<https://areomagazine.com/2017/09/27/the-100-million-killed-under-communist-regimes-matter/>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/08/03/giving-historys-greatest-mass-murderer-his-due/?wpisrc=nl_most&wpm=1

¹¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/01/30/magazine/the-world-of-soviet-psychiatry.html?pagewanted=all>
<http://jaapl.org/content/jaapl/30/1/136.full.pdf>

capitalism, and to treat “neoliberalism,” “markets,” and “profit” as dirty words and evil phenomena. Various university programs are explicitly anti-capitalist.

For example, Ryerson University School of Social Work, in its “values statement,” explains that

“School of Social Work is a leader in critical education, research and practice with culturally and socially diverse students and communities in the advancement of anti-oppression/anti-racism, anti- Black racism, anti-colonialism/ decolonization, Aboriginal reconciliation, feminism, anti- capitalism, queer and trans liberation struggles, issues in disability and Madness, among other social justice struggles.”¹²

And students absorb the lesson: the two top students in a recent senior seminar at McGill University independently said to me that “Capitalism must be replaced.” They were not able, or willing, to articulate what capitalism should be replaced with, nor did they seem concerned about the human cost of trying to replace capitalism with communism in the 20th century. But they were confident in their rejection of capitalism. This appears to be generally the case among college students and recent college graduates. In a recent poll,¹³ for example, American “respondents younger than 30 ... rated socialism *more* favorably than capitalism (43 percent vs. 32 percent, respectively).” For all age groups, Democrats rated socialism and capitalism equally positively (both at 42 percent). That is a remarkable degree of opposition to the existing American economic system that has produced an historically unprecedented prosperity.

So too in some important alternative media. Kelly Oakes, editor of the website BuzzFeed, popular with millennials, tweeted, “All I want for Christmas is full communism now.”¹⁴ Earlier in December, Blake Montgomery, a BuzzFeed reporter, claimed that “‘Victims of Communism’ is a white nationalist talking point.” It would be interesting news for the Mongol, Chinese, Tibetan, and Turkic victims of Mao’s “Cultural Revolution,” the Cambodian victims of the Khmer Rouge, the Korean victims of North Korea’s totalitarian regime, et al., that their suffering under communism is no more than “a white nationalist talking point.

Added to the marxist and neo-marxist views professed in the academy, the “social justice” perspective expands the orthodox marxist economic class conflict dynamic to include gender classes, racial classes, sexual preference classes, religious adherents of different religions, and legal and illegal immigrants.¹⁵ In this view, society is divided between oppressor genders, races, sexes, etc., and oppressed genders, races, sexes, etc.

The view advanced in colleges and universities is that the only discourse acceptable is that which sides with the alleged oppressed. Other opinions are said to be hate speech and violence advanced by racist, sexist, Islamophobe deplorables. Violence against those who express incorrect opinions is currently regarded by many as justified. Free speech is thus suppressed. Now if only some professors held social justice views, and a variety of other views were taught, the debate might be constructive. Unfortunately, in institutions of “higher learning,” Marxist and social justice views are dominant, not only in the social sciences, humanities, education, and social work, but also in law and even in medicine.¹⁶ Without democratic debate in universities,

¹² Christie Blatchford “He walked into a thought crime trial,” *National Post*, 30 Nov 2016

<https://www.ryerson.ca/socialwork/about/>

¹³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2016/02/05/millennials-have-a-higher-opinion-of-socialism-than-of-capitalism/?nid&utm_term=.3393a2c0630d

¹⁴ Kelly Oakes @kahoakes, Twitter, 14 December 2017

¹⁵ <http://observer.com/2016/02/the-totalitarian-doctrine-of-social-justice-warriors/>
<https://globalfreedommovement.org/womens-studies-and-the-rise-of-the-social-justice-warrior/>
<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9604/social-justice>

¹⁶ <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/6/liberal-professors-outnumber-conservatives-12-1/>

Many discussions about professorial allegiances are framed as (many) liberals vs. (few) conservatives. But this terminology is misleading. People labelled “liberals” commonly held views that are anathema to classical liberals: the former advocate equality of result, restriction on freedom of speech, collective rights, and government control of the economy, while the latter would advocate freedom, including freedom of speech, individual rights, and an economy based on contract and market. The former, given their illiberal goals, would be more accurately labelled “progressives,” a label most would accept enthusiastically.

diversity of opinion and democracy in the larger society is undermined.

Western universities today do not support our central institutions, or even provide the constructive criticism that is a vital part of democracy. Rather, outside of the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, they appear to be dedicated to undermining capitalism and democracy on behalf of a blood soaked and failed ideology. Even Western civilization is demeaned as the evil villain of history. What happens when today's students become tomorrow's politicians, bureaucrats, and legislators? Will our children experience the delights of totalitarian socialism the same way Russians, Chinese, Germans, Cubans, and North Koreans have experienced totalitarian socialism? While so many of our professors sing the praises of socialism, the Chinese, after so many destructive failures of their socialist experiments, have successfully turned to capitalism to bring prosperity and economic development. What clearer evidence could there be of the failure of communism and the success of capitalism? Unfortunately, our professors have devoted themselves to unrealistic, imaginary utopias as an attack on our successful, proven society. Do our students and taxpayers not deserve better?

About the Author



Philip Carl Salzman B.A. (Antioch), M.A., Ph.D. (Chicago) is Professor of Anthropology at McGill University, appointed in 1968. He founded the Commission on Nomadic Peoples of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, and its international journal, *Nomadic Peoples*, for which he received the IUAES Gold Award. In recent years he has also served as Senior Fellow at the University of St. Andrews, Open Society International Scholar at the American University of Central Asia, Erasmus Mundus International Fellow at the University of Catania, and Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney. Extensive ethnographic field research in Baluchistan (Iran), Gujarat and Rajasthan (India), and Sardinia (Italy) provided the foundation many articles in academic journals, and for book publications such as *The Anthropology of Real Life: Events in Human Experience* (1999), *Black Tents of Baluchistan* (2000), winner of the Premio Pitr–Salomone Marino, *Understanding Culture: An Introduction of Anthropological Theory* (2001), *Pastoralists: Equality, Hierarchy, and the State* (2004), *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (2008), *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict* (2008), and *Thinking Anthropologically 3rd Ed.* (2010). His latest book publication is *Classic Comparative Anthropology: Studies from the Tradition* (2012). In public affairs, he was a member of Middle East Strategy at Harvard (2008-2010), a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2004-2012), and is currently a Senior Fellow at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, a member of the Academic Council of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Studies, a Fellow of the Middle East Forum (2015-), and a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2016-). His articles have been published by the Frontier Centre, the Middle East Forum, the Gatestone Institute, the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, the Macdonald Laurier Institute, and Areo Magazine.