



## Claiming Entitlement to Their Own Facts

by Richard W. Rahn

WHEN CHALLENGED BY CONTRADICTION, SOME PEOPLE JUST MAKE STUFF UP

On Nov. 4, a conference was held in London to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, which occurred in October 1917. Rather than learn from the untold human misery which stemmed from that event, many of those who participated were celebrating the revolution or decrying it as incomplete. The conference was sponsored by the Russian Revolution Centenary Committee and was attended by well-known left-leaning academics, politicians and labor-movement leaders from Britain and many other countries. One of the attendees, the manager of the Marx Memorial Library, said: “As a library dedicated to Marxism and the history of socialism, this is a once in a generation event for the MML.” The “Soviet contribution to arts and cinema” was also highlighted.

For background, it is estimated that Stalin accounted for 40 million to 62 million deaths, and Mao for 45 million to 75 million deaths (far more than Hitler, who only ranks No. 3 as a mass murderer with an estimated 17 million to 20 million deaths). Other than killing, enslaving and impoverishing millions of their own citizens, the communists and socialists have also denied basic human liberties and property rights. Surely a record worth celebrating.

It gets worse. The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation has just released its annual report on U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, where it found that 44 percent of the millennials would prefer to live in a socialist country, or even a communist country (7 percent), than in a capitalist one (42 percent). The best that can be said is that most of these millennials are probably totally ignorant of the real tragic record and lack of success of socialism and communism anywhere. The others, and those who attended the London conference, are in denial — which is referred to as cognitive dissonance: “The mental conflict that occurs when beliefs or assumptions are contradicted by new information. The unease or tension that the conflict arouses in people is relieved by one of several defensive maneuvers: They reject, explain away, or avoid the new information.” (Britannica).

What is particularly sad and disturbing is that so many in the media also suffer from cognitive dissonance, in that they have an inability to recognize anything that President Trump or the congressional Republicans do correctly (and they really do some things correctly). As an example, I checked the websites of several of the major media organizations last week when the House Republicans released the new tax proposal. Most of them in their “news” description (not editorial comment) of what the proposal contains focused on what deductions were being cut back, and not on the fact that it will actually reduce taxes for almost everyone but the “very rich,” and spur economic growth and higher wages. Their readers would still be left in a state of ignorance of how they will be affected by the proposed changes.

A number of Democrats, including Minority Leaders Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer, were claiming the bill would only benefit the very rich. The fact is that very high-income people will have their tax burden increased because the top statutory rate remains the same, while some of their deductions would be phased out, and almost everyone else will have a tax cut. The Democrats have been saying they want “the rich” to pay more and the middle- and lower-income people to get a tax cut, which is precisely what the Republicans have proposed.

Again, people who cannot accept “yes” for an answer are suffering from cognitive dissonance or are so cynical that they are more interested in trying to gain political points by assuming that the media will keep the voters ignorant as to what will benefit them. There is plenty of room for an honest debate about the proposed tax reform, such as the impact on deficits, and what deductions should remain, so there is no legitimate reason to make stuff up.

Another example of cognitive dissonance is in the discussion of global warming. Some are so invested in the idea that a climate catastrophe is just outside the door that they are in denial about any shred of information that the situation is not that serious. Steven E. Koonin, who was undersecretary of energy for science during President Obama’s first term, writing in a Wall Street Journal op-ed last week titled “A Deceptive New Report on Climate,” described many misleading statements in the U.S. government’s Climate Science Special Report. He argued that the data misrepresentations he described “violate basic scientific norms.”

Most people want real facts about issues that might affect their lives — socialism, taxes and environmental policy — so they can make their own judgments. Where are the examples of successful socialist and communist countries? Where are the examples of countries that were not already rich, but became rich when they greatly increased the size of government and tax rates? Why did not one of the major climate models predict the decade-long pause in global warming?

How people answer those questions and others will indicate whether or not they are suffering from cognitive dissonance.

*Richard W. Rahn is chairman of Improbable Success Productions and on the board of the American Council for Capital Formation*

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