

Something Else

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as “Not the Real Conservative Message”

Eddie Cochran may have said it best with, “When it all comes true man, wow, that’s something else,” but that truth is often hard to nail down. Nobody knows this better than Psychological Operations (or “PSYOP”) experts, who I have often heard incanting their unofficial motto “perception is truth.” PSYOP campaigns are waged with carefully crafted messages rather than bullets, but are often more effective at achieving political goals. We would, therefore, serve ourselves well to recognize these when they occasionally float to the surface in the media.

Some of these messages are more obvious than others, often launched at an unsuspecting American public from a foreign capital. Among the most obvious of these are the tiresome talking points (worn to talking nubs by now) from Serbia, trying to convince conservatives to oppose the U.S. backing of Kosovo independence. If you know why Bill Clinton’s statue can be found in the Kosovo capital, on Bill Clinton Boulevard, then you know why Belgrade targets the American right. It turns out that the conservative movement in this country has been subjected to many such targeted messages, in many cases having its own message hijacked or mutilated along the way. The recent Occupy protests have proven to be the trigger for a fusillade of new messages, guns trained to the right of the lines.

When the Occupy protests kicked off, quite abruptly, there seemed to be a holding of the breath from most quarters for two or three days. My conservative friends seemed to be especially, well, conservative when it came to forming an immediate opinion of the protesters and their aims. It didn’t take long, though, before some soft-yet-derogatory words began to be whispered from the dexter stage curtain. “Lazy” and “hippie” started to creep into newscasts and commentary, then the more serious “criminal” and “dangerous” descriptions were tested. Once “un-American” finally came out after a few more days, I knew it was inevitable that we were headed for the *tired-and-true* “Nazi” and “Communist” clichés. When the Occupy protesters decided to shut down the Port of Oakland, the hypersensitive tripwire was trodden, and the H-bomb of “terrorism!” was finally deployed. All of these messages were faithfully repeated by the willing- posted in blogs and copy/pasted onto social media pages. (To be fair, many of my very-liberal friends were posting daily complaints about the “extreme violence” of pepper spray used against U.S. citizens, while their Facebook walls remained mute about Syrian protesters being machine-gunned by the hundreds.)

The charge of ‘terrorism’ against the Occupy protesters I found a bit too much for reasons which should be obvious to most. The implication that these people are somehow less-than-citizen and closer to enemy combatant status should be chilling in a Kristallnacht sort of way. One Tea Party supporter I know went so far as to tell me that the Occupy protesters are *exactly* the same as the 9/11 hijackers (which would seem to indicate only his own lack of moral scruple). When I interrogated him on his

reasoning for this comparison, he said that the Occupy movement is “anti-capitalism and any threat to capitalism is a threat to our system, and therefore, terrorism.”

The stunning observation in all of this is that the Occupy protesters are protesting during the Obama administration, against the massive redistribution of funds from the taxpayer to the banks and corporations by the President, even heckling his news conferences- and yet it is somehow considered a worthwhile endeavor by some on the far right to deride the movement in the most vitriol terms. It is made somewhat less stunning only when assembled with other messages targeting the American right: atheists are conspiring to take children’s faith by teaching evolution, eliminate the EPA, do away with the Department of Education, drilling will fix the economy, and the President is a ‘secret Muslim’ who is going to take our guns- while supporting Al Qaeda in Libya. How these ideas came to be considered ‘conservative’ I have no idea. Before every kitchen knife in a flowerpot becomes a weapons cache, and the Boston Tea Party becomes the 9-11 of 1773, conservative media consumers need to apprehend that these are not their messages. These messages are something else.