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USA

We Oppose McCarthyism and Apologizing for China

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A petition titled “McCarthyism Is Back—Together We Can Stop It” is currently being circulated by a number of organizations and individuals on the left. It is motivated by a recent New York Times article that describes relationships between the multi-millionaire Roy Singham and a variety of left organizations (particularly the ones circulating the petition). Much of the information in the Times article had been discussed previously in the award-winning, left-of-center New Lines journal, but the Times provided additional reporting. The South African left journal amaBhungane also previously discussed Singham’s role. The petition accuses the Times and the media in general of encouraging a new Cold War, engendering racism toward Chinese Americans, shutting down critics of U.S. foreign policy, and menacing the left and society in general with a new period of McCarthyism.

The essence of the reporting is that Singham, a long-time Maoist who supports the Chinese government, uses his fortune to influence and sometimes to control other organizations. Singham, who doesn’t need or, as far as is known, receive Chinese government funding, gives his money to other organizations that share his support for China and pro-Chinese policies. As in other cases where the rich provide financial backing to politicians or political parties, it is not obvious whether the money caused a change in political position on the part of the recipient. But either way, the money increases the political weight of views aligned with the donor, in ways unaccountable to the progressive community or anyone else. What Singham has been doing seems a mirror image of U.S global disinformation and media manipulations over the decades.

Though we object to the lack of transparency and accountability of Singham’s largesse, our principal objection is to his politics. That is, we oppose his uncritical support for China. And this is not because we support a new Cold War.

Although Cold War rhetoric in the United States has indeed increased among both Republicans and Democrats, the deeper problem is the rising tension caused by a new period of imperialism driven principally by the competition among the United States, the European Union, China, and Russia, as well as other great and lesser powers. The resulting tensions and conflicts now drive the world toward war. As often happens, these external conflicts also contribute to racism towards the Chinese and others in America. The militarism, war, and racism of the United States must all be condemned in the strongest terms, as the left has always done.

But Chinese policies must also be denounced. China is one of those great imperial powers, with a highly authoritarian state that represses the Chinese working class, the Uyghurs, the Tibetans, and the Hong Kong democracy movement. China also threatens war with Taiwan, carries out bullying in the South China Sea, and, in classic imperialist style, makes loans and investments worth tens of billions of dollars in nations of the global South, gaining increasing influence over their governments. China’s policies resemble, without having yet equaled, those of Great Britain and France in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth. As socialists, we oppose the Chinese government’s repression of democratic and social justice movements at home and its use of economic leverage to pressure governments abroad. Yes, China has accomplished commendable poverty alleviation, but this no more makes it socialist than economic growth in Taiwan or South Korea make them socialist.

Singham’s generosity and his politics have helped to promote an unfortunate ideological current on the left: campism. In the name of anti-imperialism, campists oppose the camp of the United States and reflexively support governments in the opposite camp, no matter how authoritarian and repressive they may be. During the original Cold War, some allowed their rejection of Western imperialism to blind them to the evils of the Soviet Union. All too many on the pro-Soviet left denied the existence of the gulags or excused Soviet intervention in Hungary or Czechoslovakia because of the crimes of the West. Unfortunately, a similar dynamic is seen today. The campists praise China

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despite its wretched record on political and civil rights. They back Iran and Nicaragua as opponents of U.S. imperialism, though these regimes trample on women's rights and basic democratic rights. They soft-peddle Russia's violations of international and humanitarian law in Ukraine and are silent about its increasingly dictatorial regime with viciously anti-LGBTQ+ policies. And some campists have even joined with the far-right in what has been called the red-brown alliance.

The New York Times or New Lines articles are not McCarthyism. The Times of course is a major instrument of the U.S. elite that often promotes rotten policies and colludes with the government. But that doesn't mean that everything it reports is false. McCarthyism, while it involved the collaboration of the media, was based in state power. In the late 1940s and 1950s, presidents Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower along with Senator Joseph McCarthy enacted laws and conducted investigations aimed at discrediting and repressing the Communist Party. Many on the far left in that period—not just CP members, but anarchists, Trotskyists, and some socialists—opposed McCarthyism, and rightly so.

Recently Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) called on the Department of Justice to investigate China's ties to Code Pink and other groups on the left. This should be opposed. The left should defend anybody facing state repression of their democratic rights. But honest investigations and reporting on money that both rich people and governments spend to influence policy and politics should be welcomed. Investigative journalism exposing obscure financial connections shouldn't be confused with McCarthyism.

The left should oppose Cold War rhetoric and actions as well as anti-Chinese racism or any other sort of discrimination or bias. At the same time, the left should be internationalist in the sense of supporting movements for democracy, for labor unions, for feminism or LGBT rights whether in the United States, Russia, China, Nicaragua, Iran, or Uganda. The best weapon for countering a new Cold War, imperialism, and racism is a democratic and internationalist foreign policy.

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Source: [Foreign Policy in Focus](#)

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