



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on May 28, 2012

Occupying for a Failed Ideology

“I think the disruption added to the excitement of the evening,” said a fellow attendee at the recent Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty Award Dinner as we were leaving the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton.

He was talking about an unscripted Occupy outbreak when a protester burst into the ballroom, yelling and waving two large placards above his head and charging the stage during the presentation of the 2012 Friedman award to Mao Yushi, an 83-year-old economist and engineer, one of the pioneers of the movement in China committed to individual freedom, government reform, and the transition from a centrally planned and politicized economy to a market economy.



The Friedman award, which includes a \$250,000 cash prize, is presented by the Cato Institute every other year to an individual who has made “a significant contribution to advancing human freedom.”

In 2007, *China Newsweek* named Mao Yushi and Tsinghua University’s Qin Hui the most influential intellectuals of the decade. In 2011, Mao Yushi’s article chronicling the human costs of brutal communist policies in China from 1949 to 1976, “Returning Mao Zedong to Human Form,” led to calls for his prosecution and execution for treason.

In any case, it was hard to immediately know what the protester’s yelling was all about at the dinner. Markets work better than communism — even in China, that’s increasingly obvious.

Additionally, a swanky black tie event in D.C., at a moment between the double entrée of herb crusted tenderloin of beef and grilled swordfish with apricot relish and a triple dessert of green tea crème brûlée, mini-caramellow, and basil cheesecake, hardly seemed the best time and place to convince anyone that freedom is a scary thing, scarier than totalitarian rule and poverty-inducing collectivism.

Plus it was hard to get the message because he was yelling in Chinese and the placards were in Chinese.

Like any good activist, the protester has a blog, proudly displaying his latest disruption, along with photos of the posters and his dash to the stage.

When we got back to Pittsburgh, I took my computer to lunch at my favorite Chinese restaurant and asked for a translation from one of the employees.

“He is saying Mao Yushi is a traitor to his country, that this person Mao Yushi is a betrayer of the Chinese government,” she explained, reading the blog. “He wanted to ‘disturb’ the award.”

She translated the first poster: “It says, ‘Mao, Puppy of USA 1%.’ He is saying that Americans are the



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owner and Mao Yushi is the dog.”

The message on the second poster was similar, again echoing the rich versus poor stance of the Occupy movement, the 99 percent versus the 1 percent: “Mao serves American rich people — 99% not slave.”

The message echoes the flawed and destructive view of seeing an economy as a fixed pie, an unchanging asset where an increase of one person’s piece comes only at the expense of all the others — not unlike how bickering and envious offspring fight over dad’s will.

It’s a creed that fails to see how a Henry Ford or Bill Gates creates a whole new pie. It an ideology that creates a mindset that automatically condemns the success, incomes, and accumulated wealth of a Ford or Gates, a mentality that seeks, first and foremost, a redistribution of income and assets, a mentality that destroys incentives for performance and refuses to acknowledge how Ford and Gates increased the incomes and living standards of countless workers and consumers.

I asked the woman doing the translating what she thought about the children and grandchildren of Communist China’s revolutionary leaders now becoming super-wealthy, some by way of entrepreneurship and free market ventures, and others by way of insider trading on a massive scale and crony capitalism.

“Equality does not work,” she replied. “It never works, not anywhere. There is always inequality, in every city, even in small villages. That is the unchanging nature of things. People with money have dominion, the say-so. It is no different in China. It cannot be equal.”

As Milton Friedman said to Phil Donohue during a TV interview in 1979: “You think China doesn’t run on greed?”

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