Question Insanity: What to Ask Progressives

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An ex-Soviet immigrant goes Socratic on his liberal American critics.

The two women who showed up early for my book signing at a small bookstore in Houston, TX, never even bothered to open my book. Wearing knowing smiles, they engaged me in a bizarre discussion that wound up leaping all around the known and unknown universe. They hadn't the slightest curiosity about my ideas as an ex-Soviet immigrant in America, or what I had to say about my experience working inside the two ideologically opposed systems. As it turned out, they had spotted my flyer in the store window the day before, and the book's title – Shakedown Socialism – had enraged them so much that they decided to return the following day and give me a piece of their collective mind.

Their act almost made me feel as if I were back in the USSR, where the harassment of people with my opinions was the norm. The shorter, pudgier woman was the soloist bully, while her skinnier, older comrade provided backup vocals and noise effects. The duo's repertoire was an eclectic collection of unoriginal talking points, each branded with an almost legible label: NPR, Air America, MSNBC, and so on. Not only were those mental fragments mismatched in key and rhythm; the very existence of harmony seemed an unfamiliar concept to them. But compared to the hard-core screaming I used to hear from card-carrying Soviet bullies, this was almost elevator music. If I had survived the original cast, I could certainly handle a watered-down remake.

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