

DESANTIS GOES TO WAR ON WOKEISM

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On election night, I was half-

watching Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's victory remarks when something quite extraordinary and encouraging caught my attention.

DeSantis evoked Churchill's "fighting on the beaches" speech, in which Churchill stirred the resolve and patriotism of the British people in anticipation of the invasion of their homeland by the Nazis. DeSantis, of course, was not warning against Nazism: he was warning against wokeism, which he was implicitly equating with Nazism.

I had never heard a national political figure treat wokeism with such (deserved) gravity.

Before rephrasing Churchill, DeSantis said:

"States and cities governed by leftist politicians have seen crime skyrocket. They've seen their taxpayers abused, they've seen medical authoritarianism imposed, and they've seen American principles discarded. The woke agenda has caused millions of Americans to leave these jurisdictions for greener pastures.

People do not uproot themselves and leave the rhythms of home 'for light and transient causes.' These people are not coming to Florida just for the weather. They are fleeing the woke regime of blue America—an abusive, lawless, totalitarian regime which is waging war against American principles and the American way of life".

DeSantis continued:

“Now, this great exodus of Americans, for those folks, Florida, for so many of them, has served as the promised land. We have embraced freedom. We have maintained law and order. We have protected the rights of parents. We have respected our taxpayers, and we reject woke ideology. We fight the woke in the legislature. We fight the woke in the schools. We fight the woke in the corporations. We will never, ever surrender to the woke mob. Florida is where woke goes to die.”

In evoking Churchill’s speech, DeSantis lets us know that the woke regime is bearing down on America. In the urgent cadences of war, DeSantis tells us that America will not survive unless she defeats the woke regime. He believes this regime is so evil and powerful that he can, without bathos, compare it to the Nazi regime.

DeSantis has made a good start. He has told us that we are at war with a deadly regime, the woke regime. You cannot win a war unless you know you are in one.

But at some point soon, he must go further. He must show a voting majority of Americans that wokeism is the challenge of our generation, as Nazism was the challenge of the WWII generation and Communism for two generations thereafter.

And he must back up his claim. He has given us at least one piece of substantial evidence: in large numbers, people are fleeing their homes. Still, we need more. We shall not address the problem with the right strategies and people or the necessary resolve until we believe the country’s life truly is at stake. DeSantis needs to put America on a war footing.

In today’s environment, where there is a keen and deepening generalized awareness of danger, I think there is a hunger for a reasoned account of that danger. DeSantis’s most important role—the role of any statesman who is to rise to the historic challenge of this crisis—is to give such an account, one that calls a morally indifferent nation back to the principles of the founding.

So far as I can tell, there is no national Republican elected official who fully understands the threat except for Trump and DeSantis. He should make defeating wokeism his central purpose, with the goal of making it the central purpose of the Republican Party (which currently has no central purpose).

Presumably DeSantis will run for the presidency. But even if he doesn’t, his first goal should be the mobilization of America. He should make anti-wokeism (and its opposite, pro-Americanism) the theme of the next Republican administration, whether it is his administration or not.

To develop an anti-woke (pro-American) agenda, DeSantis must first help us understand the woke regime, the woke way of life. He must explain that this way of life cannot possibly coexist with the American way of life. The two regimes have utterly irreconcilable understandings of a just society.

For the American regime, a just society is one in which free men and women pursue happiness according to their abilities and according to nature. Such a society is one where merit rules. For the woke regime, on the

other hand, a just society is one where the regime imposes identity group quotas based on victimhood rankings. Such a regime makes war on merit.

It's one regime or the other. You can't offer admission to college (or anything else) according to group quotas and, at the same time, offer admission according to merit. I suggest DeSantis frame the debate accordingly: the merit regime vs. the group quota regime (or simply, merit vs. group quotas).

DeSantis should be very clear: woke revolutionaries attempt not to improve our culture, or remake aspects of it, but to destroy it or lead us to destroy it ourselves—not partially but completely. Like (crazed) revolutionaries everywhere, they believe the world must be purified, no matter the cost.

But DeSantis should not overestimate the threat either. The woke regime is a totalitarian regime *in the making*. Our side is outgunned almost everywhere, but there is still room to maneuver.

America is not yet a one-party state; we still have some open communication channels; our intelligence agencies can (conceivably) be reformed; wokeness in the military can probably be reversed by a strong president, and businesses (one must hope!) will come around if they see America gaining the upper hand on woke tyranny.

Even in education, where the woke revolutionaries have us tied to a chair, our hands are still free.

In addition to a framing, we need a simple theory or model of the woke regime: its composition, its goals, and the means for achieving those goals. Without a model we cannot anticipate where the woke revolutionaries are going next, and so we are always playing whack-a-mole, each new woke initiative catching us by surprise.

The objective of the woke regime—group quotas—requires the woke revolutionaries to make Americans deeply ashamed of their past, thereby making them inclined to trade in the merit regime for the group quota regime. This requires a Big Lie. Every totalitarian regime has one.

The woke regime's big lie is that America is systemically racist and about to be overrun by racists, a.k.a. Trump voters.

DeSantis should call this the "Big Lie" and, like Trump, dismiss it without apology or qualification. DeSantis should explain that the phony white guilt of the elite is killing the rest of us, black and white, that racism is low on the list of problems confronting black citizens, and, as Frederick Douglass counseled, the way to help blacks is to encourage them to help themselves.

DeSantis must tell Republicans they should forget about defending themselves against charges of "racism" (it cannot be done). Instead Republicans need to explain that the central problem facing the nation is not racism, but the trumped-up charges of racism that hound us from morning to night.

The goal of conservatives should be, as David Azerrad has pointed out, "not to solve the race problem but to prevent the race problem from crushing the country."

DeSantis needs to explain that the doctrinaire egalitarianism of wokesism denies the natural differences in abilities among people and so is evil. DeSantis should say just that: "evil." Although the elite will cringe, as it did when Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union "evil," most Americans will find it both bracing and reassuring.

In addition to telling lies, the woke revolutionaries must, as most everyone knows by now, censor anyone who challenges the lies. In a totalitarian regime there can be no space for dissent. This requires, among many other things, erasing from memory totalitarian regimes and their evil.

DeSantis gets it. To his great credit, he signed a bill last year that *requires* the teaching of “communism and totalitarianism.”

Republicans recognize the Big Lie, censorship, and the corruption of education, but like many pieces of the woke regime, these are not usually seen as part of the larger woke strategy. We see the pieces but not always the picture. That’s DeSantis’s role: to put the pieces together.

DeSantis should make us understand all the woke regime’s actions through this totalitarian lens. Take, for example, Biden’s decision to stop the Keystone XL pipeline.

The woke revolutionaries tell us this has to do with climate change, but it is difficult to see how destroying American energy independence can be other than part of an attempt to destroy America. Whether done with conscious intent or simply allowed to happen, the result is the same.

Or take open borders. We usher in millions of illegal immigrants, distribute them around the country, encourage them not to assimilate, and sometimes even allow them to vote. This too is an attempt to destroy our country with the additional benefit for the woke revolutionaries of swelling Democratic voting rolls.

Another example is the breaking of the country into identity groups (tribes), each competing for the highest ranking in the victimhood sweepstakes. This will almost certainly lead to tribal warfare. When has it not?

DeSantis should help us follow the logic of wokeism. For example, if we know group quotas for innocent victims is the goal of the woke regime, then we know that the woke revolutionaries need to bring the black prison population (currently about 33 percent of the total prison population) more in line with blacks’ percentage of the overall population (13 percent).

That is the purpose of defunding the police and failing to prosecute certain crimes and other criminal justice “reforms.” For the most part, people with common sense—in particular black Americans who must endure the consequences in their own neighborhoods—see these things simply as very stupid ideas.

But DeSantis should keep reminding us that *wokeism is not a jumble of stupid ideas but a coherent set of stupid ideas* in the service of the group quota regime, one that is completely at odds with the merit regime.

And DeSantis should help us anticipate the woke revolutionaries’ next steps.

In the case of prison population, the next step might be disparate sentencing, where blacks get lighter sentences than whites for the same offense, or perhaps the elimination of prison altogether. As loopy as these ideas sound, they are logical extensions of woke theory.

Moreover, each has been talked about by leading woke revolutionary intellectuals like Ibram X. Kendi. Sometimes all we have to do is listen.

The War on Wokeism also requires different personnel. Trump, an almost unthinkable option at any other time

in American history, was the right man for these times, and may still be the right man. Trump was a great war time president. DeSantis must help us understand that Trump's flaws were not—perhaps are still not—disqualifying.

The easy way out for Republicans, and the temptation for DeSantis, will be to say Trump's policies were good, but not the rest of him. I think this assessment of Trump is wrong. Trump advanced many important policies, but the “rest of him” is where one finds the virtues that have inspired a movement.

His willingness to fight, his abundant courage, strength, independence, optimism, confidence in America, and absence of white guilt are examples of virtues that made him both effective and dear to patriotic Americans. DeSantis should resist his advisors who tell him he should not speak well of Trump. Now is the time for statesmanship.

And when the Republican establishment dismisses the Trump movement as “populist,” DeSantis should demur and explain to that establishment that when the elite undermines the American way of life, and the voices of ordinary people cannot be heard, populism is not only healthy but vital.

Trump's populist base has just what the Republican Party lacks: purpose, the passion that can match the ideological zeal of the woke revolutionaries, optimism, and confidence in itself and the country. And the base doesn't have what the party has altogether too much of: white guilt. Trump's base is a fighting force we cannot afford to lose.

In his election night victory speech DeSantis imagined that he, like Churchill, was a great leader fighting the forces of evil. If DeSantis is to actually follow Churchill (and Lincoln), he must be magnanimous, as they were. Voters will rally to magnanimity coupled with courage and resolution.

DeSantis's immediate goal is to make America vs. the woke regime (merit vs. group quotas) the central theme of American political discourse. Perhaps that begins with a speech.

Like Churchill and Lincoln, DeSantis should appeal to our patriotism in order to stir our resolve. We are still a patriotic people. Where patriotism has waned, I suspect its embers would burst into flames.

DeSantis must remind us we are part of a noble and honorable tradition. He must call attention to the great successes of our past. In doing so he reminds us that we are still capable of greatness. As in times before, the future of freedom *everywhere* rests on our shoulders, a fateful burden we carry as the “almost” chosen people.

DeSantis must give us hope but not let us forget the possibility of darkness. As a peroration, he cannot improve on Lincoln who faced a crisis not so dissimilar to the one we face today:

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

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