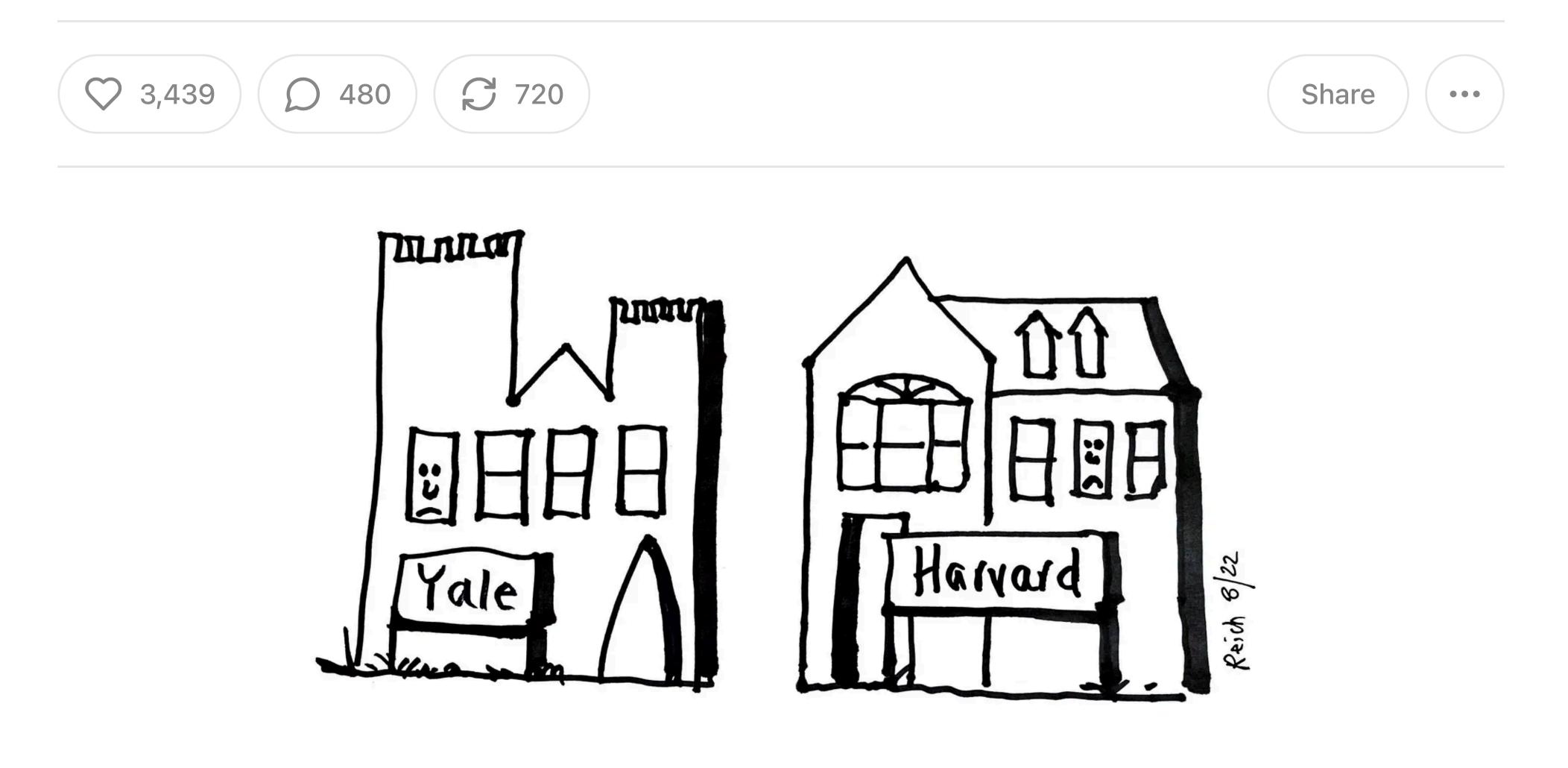
The universities are next

ROBERT REICH MAR 10, 2025



Friends,

Trump is following Putin's, Xi's, and Orban's playbook. First, take over military and intelligence operations by purging career officers and substituting ones personally loyal to you.

Next, subdue the courts by ignoring or threatening to ignore court rulings you disagree with.

Intimidate legislators by warning that if they don't bend to your wishes, you'll run loyalists against them. (Make sure they also worry about what your violent supporters could do to them and their families.)

Then focus on independent sources of information: the media and the universities. Sue media that publish critical stories and block their access to news conferences and interviews.

Then go after the universities.

Last week, Trump threatened in a social media post to punish any university that permits "illegal" protests. On Friday he cancelled hundreds of millions in grants and contracts with Columbia University.

This is an extension of Republican tactics before Trump's second term. Prior to Trump appointing her ambassador to the United Nations, former Representative Elise Stefanik (Harvard class of 2006) browbeat presidents of elite universities over their responses to student protests against Israel's bombardment of Gaza, leading to several presidents being fired.

Senator Josh Hawley (Stanford class of 2002 and Yale Law class of 2006) called the student demonstrations signs of "moral rot" at the universities.

But antisemitism was just a pretext.

JD Vance (Yale Law 2013) has termed university professors "the enemy" and suggested using Victor Orban's method for ending "left-wing domination of universities."

I think his way has to be the model for us: not to eliminate universities, but to give them a choice between survival or taking a much less biased approach to teaching. [The government should be] aggressively reforming institutions ... in a way to where they're much more open to conservative ideas."

Trump is also targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion programs on university campuses.

But of all Trump's and Republicans' moves against higher education, the most destructive is the cancelation of research grants and contracts. The destruction is hardly confined to Columbia and other suspected left-wing bastions.

Research universities depend on funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Trump reportedly aims to slash the budget of the National Science Foundation by <u>up</u> to two-thirds. And he's instructed the National Institutes of Health to no longer honor negotiated rates for "indirect costs" on grants that it administers — money that universities use for laboratory space and research equipment.

In defiance of court orders, Trump has largely maintained a freeze on NIH funding.

As a result, many of America's great research universities have stopped hiring and are cutting Ph.D. programs — in some cases rescinding offers to accepted students.

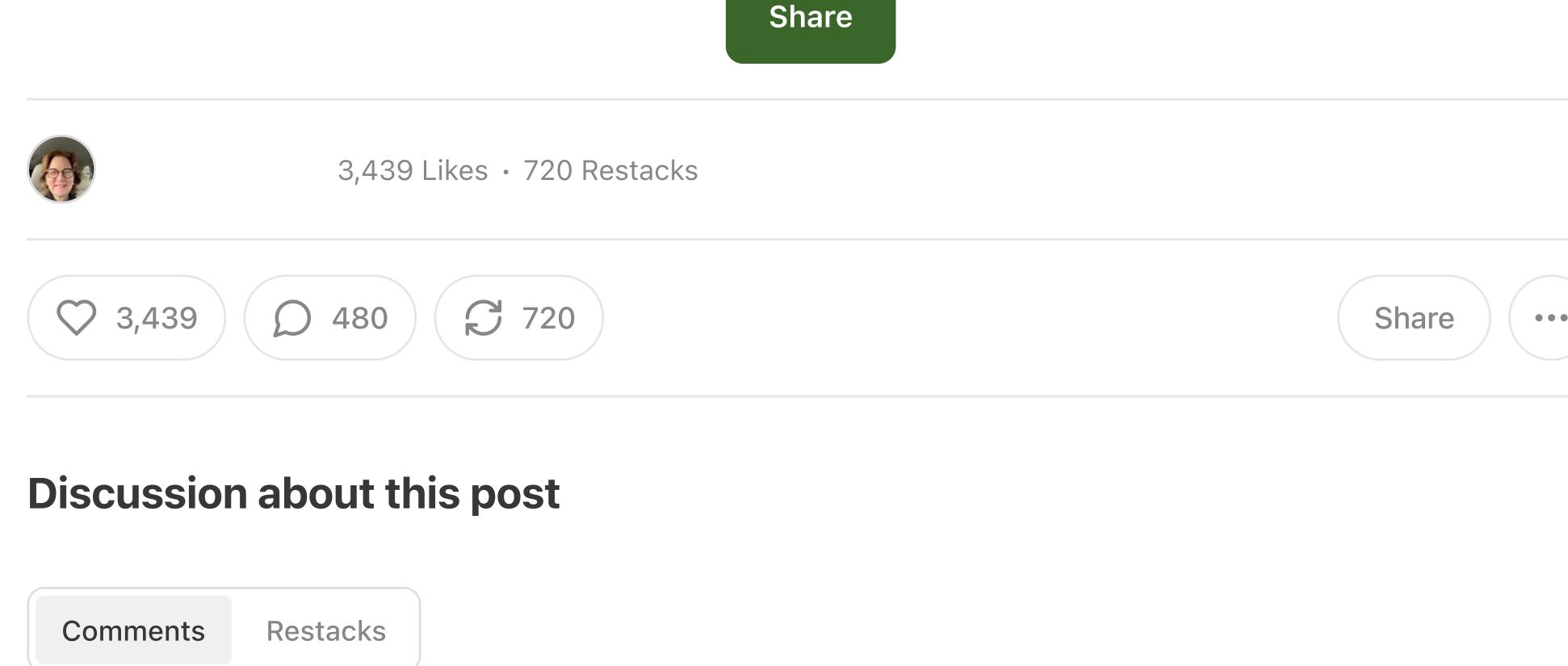
Trump's moves are consistent with the tyrant's playbook, but they're also jeopardizing America's national security and competitiveness.

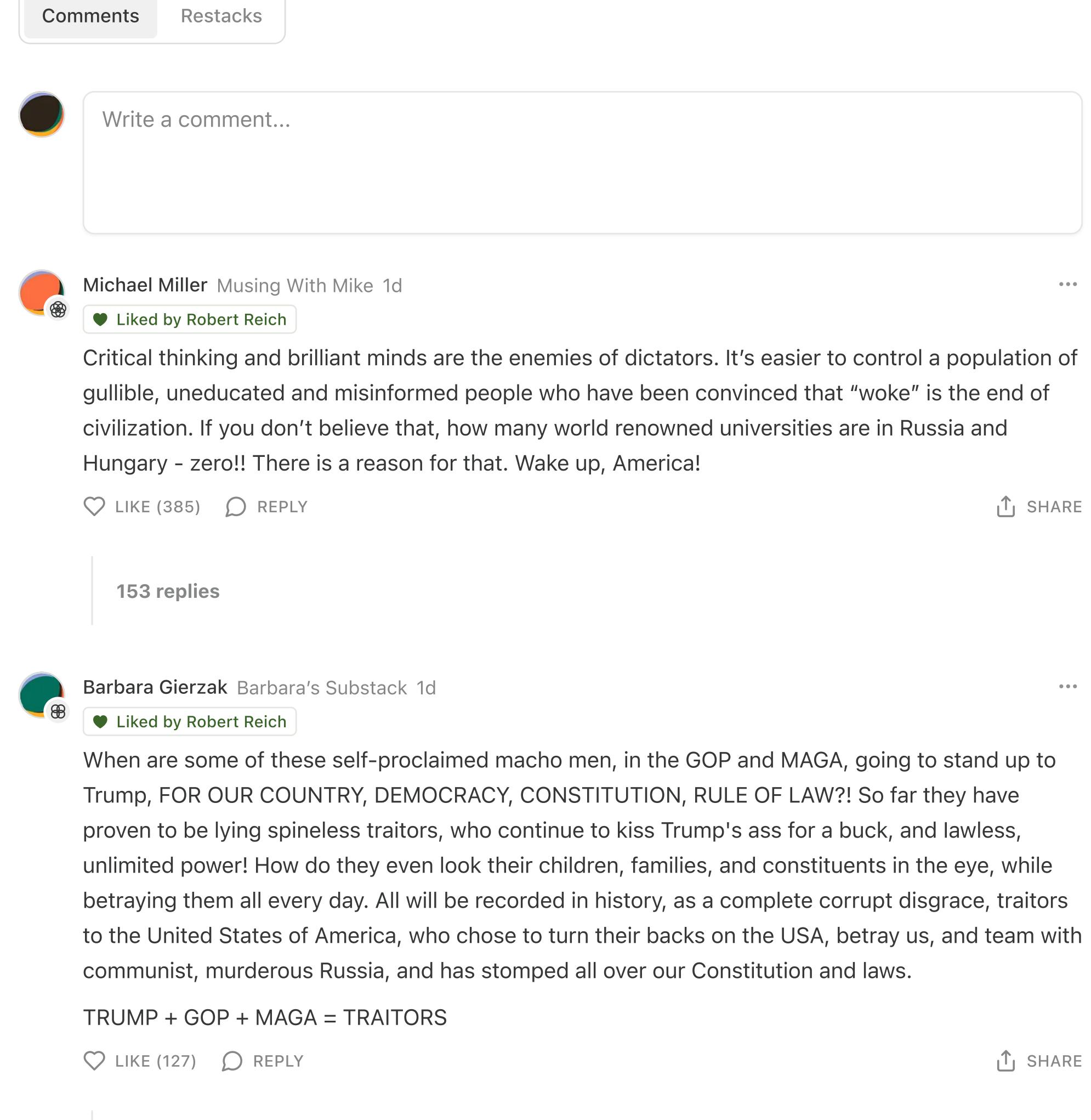
Trump speaks of putting America First, but his attack on the nation's great research universities is ensuring that the U.S. comes in second — to China.

Although America has long been the global leader in scientific output, China is now surging ahead. Even before Trump's cuts in research funding, China was projected to match U.S. research spending within five years.

China has already surpassed the U.S. as the top producer of highly cited papers and international patent applications. It now awards more science and engineering Ph.D.s than the U.S.

Tyrants close universities. Fascists burn books. Trump is destroying America's most important asset — its innovative mind.





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