

"Radical Egalitarian" Stalinism: A Post Mortem

During the heyday of the New Left a generation of Western radicals came to politically embrace Stalinism in its "Third World" variants in large part because Cuba and China appeared to these impressionistic petty-bourgeois idealists to be egalitarian societies in struggle, unlike the seemingly complacent, stodgy, bureaucratized Soviet Union. For the last decade in the U.S. political identification with what could be called "Third World" Stalinist egalitarianism has been a dominant tendency in mainstream petty-bourgeois radicalism.

New Leftism first coalesced with "Third World" Stalinism over the Cuban revolution during the mid-1960's. In marked contrast to their Russian patrons the Cuban leadership appeared to be genuinely committed to humanistic and populist ideals, seemingly determined not to give up their old spartan guerrilla values or their vision of spreading the revolution throughout Latin America by fomenting "armed struggle." Contrary to the New Left illusions, the Cuban leaders were at bottom Khrushchevs in khaki. After their budding "détente" with Yankee imperialism was abruptly terminated by Washington and their cordial relations with the Kremlin estranged following what was regarded as a Soviet retreat over the 1962 missile crisis, the Cuban leaders had nothing to lose by adopting a militant posture.

What especially captivated the New Left was how Ernesto "Che" Guevara eloquently preached the need to combine "building socialism" with creating "socialist man." To New Leftists Guevara seemed to be speaking their language when he advocated a struggle to end alienated labor in Cuba that would start by replacing all material incentives with moral incentives. Guevara seemed to integrate two distinct New Left currents: regarding the "wretched of the earth" in the "Third World" as the sole revolutionary vanguard (Frantz Fanon), and viewing the question of "personal liberation" as a necessary but neglected goal of Marxist socialism (Herbert Marcuse).

Although the much-touted "radical" policies adopted by Castro produced a series of economic disasters instead of "socialist man" and were later scrapped in favor of a return to more orthodox Soviet-model methods, the New Left in the meantime had its attention diverted to China, then in the throes of the so-called "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Starry-eyed radicals in the West took as good coin the Maoist demagoguery about struggling to eliminate bureaucratism and privilege and to create in China a society modeled after the Paris Commune. In reality an intra-bureaucratic power struggle launched by Mao only to oust his principle rivals in the regime and to whip the apparatus into line, the Cultural Revolution was idealized by many Leftists as a titanic campaign to institute "participatory democracy" for one fourth of the human race.

Whereas Guevara's specific economic (as opposed to his high-falutin' social) ideas advocated during the Cuban "Great Debate" had relatively little impact on the New Left, the Chinese Cultural Revolution made questions of economic policy, such as moral versus material incentives, a real issue among vicarious "radical" Stalinists. While Guevara had regarded material incentives as perhaps le-

gitimate for "building socialism" Soviet-style but a fetter on creating "socialist man," Mao claimed that material incentives and wage differentials were a mortal *threat* to the very existence of "socialism" in China. Not only those who joined Maoist cadre organizations after the demise of the New Left but also those soft "Third World" enthusiasts who remained organizationally unaffiliated accepted the incredibly idealist Maoist dogma that "revisionists" (defined as anyone in the Chinese bureaucracy who opposed Mao) could restore capitalism in China simply through gradually expanding "bourgeois right" (material incentives and the like), i.e., a peaceful and possibly even surreptitious counterrevolution.

But history hasn't been kind to those who seek to glorify "Third World" Stalinist egalitarianism. If the economic policies of the Castro regime haven't caused significant disillusionment in the New Left radical milieu, the seemingly kaleidoscopic policy shifts associated with the revolving-door purges in People's China since the death of Mao certainly have. In October of 1976 the most prominent representatives of "radical" Maoism (Chiang Ching, Yao Wen-yuan, Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao) were suddenly purged and henceforth vilified as a high-living, double-dealing "Gang of Four" who spouted rhetoric about "restricting bourgeois right" only to conceal their allegedly nefarious schemes to restore a new bourgeoisie to power in China. Claiming the mantle of Maoism, the new regime headed by Hua Kuo-feng and Teng Hsiao-ping has promised to rectify the voluntarist idiocies attributed to the "Gang of Four" and to adopt more "pragmatic" economic policies, which include replacing moral incentives with material incentives and raising wages for the first time in 16 years. Thus, a recent issue of *Peking Review* (17 February) prominently featured on its front page a slogan which for years had been denounced by the "radical" Maoists as the epitome of Brezhnevite "revisionism": "To Each According to His Work: Socialist Principle of Distribution."

While Castro's abandonment of Guevarist-inspired economic policies produced no ripples among New Left circles, the purge of the most prominent self-proclaimed Maoist "egalitarians" proved to be a political bombshell in the camp of Maoists and pro-Peking "progressives" abroad. It was soon followed by an official campaign repudiating those policies and rhetoric that for a decade had been associated with "radical" Maoism. In the U.S. the question of material incentives versus "restricting bourgeois right" entered into the clique fight which recently ripped apart the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), once the largest pro-Peking organization in this country. To the extent that the RCP clique fight had a programmatic expression, the rival "headquarters"—the inveterate New Leftists around the "Chairman" Bob Avakian and the more orthodox Stalinists following Mickey Jarvis—clashed over the question of whether or not the new leadership in Peking was leading China down the "capitalist road." In his main "summing-up" of the fight Avakian directed his "main blow" at Teng's "Twenty Points," an

economic policy platform that proposed granting wage increases and reinstating material incentives.

Apart from those few dogged spirits who continue the search for "socialist man" among the peasantry of tiny Albania, New Left radicals have been left without any Stalinist-ruled state to idealize as an egalitarian society. Even Vietnam, that "socialist fatherland" for "Third World" enthusiasts who wanted to wish away the Sino-Soviet split, has been a "God That Failed" for many New Left leftovers. While Ho once was glorified as a gentle philosopher-poet concerned with instilling humanistic values in his people even under conditions of war and destruction, his heirs in Hanoi are today locked in a sordid nationalist war with their "comrades" in Phnom Penh, who are denounced as marauding rapists and cannibals. But "poor little Cambodia" isn't likely to become a New Left favorite. If wage differentials have been eliminated in "Democratic Kampuchea," it is only because the rabidly xenophobic and primitivist Cambodian Stalinist regime has actually abolished wages and even currency itself—which under conditions of material scarcity can only result in militarization of labor and enormous economic hardships for the toiling masses.

Thus, as a significant New Left-derived political tendency identification with "radical" Stalinist egalitarianism has had its day. But the issues which nurtured this tendency are very much alive. Especially now, considerable attention has been generated by the new so-called "pragmatic" policies of the Hua/Teng regime. But in denouncing how the "radical" Maoists misused moral incentives and in "rehabilitating" material incentives the present Peking regime by no means has repudiated moral incentives as such. Regardless of which clique rules in the Forbidden City, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, as long as it remains saddled by the enormous contradiction between its material backwardness and its Great Power aspirations, must continue to resort to utopian-voluntarist methods—and to rationalize their economic policies with phony egalitarian rhetoric. It is thus timely to consider how the questions of material incentives and wage differentials have been obfuscated and distorted by Stalinist ideologues, both of the orthodox Moscow school and the sundry self-styled "radical egalitarians," ranging from Guevara to Mao.

Stalinist idealism a la "Che"

"Che" Guevara was lionized by the New Left as the most articulate of the Cuban leaders who were growing increasingly critical of the guidance provided by the "socialist beacon" in Moscow. A series of domestic economic failures in the early 1960's convinced Guevara that Soviet-model planning principles couldn't be successfully imposed upon the plantation monoculture of Cuba. Moreover, many of the top leaders in the Cuban regime regarded the Soviet role during the Missile Crisis of 1962 as a retreat which Cuba even more isolated than before.

In the course of the so-called "Great Debate" over economic and developmental policies which took place in Cuba during 1963-66 Guevara stressed what he called "the two pillars of socialist construction: the formation of the new human being and the development of technology." If Cuba were to achieve genuine socialism, argued Guevara, then two interrelated tasks had to be simultaneously tack-

led at once. First, commodity production in Cuba had to be completely eliminated through full collectivization, super-centralized planning and financing and the eradication of material incentives. Second, creating a self-sacrificing, frugal and fully-socialized "New Man" required replacing material with moral incentives and instituting campaigns encouraging unpaid voluntary labor.

While Guevara was undoubtedly fervent in his egalitarian convictions, the fundamental concepts he formulated and defended during the "Great Debate" remained fully within the ideological domain of Stalinism. At no time did Guevara question the total political disenfranchisement of the Cuban masses or the commitment of the Castro clique to the reactionary-utopian Stalinist dogma of "building socialism in one country"—in this case a tiny island only ninety miles from the shores of the foremost imperialist colossus. Guevara's political worldview was fundamentally defined by his identification with the rule of a Stalinist bureaucratic caste that views as a hostile act demands by the workers for a higher living standard or for some say in decision making. If he sounded more militant and egalitarian than the Kremlin bureaucrats (and their loyal lackeys in Cuba), it was mainly because Guevara, perhaps even more so than Fidel Castro, identified with the military—i.e., the guerrillas in power. Unlike the party and administrative apparatuses, the military command was that part of the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy least directly involved with implementing economic policies. Guevara was guided by a conception that "socialist" society should be built not through appealing to supposedly base material interests but by exhorting the masses to sacrifice, just as the guerrillas had only been victorious through enormous self-sacrifice and revolutionary idealism.

What defined Guevara as fundamentally an *idealist* Stalinist is the fact that he sought to surmount the insurmountable obstacles to "building socialism" in economically backward Cuba through utopian-voluntarist means. In his well-known 1965 essay, "Man and Socialism in Cuba," Guevara explicitly links the primacy of moral over material incentives to the problems of how to rapidly industrialize underdeveloped Cuba in a capitalist international environment:

"Underdevelopment and the customary flight of capital to 'civilized' countries make impossible a rapid change without sacrifices. There still remains a long stretch to be covered in the building of the economic base, and the temptation to follow the beaten paths of material interest as the lever of speedy development is very great

"Pursuing the chimera of achieving socialism with the aid of the blunted weapons left to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability, and individual material interest as levers, etc.), it is possible to come to a blind alley. Meanwhile, the adapted economic base has undermined the development of consciousness. To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base."

—reproduced in Bertram Silverman, *Man and Socialism in Cuba: The Great Debate* (1971)

Thus, consciously rejecting an internationalist (i.e., Leninist-Trotskyist) perspective of revolution, Guevara advocated "sacrifices" by the laboring masses as the only viable alternative to Soviet-style technocratic methods.

It is thus quite logical that for Guevara the principal obstacle to "building socialism" in Cuba was the continuation of individualistic attitudes and values among the masses, in particular material interest as the prime motivation for labor. For example, in an interview held in 1963 Guevara declared:

"I am not interested in dry economic socialism. We are fighting against poverty, but we are also fighting against alienation. One of the fundamental objectives of Marxism is to remove interest, the factor of individual interest, and gain from men's psychological motivations. Marx was preoccupied both with economic factors and with their repercussions on the spirit. If communism isn't interested in this, too, it may be a method of distributing goods, but it will never be a revolutionary way of life."

—quoted in Silverman, introduction to *Man and Socialism in Cuba*.

While attractive to the radical iconoclasm of the early New Left, this political worldview is profoundly *anti-Marxist*. The counterposition of individual material interest to an abstract concept of social collectivity is a bourgeois ideological prejudice. In one of his earliest writings as a socialist Marx explicitly attacked setting the interests of society above the well-being of its individual members:

"Above all we must avoid postulating 'society' again as an abstraction *vis-a-vis* the individual. The individual *is the social being*. His manifestations of life—even if they may not appear in the direct form of *communal* manifestations of life I carried out in association with others—are therefore an I expression and confirmation of *social life*." [emphasis in I original]

—"Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," I in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (1975) Vol. III, p. 299

Engels was even more explicit about the individualist I values of communist society. In what became the first draft of the *Communist Manifesto* he wrote:

"Question 2: *What is the aim of the Communists?*" Answer: To organise society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom and without thereby infringing the basic conditions of this society."

—"Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (1976) Vol. VI, p. 96

Needless to say, Marxists understand that in the course of the epochal struggle to overthrow world capitalism the cadres of the revolutionary vanguard must be prepared to sacrifice their individual interests and sometimes even their I lives. In a period of revolutionary crises the working masses I will also make great sacrifices. But in mass struggles such sacrifices are made for the purpose of securing better material conditions in the near future. It is profoundly *anti-Marxist* to transform the need for the vanguard and the masses to make sacrifices in the struggle to overthrow capitalism into a doctrinal rejection of the materialist and individualist aims that are a component part of the communist worldview.

Just as Guevara counterposed individual interest to the ideal of an egalitarian-collectivist society, so he also tended to simply identify individual selfishness with bourgeois ideology. But Marxists understand that bourgeois

ideology is not and never has been the cult of unbridled selfishness. Only the most vulgar bourgeois ideologists of the ilk of Ayn Rand would venture to make such a claim.

Nationalism and religion, often in concert, have played an enormous role in conditioning the laboring masses to submit to bourgeois authority in the factory and society in general. For example, Methodism was the main ideological force in the transformation of the independent English artisan class of the eighteenth century into a disciplined factory proletariat. Early nineteenth century British mill owners were very much aware of the importance of moral (i.e., religious) incentives in exploiting "their" laborers.] One leading ideologue of the British industrial revolution, Andrew Ure, made the following typical observation in his 1835 work, *Philosophy of Manufactures*:

"It is, therefore, excessively the interest of every millowner to organize his moral machinery on equally sound principles with his mechanical, for otherwise he will never command the steady hands, watchful eyes, arid prompt co-operation, essential to the excellence of product... There is, in fact, no case to which the Gospel truth, 'Godliness is great gain,' is more applicable than to the administration of an extensive factory."

—quoted in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963)

It was Guevara's Stalinist political outlook which limited him to his superficial and false view of bourgeois ideology as simply pure individualism. Guevara cannot consider nationalism as a *bourgeois* ideology precisely because of his own central ideological commitment to "socialist nation building." And Guevara's subjectivist concept of how to liberate the "socialist man" within every Cuban citizen has a certain ideological resemblance to the Christian doctrine that "the Kingdom of Heaven is within."

Subjectivist Re-Definition of Alienation

What most attracted the New Left to Guevara's egalitarian concepts was his exhortation about ending alienated labor as a vital part of the struggle to "build socialism" in Cuba. Eliminating alienated labor would, in turn, contribute to the interrelated task of creating the new "socialist man." In "Man and Socialism in Cuba" Guevara defined unalienated labor in the following terms:

"In order for it to develop in culture, work must acquire a new condition; man as commodity ceases to exist, and a system is established that grants a quota for the fulfillment of social duty. The means of production belong to society, and the machine is only the front line where duty is performed. Man begins to free his thought from the bothersome fact that presupposed the need to satisfy his animal needs by working. He begins to see himself portrayed in his work and to understand its human magnitude through the created object, through the work carried out. This no longer involves leaving a part of his being in the form of labor power sold, which no longer belongs to him; rather it signifies an emanation from himself, a contribution to the life of society in which he is reflected, the fulfillment of his social duty."

In other words, through institutionalized measures that would encourage and reward performing "social duty" (e.g., voluntary unpaid labor) the individual Cuban worker would begin to identify his work with the larger socialist cause and, to that extent, his labor would cease to be alien-

ated. Thus, for Guevara alienated labor *is a subjective* phenomenon, like individual interest, that can be transformed through successfully instilling new collectivist values among the working masses.

Such a concept of alienated labor, however, has nothing in common with Marxism. As understood in the Marxist sense, alienated labor is not fundamentally determined by the subjective attitude of the worker towards his work—whether he hates or likes his job, or whether he begins to get satisfaction from working to "build socialism" regardless of how he feels about his particular job. For Marxists alienated labor is not subjectively but rather *objectively and historically determined*.

Marx defined unalienated labor in the following precise terms in the *Grundrisse*:

"The labor concerned with material production can only have this [unalienated] character if (1) it is of a social nature, (2) it has a scientific character and at the same time is general work, i.e., if it ceases to be human effort as a definite, trained natural force, gives up its purely natural, primitive aspects and becomes *the activity of a subject controlling all the forces of nature in the production process.*" [emphasis added]

Thus, for Marx alienated labor is bound up with an historically evolved division of labor in society wherein the individual workers who are involved in material production are denied mastery over the production process. This given division of labor in turn derives from the inadequate development of productivity and particularly the low cultural level of the masses. Labor ceases to be alienated only when "general work" has a thoroughly scientific character, i.e., when objective conditions enable the producer to fully control "all the forces of nature in the production process." Social production will continue to be marked by alienated labor as long as the low level of productivity imposes a division of labor upon the individual producers.

In contrast to Guevarist idealism, Marxists understand that there are definite and manifold material preconditions which must be socially achieved before *all* producers in society are able to control "all the forces of nature in the production process." Cutting sugar cane or manning an assembly line in Stalinist-ruled Cuba can *never* be unalienated labor, no matter how socialist-minded and self-sacrificing the workers might be. Ending alienated labor for the mass of producers is possible only in a genuinely socialist society, the product of the transition period (the dictatorship of the proletariat) which has achieved a multiple increase in labor productivity, an enormous raising of the general cultural level of the population and the continual expansion of individual free time. In contrast, Guevara adopted the classically Stalinist position that falsely identifies the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, the transitional epoch between capitalism and socialism when "classes still remain and will remain" (Lenin), with *socialism*, the lower phase of communist society which presupposes "an end to all class differences and class antagonisms" (Engels). Thus, in arguing that "building socialism" in Cuba required the elimination of material incentives Guevara explicitly rejected those sections of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* which unambiguously stated that during the transitional epoch (the dictatorship of the proletariat) "bourgeois right" manifested in income differentials would continue to exist.

Idealizing the Cuban Bureaucracy

Although New Left radicals were mainly enamored of Guevara's visions of the "New Man" freed from alienated labor, the "Great Debate" in Cuba actually centered on far more pragmatic issues. Guevara linked his abstract exhortations for raising mass consciousness and ending alienated labor with a series of proposals aiming at total industrial/financial centralization in Cuba (an economic scheme that ran counter to the New Left fetish of decentralization). During the "Great Debate" Guevara advocated administering Cuba as if the country were a single extensive factory.

Underlying Guevara's ultra-centralism was his evident belief that at every level the Cuban administrative personnel would carry out their production quotas in the most cost-efficient, conscientious manner, i.e., that the Cuban bureaucracy had sufficient socialist consciousness so as not to require strict financial controls. His Soviet-model opponents, principally the veteran Moscow-line Stalinist Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, argued that unless enterprises were financially self-sufficient (i.e., expected to normally make a bookkeeping "profit"), managers would tend to squander resources. Thus, the "Great Debate" represented an intrabureaucratic tug-of-war between Guevara the idealizer of the Cuban guerrillas in power and the more "pragmatic" Stalinists around Rodriguez, who argued for a more "realistic" accommodation to managerial parasitism.

In such intrabureaucratic conflicts over planning methods revolutionary Marxists cannot take sides, since a rational and egalitarian economic policy is not possible as long as political power is monopolized by a privileged bureaucratic caste. However, among the prominent contributors to the "Great Debate" was none other than Ernest Mandel, erudite Pabloist revisionist and today prominent leader of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec). While Cuba did present the unique phenomenon of a bureaucratically deformed workers state issuing out of the victory of a non-Stalinist petty-bourgeois nationalist guerrillaist formation (the July 26 Movement), Mandel & Co. claimed that "Fidel" and "Che" were genuine Marxist-Leninists and that the supposedly insignificant bureaucratic deformations which existed in the Havana regime did not require a political revolution led by a Trotskyist party but could be rectified through oh-so-comradely criticism and suggestions.

While the USec aggressively assumed the role of publicity agents for the Cuban regime under the rubric of "defending the Cuban revolution," Mandel traveled to Havana to intervene in the "Great Debate." His article, "Mercantile Categories in the Period of Transition," appeared in the January 1964 issue of *Nuestra Industria*, the journal of Guevara's Ministry of Industry. Mandel sought to become a theoretical braintruster for what he viewed as the left-leaning wing of the Cuban "leadership" around Guevara. Needless to say, in this article (as well as all his other pro-Castro accolades then, and since) Mandel was mum about his "Trotskyist" affiliation and formal espousal of the program of the Fourth International; he was well aware of the fact that one of the first acts of the Castro regime was the suppression of the ostensibly Trotskyist movement in Cuba (the Posadista organization), which included the destruction of the printing plates for a Spanish translation of Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*.

Disingenuously presenting himself as merely an academic fellow traveler of world Stalinism commenting on the problems faced by the "workers states" in the transition to "socialism," Mandel in this article throws his support behind Guevara in the issues in dispute. On the question of enterprise autonomy, for instance, Mandel backs Guevara's supercentralism:

"The more underdeveloped a country's economy, the fewer able, experienced, and truly socialist technical cadres it will have, and the wiser it is, in our opinion, to reserve decision-making power over the more important investments and financial matters to the central authorities."

—reproduced in Silverman, *Man and Socialism in Cuba*

Having thus given the Cuban Stalinist "central authorities" a *carte blanche*, Mandel must take political responsibility for the disastrous results of Castro's economic policies. What Guevara's super-"centralist" schemes actually involved was the dismantling of the system of charges between state-owned enterprises and between enterprises and the ministries as the means of financial control and accountability. Thus, the Cuban economic system was stripped of any mechanism for determining rational resource allocation and utilization. In 1966 Castro drastically reduced the power and functions of the Central Planning Board and personally assumed decision-making formerly handled by the planners. Completely neglecting the gathering of statistical data, Castro discarded the medium-range plan, launching in its place a series of unrelated "mini" and "special" plans. As a result capital and human resources were grossly misused and squandered.

Years later, after Castro returned to orthodox Soviet-model planning systems, the Guevarist schemes were criticized as idealist. At the first-ever congress of the Cuban Communist Party held in 1976 Castro made the following very dry criticism of Guevara's policies:

"The fact is that a single management system of the entire economy did not exist and, under the circumstances, we took the less correct decision—to invent a new procedure. By the end of 1965, the Ministry of Finance had already been dissolved and the National Bank restructured. The last budget adopted was that of 1967, but its implementation was not controlled because, since the second quarter of that year, charges and payments were no longer being made. In 1968, the connection between salaries and output sales was severed. Work-hour schedules on the basis of consciousness and renunciation of pay for extra hours worked were stimulated. In 1967 interest on loans and taxes collected from farmers was abolished. When it might have seemed as though we were drawing nearer to communist forms of production and distribution, we were actually pulling away from the correct methods for the previous construction of socialism." —*Granma*, 4 July 1976

While his philosophical contributions were definitively idealist and his economic schemes proved disastrous, Guevara at the same time was a rare figure in the history of world Stalinism inasmuch as he evidently believed in the egalitarian principles that he articulated. Guevara was manifestly a man of considerable political integrity and personal courage who lived and was prepared to die for his beliefs. It has been claimed—and it may indeed be true—that Guevara left Cuba to undertake guerrilla war in Latin America at least in part because he was repelled by the

small-mindedness, philistinism and venality of the new bureaucratic caste under Castro.

Maoist Mystification of Bourgeois Right

While ideologically an inveterate Stalinist to the end, Guevara was different in this respect from the Chinese "radical egalitarians" who rose to power and prominence during the Cultural Revolution. In contrast to Guevara, the Maoist sycophants, like their mentor, were totally cynical and demagogic in their professions of egalitarian policies. Mao was a bonapartist maneuverer whose endlessly quoted, quasi-delphic utterances could be (and have been) used to justify the most contradictory and even counterposed policies. For her part Chiang Ching preached puritanism and austerity to the Chinese masses, while enjoying to the full a luxuriant lifestyle that would be fitting for a Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis or a Princess Grace of Monaco. From all evidence the Maoist "radicals" were exceptionally corrupt and vicious cliquists, even by the Byzantine standards of the Forbidden City.

All the "radical" Maoist rhetoric about "restricting bourgeois right" and "putting politics in command" that captured the imagination of the New Left was nothing more than demagogy which the Chinese leaders cynically used to rationalize what in reality were intrabureaucratic and internecine dogfights. It all originated with the rupture between the USSR and China in 1960, when the Chinese Stalinist leadership felt compelled to concoct an incredibly idealist and vulgar "theory" to explain how "socialist" Russia had suddenly become "revisionist." According to Mao and his then "comrade-in-arms" Liu Shao-chi (the head of state and number two man in the party hierarchy), under "socialism" a "two-line struggle" continues between the genuine revolutionaries and the "revisionists" whose policies, if implemented, would lead inevitably to the restoration of capitalism. Thus, with the passing of Stalin, the "revisionist" Khrushchev seized power in a palace coup and proceeded over the next several years to open the floodgates to all the crypto-"capitalist roaders" who had been secretly harboring restorationist ideas but were afraid to come out into the open. Needless to say, this "theory" neglected to explain why Mao only got Khrushchev's number after the Sino-Soviet rupture.

It was during the Cultural Revolution, however, that this fairy tale was elaborated into the doctrine of "capitalist roadism." Whereas Stalin claimed that all his real or potential enemies in the bureaucracy were agents of Wall Street or Hitler, Mao "deepened" this method, accusing his rivals within the Chinese bureaucracy of having *bourgeois ideas*, i.e. of being "capitalist roaders." In a bid to restore his authority that had been damaged after the fiasco of the "Great Leap Forward" Mao launched the Cultural Revolution by branding Liu Shao-chi "China's Khrushchev" and calling for the purge of his followers who were allegedly leading China down the "capitalist road."

Maoist rhetoric about "restricting bourgeois right" derived from the need to explain just how the economic policies pursued by Liu Shao-chi, Teng Hsiao-ping and Peng Chen—restoration of private peasant plots and return to a free market in agricultural produce, both designed to regain the peasants' confidence that had been lost through the "Great Leap" disaster—could lead to the restoration of capitalism. Thus, Mao and his "closest-comrade-in-arms"

Marshal Lin Piao charged Liu and Teng with advocating the primacy of material incentives and forgetting about the "class struggle." By "putting production in command" Liu and Teng were said to have been conspiring to put a new bourgeoisie in power.

That such charges were sheer demagoguery was revealed most starkly when Lin Piao, named in the Chinese constitution as Mao's heir designate, fell out of favor in the Forbidden City in 1971. After Lin's plane reportedly fell out of the sky over Mongolia the deceased former "closest-comrade-in-arms" of the Chairman was denounced as "a fanatical advocate of 'material incentives'." On the contrary, Lin in fact had been a champion of Maoist voluntarism. During the Lin Piao period (1969-71) Chinese economic policies resembled those of the "Great Leap," although not on the same scale. Private peasant plots were curtailed and labor was mobilized not through use of material incentives but through direct state coercion.

The major Maoist tract branding support for material incentives as "capitalist roadism" is the article, "On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique," penned by Yao Wen-yuan, Mao's principal literary hatchet man (until he got axed after the death of the Chairman). Here is the nub of his argument:

"If we do not follow this course [restricting bourgeois right], but call instead for the consolidation, extension and strengthening of bourgeois right and that part of inequality it entails, the inevitable result will be polarization, i.e., a small number of people will in the course of distribution acquire increasing amounts of commodities and money through certain legal channels and numerous illegal ones; capitalist ideas of amassing fortunes and craving for personal fame and gain, stimulated by such 'material incentives,' will spread unchecked; such phenomena as turning public property into private property, speculation, graft and corruption, theft and bribery will rise; the capitalist principle of the exchange of commodities will make its way into political life and even into Party life, undermine the socialist planned economy and give rise to such acts of capitalist exploitation as the conversion of commodities and money into capital and labor power into a commodity; and there will be a change in the nature of the system of ownership in certain departments and units which follow the revisionist line; and instances of oppression and exploitation of the labouring people will once again occur."

—*Peking Review*, 7 March 1975

What Yao does here is a causal sleight-of-hand. For Marx and Lenin "bourgeois right" had a precise and delimited meaning in terms of the transitional epoch. It signified the continuation of differences in wages and income during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But under the rubric of "bourgeois right" Yao identifies widening wage differentials with the illicit accumulation of capital, arguing that the first necessarily and inexorably leads to the second. This is a specious argument.

In a non-capitalist state such as the USSR or People's Republic of China wage differentials result in different levels of *individual consumption*, but not in personal accumulation of the means of production. Even the often extravagant incomes (legal and otherwise) received by the Stalinist bigwigs are expended mainly on high living (e.g., Brezhnev's collection of foreign cars, Chiang Ching's col-

lection of foreign films). To be sure, in the USSR and China instances occur when state administrators are caught selling state property on the black market. But such cases of individual officials going into business for themselves are a marginal economic phenomenon (even in Yugoslavia, where "market socialism" is most extensive); stiff penalties (including capital punishment) serve to discourage such "capitalist roadism."

Contrary to the scenario given by Yao, quantitative changes in income distribution, important as they might be in many ways, cannot affect the class character of the state as long as the main means of production remain nationalized. It would take a counterrevolution that *smashed the state apparatus* and subsequently converted the collectivized property back into privately owned commodities to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union, China or any of the other deformed workers states. Such a fundamental overturn in property relations could not be produced simply through the molecular economic processes precipitated by widening income differentials.

However, what Yao and Mao were really concerned about was not bureaucratic parasitism but workers' demands for higher wages. Wages had remained frozen in China since 1962, even though the 1956 wage code stipulated that general raises were to be implemented every other year. In his article Yao attributed all demands for higher wages to the nefarious influence of Lin Piao:

"A principal member of the Lin Piao anti-Party clique also wrote that 'the principle of to each according to his work and of material benefit' was the 'decisive motive force' in promoting production. On the face of it, they advocated using money to 'stimulate' the workers, but actually they wanted to widen without limit the differences in grade among the workers in order to foster and buy over a small section of the working class, turn it into a privileged stratum which betrays the proletarian dictatorship and the interests of the proletariat, and split the unity of the working class.... Lin Piao and company attached 'particular importance' to using 'wages' to lure 'young workers.' and their 'inducements-official post, emolument, favour were a sinister scheme. This shows us by negative example that young workers, particularly those who have become cadres, must consciously reject the material inducements of the bourgeoisie and the flattery offered them in various forms by the idea of bourgeois right."

Thus, while claiming to stand for the "unity of the working class," Yao actually sought to justify the suppression of all wage demands by the Chinese workers.

A few months after Yao wrote this article the Maoist regime demonstrated in practice its hostility to legitimate wage demands by the workers. In the summer of 1975 a citywide strike erupted in the major textile-producing center of Hangchow, near Shanghai. At first the regime sent Wang Hung-wen, one of Yao's "radical" cronies and later one of the hapless "Gang," to Hangchow to try to talk the strikers back to work. When this failed, Teng Hsiao-ping personally led a 10,000-strong PL A force into Hangchow and smashed the strike. When confronted by the long-denied economic demands and struggles of the Chinese workers, all wings of the bureaucracy, from the phony "egalitarians" to the "rehabilitated revisionists," proved to be united in their commitment to preserving

their complete political stranglehold over the atomized proletariat.

Unlike New Left radicals, the Chinese working class was far from satisfied with a steady diet of egalitarian rhetoric. If anything, the Cultural Revolution left the mass of Chinese workers in an even worse economic situation than before. In the name of combatting "capitalist roadism" the Maoist regime has kept wages frozen; in 1973 the Chiang Ching clique evidently put a stop to a move to advance workers in the bottom five wage grades one rung higher. Under this system the first grade provides a wage of 30 yuan a month and the top grade 100 yuan a month, a wage ratio comparable to that in the USSR (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 January 1978).

However, the fundamentally inegalitarian nature of income distribution in Mao's China is revealed not so much by wage differences among the workers as by the income differentials between the working class and the administrative/technical elite. In the wage system copied from the USSR by Mao in 1956 (and retained to this day) the highest technical grade receives 340 yuan a month and the top administrative grade 450 yuan a month. In Canton in 1974 the lowest grade clerical worker received only 35 yuan a month while the head of his or her bureau received an official salary of between 200 and 210 yuan a month—a ratio of about six-to-one (*Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, No. 4, 1976).

Furthermore, the material privileges which the Chinese administrative elite enjoys also include various "fringe benefits." For manual workers sick leave up to one month is given with a ten percent reduction in pay; for longer periods pay is docked at a rate up to 50 percent. But administrators are granted up to three months sick leave with no loss in pay, while longer absences are given with only a 10-30 percent reduction in pay (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 January 1978). And these are only the official wage and benefit scales. Since the Chinese proletariat has no institutionalized control over the government apparatus, Chinese enterprise managers, heads of bureaus, military commanders and a whole host of other well-placed bureaucrats can supplement their official incomes by all kinds of petty corruption and parasitism, for example using state vehicles for personal errands. Such inegalitarian wage scales and bureaucratic parasitism and mismanagement are inevitable as long as the governmental administration is not responsible to the democratic organizations of the working class, i.e., until genuine soviet democracy is established through a proletarian political revolution that topples the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy.

"Great Disorder Under Heaven...?"

To rationalize the proposed re-introduction of material incentives the new Hua/Teng leadership has made much ado about the supposed breakdown in labor discipline in China's factories. This situation, like every other evil (real or fabricated) that has befallen China, has been attributed to the misdeeds of the nefarious "Gang of Four," who allegedly were out to wreck the economy. Typical of the tirades against the voluntarist idiocies supposedly promoted by the "Gang" is the article, "The 'Gang of Four' Pushed Anarchism," which reads in part:

"The 'gang of four' was not just opposing 'kuan, chia, yd [controlling anarchist tendencies, curbing capitalist tenden-

cies, suppressing the class enemies' sabotage] but was opposing all rules and regulations. Chang Chun-chiao made this clear when he said: 'It is necessary to set up enterprises that have no rules and regulations' How can production go on in a large enterprise without rules and regulations? This is common knowledge. Was the 'gang of four' really ignorant of this? Of course not. In spreading such nonsense as they did, they aimed at throwing the national economy into chaos I so that they could blame others for it and seize power by taking advantage of the ensuing chaotic state of affairs." — *Peking Review*, 1 April 1977

The Western bourgeois press has generally bought the official Peking line that labor morale and discipline in China has gone to the dogs as a result of the policies of the "Gang." For example, the *Washington Post* of 15 May 1977 ran an article entitled "Post-Mao Leaders Battle 'WPA Atmosphere' in Factories." Similarly, one of the editors of the prestigious London *Economist* who recently returned from a tour in China described a typical Chinese factory in the following terms:

"Half the work force was not there at all, being better occupied in the town burying the winter cabbages dumped in already frost-nipped piles along the city's pavements. The other half was gently ambling on with its job, English-style, but was not adverse to stopping for a cigarette and a peer at the inscrutable occidentals come to visit them. Work discipline everywhere in our industrial plants was, to put it kindly, relaxed..."

—*Economist*, 31 December 1977

A widespread and serious deterioration, in labor discipline is always a sign of political disaffection with, if not opposition to, the state authorities. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, for example, the normally industrious Prague factory workers began to take very long coffee and lunch breaks, and productivity plummeted as a result. It is certainly possible that in China industrial workers have responded to the, years of frozen wages and feverish "ideological campaigns" that consumed much of what little free time they had by deliberately slacking off on their productivity. Over the past several years at least, China has been plagued by labor unrest; so volatile and violent have been the reported strikes and protests since the death of Mao and the purge of the "Gang of Four" that the army had to be sent to occupy several provinces.

However, the accounts of the Hua regime and bourgeois "China watchers" about how lackadaisical Chinese workers have become cannot be taken at face value. It is important to keep in mind that in their campaign to vilify the "Gang of Four" the present Chinese rulers have a real interest in exaggerating all the "crimes" supposedly committed by the purged four. Moreover, Peking is no doubt exaggerating the problem of labor discipline in order to justify the proposed widening of pay differentials and restoration of piece rates and bonuses—anti-egalitarian measures that are sure to be unpopular with the Chinese workers. For their part bourgeois journalists, who have no interest in seeing labor productivity increased in China, are predisposed to accepting the contention that the Maoist "radicals" destroyed labor discipline, since they seek to discredit the very idea that socialist consciousness can ever be a positive factor in production.

It isn't now possible to ascertain the true state of labor morale presently prevailing in China's factories. Even if the official reports of high absenteeism and low labor productivity were accurate, these examples are selected for a tendentious purpose. It is also necessary to bear in mind that in order to minimize unemployment, factories in China (like those in the USSR) are kept *overmanned* by capitalist standards. Thus, the impressionistic comparisons with West European or Japanese enterprises which are frequently made by foreigners who visit China are not very meaningful.

In any case, changes in labor productivity on a national scale are very difficult to measure. Even more so than the Soviet Union, China is a closed society in which the detailed, comprehensive statistics required to compute labor productivity are not public information and may not even exist at all. However, one can derive a rough indirect index of labor productivity from statistics about industrial output. On the basis of statistics compiled by the Peking regime the well-respected *Far Eastern Economic Review* calculated that between 1969 (the end of the Cultural Revolution) and 1973 industrial output in China increased by 58 percent (*Asia Yearbook*, 1975). Such a significant increase in output does not jibe with the scenarios of widespread anarchy in factories across China that have been promoted by the regime.

Differential Wages During the Transitional Epoch

In their writings on moral versus material incentives and "restricting bourgeois right" both the ideological spokesmen of the current so-called "pragmatic" regime in Peking and the "radical" Maoists confuse, in large part deliberately, three separate questions. One is the question of wage differentials as a mechanism for allocating labor between different occupations, industries and geographical regions. A second and related question is differential wage payments—piece rates and bonuses—as a means of securing labor discipline and morale. And the third is the relation between the incomes of the administrative hierarchy and those of the mass of the workers.

Stalinist "egalitarians" like Guevara and Yao attempt to simply identify differential wages with capitalist market relations. All their talk about "restricting bourgeois right" and "moral not material incentives" is a demagogic cover for *state coercion* in the allocation of labor. It is an elementary proposition of Marxism—explicitly stated in such key works as Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Engel's *Anti-Dühring* and Lenin's *State and Revolution*—that during the transitional epoch (the dictatorship of the proletariat) differential wages will continue to exist. Income differentials continue to be needed to allocate labor between different occupations, industries and regions without having to resort to administrative coercion. Given that material scarcity and cultural attitudes inherited from bourgeois society do not immediately disappear under the dictatorship of the proletariat, many workers will not take the time and effort required to acquire new skills without receiving a higher income for doing so. Similarly, many workers will not take particularly dangerous, arduous or unpleasant jobs without receiving significantly higher than average wages.

In addition to such material incentives, a workers state would also have recourse to moral incentives during the

transition period. A revolutionary regime, elected on the basis of workers councils (Soviets), would have the moral authority to reduce in general wage differentials. For example, many urban youth could be induced to take jobs in remote or backward rural areas on the basis of socialist idealism rather than higher wages. In a workers state the optimum wage structure, including the best mix of material and moral incentives, would be determined through the institutionalized mechanisms of workers democracy, in particular, negotiations between the central labor ministry and the trade unions.

In contrast to this socialist norm, in China, despite all the "radical" Maoist demagoguery about "restricting bourgeois right," industrial workers *cannot change jobs* without official approval—a degree of state coercion in the allocation of labor that is reactionary even by the norms of capitalism. Likewise, in the period since the Red Guards were smashed in 1968 millions of urban youth in China have been dispersed throughout the countryside to perform back-breaking agricultural labor. Exhorted by the regime to "learn from the peasantry," these youth went to the countryside not on the basis of Maoist "moral incentives" but as a result of (or under the threat of) state coercion, which for the Red Guards who resisted the liquidation of what they mistakenly believed were the egalitarian goals of the Cultural Revolution meant brutal military force.

If the smashing of the disillusioned Red Guards and the subsequent suppression of proposed wage increases for the Chinese workers are considered victories in "restricting bourgeois right," then pro-"Gang" Maoists like the Avakianite RCP should love the methods of so-called "socialist construction" imposed by the Pol Pot regime in "Democratic Kampuchea." Why, the Maoist "mass campaigns" to exorcise the evil Confucian spirit that was embodied in Lin Piao pale in comparison with how the ruling clique in Phnom Penh (whoever they are) cleaned out "bourgeois right" in Cambodia.

After consolidating power in the spring of 1975 the Cambodian Stalinists emptied the capital city of Phnom Penh at gunpoint (other cities and towns were depopulated in a similar fashion as they fell to the Khmer Rouge). The urban population—not just the war refugees but long-time city dwellers, including the elderly and sick—were forced-marched into the countryside, where they were put to work in rice production regardless of their previous occupation. According to several Yugoslav journalists who toured Cambodia last March (the first foreigners allowed to do so since the Khmer Rouge came to power three years ago), Cambodian workers are not permitted to leave their assigned farming commune or even their production team, and youths by the thousands have been impressed into so-called "voluntary" mobile labor brigades (*New York Times*, 24 March 1978).

Rather than using material incentives for particularly back-breaking and noxious work the Cambodian regime resorts to extensive child labor. In a recent very revealing statement Cambodian President Khieu Samphan declared:

"Our children do not need toys which were formerly imported at considerable cost. They are happy with driving sparrows away from the crops, tending cattle and buffalo, collecting natural fertilizer and helping to build dams and

digging ditches."—quoted in *London Times*, 7 February 1978

As for the second question—differential wage payments to impose labor discipline—Stalinist "pragmatists" like Hua and Teng attempt to identify differential wages as a means to allocate labor with differential wage payments as a means of securing labor discipline and goading the workers into greater productivity. Communists have a fundamentally different attitude toward piece rates and bonuses than toward occupational or sectoral wage differences. Piece rate wages and bonuses for productivity pit one worker against another and consequently have always been fought by the labor movement under capitalism. As Trotsky remarked about the retrogressive character of the Russian Stakhanovite movement launched in 1935, "Relations of this kind are farther from socialist morals than the relations of the workers of a capitalist factory, joined together as they are in a struggle against exploitation" (*Revolution Betrayed*).

Stalinist "pragmatists" like Teng seek to justify their anti-egalitarian economic policies by pointing out that Lenin regarded piece rates as legitimate. It is true that during the catastrophic economic collapse which accompanied the horribly destructive civil war in Russia, at a time when most of the class-conscious workers had been mobilized to the military fronts and their places in the factories were taken by raw peasants drawn from the backward countryside, Lenin advocated the introduction of piece rates as a capitalist production technique which, while odious, nevertheless was superior to the primitive methods of "War Communism." However, with the civil war behind, the Soviet Labor Code of 1922 provided for wages to be negotiated between the trade unions and the enterprise management. By 1928 piece rates covered only 34 percent of the industrial labor force (Margaret Dewar, *Labour Policy in the USSR, 1917-1928*). It was during Stalin's break-neck forced industrialization drive of the 1930's that piece rates were made nearly universal in the USSR and with differentials far steeper than ever before. Stakhanovism served to enormously widen income differences within the Russian proletariat, crystallizing a labor "aristocracy" that was despised by the mass of the workers.

In a workers state socialist consciousness, integrally bound up with soviet democracy, would act to ensure that work is performed conscientiously. To be sure, even in a healthy workers state there will be some loiterers and shirkers. But such errant individuals who are willfully negligent can best be dealt with through the organized social pressure of their fellow workers; the few incorrigibly ill-disciplined workers could be economically penalized and, perhaps as a last resort, fired.

If the Stalinist "egalitarians" and "pragmatists" each manipulate for their own purposes the separate but related questions of wage differentials among the workers, they are united in their common attempt to obfuscate the question of income differences between the mass of workers and the administrative hierarchy. All Stalinist ideologues discuss the question of incentives in terms of the population in general, making no distinction between the mass of workers and the so-called "socialist intelligentsia" (the bureaucrats). Orthodox Stalinist ideologues in the service of Teng and Hua use the general principle, "From each according to his work," to rationalize the relatively ex-

travagant incomes and "fringe benefits" enjoyed by the administrative elite. Contrariwise, the Stalinist "egalitarians" like Guevara and Yao seek to divert attention from the bureaucracy's material privileges by belaboring the lack of full socialist consciousness among the masses.

Neither the Stalinist "egalitarians" nor the "pragmatists" have ever advocated the genuinely egalitarian principle that, as a norm, the income of a socialist administrator should not exceed the income of an average skilled worker. In his seminal work *State and Revolution* Lenin presents this as one of the basic economic principles of the transitional society:

"To organize the *whole* economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as *all* officials, shall receive salaries no higher than 'a workman's wage,' all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat—this is our immediate aim." [emphasis in original]

Of course, such a programmatic norm is not always immediately realizable. If a workers state remains isolated and backward (as was the USSR in Lenin's time), then bourgeois experts can be expected to try to flee to the advanced capitalist countries, and all the more so if their salaries were to be cut to correspond to the earnings of a skilled manual worker. Thus in the USSR under Lenin and Trotsky bourgeois specialists desperately needed by the beleaguered regime, including foreigners, were paid relatively high salaries. But for Lenin and Trotsky such income differentials were an unfortunate necessity, dictated by the delay of the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. Furthermore, at that time bourgeois specialists in the employ of the Bolsheviks were not given posts as responsible administrators but instead only had advisory and purely technical roles.

In a workers state during the transitional epoch income differentials between the mass of workers and the technical specialists will persist for a period as a result of the lack of uniform socialist consciousness conditioned by the continuation of conditions of material scarcity. However, in a workers state the responsible central administrative hierarchy would be selected precisely on the basis of *demonstrated socialist consciousness*; i.e., from among Those who offer their services to the regime out of demonstrably unselfish motives. Thus, in a workers state the income of a factory manager or head of an industrial ministry would not be determined in the same way as the salary of a coal miner or a doctor working in a remote rural area, i.e. by the labor market.

Material incentives as a means to keep the administrative personnel honest would be regarded as fundamentally inappropriate in a workers state. Managers or other specialists who are corrupt, incorrigibly negligent or abusive would simply be removed from positions of responsibility. In the institutional context of soviet democracy the most effective mechanism for keeping socialist administrators honest is workers control: the authoritative consultative voice of workers at the point of production. It is the workers under a particular administrator who are best able to ensure that his work is performed conscientiously.

In contrast, in the Sino-Soviet degenerated/deformed workers states the economic parasitism of the administrators has become institutionalized. Bureaucratic parasitism

has been at the heart of the seemingly interminable debates over economic and financial decentralization, from the "Great Debate" in Cuba to the rigidly controlled discussion of "Libermanism" in the USSR.

But the continual shifts in the level of centralization in the collectivized economies of the degenerated/deformed workers states can never solve the problem of managerial corruption and parasitism. Rational economic planning and administration are fundamentally incompatible with the monopolization of political power by a bureaucratic caste. Soviet attempts to curb managerial parasitism and inefficiency provide the most graphic case in point.

With the institution of the first Five Year Plan in 1928 managerial incomes were geared to over-fulfilling the planned output. However, this single, crude index left a lot of room for cheating on the part of the administrative authorities. Thus, Soviet managers routinely understated the real productive capacity of their plants so as to be given a plan that could be easily fulfilled (and hopefully over-fulfilled), while hoarding labor and raw materials and willfully sacrificing assortment and quality so as to maximize output. In 1965 the Brezhnev/Kosygin regime instituted an economic reform that was motivated by the "principle": if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. A complex system was instituted in the USSR which directly linked managerial incomes to enterprise "profitability." But instead of eliminating the bureaucratic evils of the old system, the "Liberman" reforms simply perpetuated them, while generating others. (For a detailed analysis of the 1965 Soviet economic reforms see: "How Maoists 'Restore Capitalism' in the Soviet Union," in the Spartacus Youth League pamphlet *Why the USSR Is Not Capitalist*.)

A revolutionary workers government would be able to suppress administrative parasitism as a significant economic phenomenon. It thus would be able to eliminate those forms of financial decentralization now employed in the Soviet bloc in a vain attempt to counter managerial corruption and inefficiency. In a non-capitalist state centralized economic planning takes on an unequivocally socialist character only when the governing authorities represent the rational, democratically determined interests of the working people. Under a Stalinist regime greater economic centralization does not necessarily possess any such socialist virtues and may be largely formal. As demonstrated by Mao's "Great Leap" debacle and Castro's 10 million ton sugar harvest fiasco, the megalomania of the Stalinist rulers can be far more economically disruptive and wasteful than increased competition between state enterprises.

Not much remains of the aura of radical egalitarianism surrounding the "Third World" Stalinist regimes. It has been getting increasingly difficult for the New Left apologists for the Chinese and Cuban regimes to claim that these societies are somehow profoundly egalitarian. When Castro's Cuba and Mao's China have experimented with making a leap out of commodity production, the result has been increased state coercion of labor and rationing for the masses—followed by costly fiascos which fall hardest on the shoulders of the workers and peasants. In this respect the truly brutish primitivism of Pol Pot's "Democratic Kampuchea" is simply the most extreme expression of Stalinist economic "egalitarianism."

Genuine economic egalitarianism is not possible as long as political power is monopolized by a Stalinist ruling oligarchy. The genuinely egalitarian use of moral incentives requires a government with the moral authority derived from the democratic participation of the working masses expressed through soviet institutions. Wage labor and the commodity nature of consumer goods will be overcome through the appropriation of the economic wealth of the advanced capitalist world—the fruit of the transitional period inaugurated by the victory of the international proletarian revolution. ■

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