

NOTE

Learning from the Past

Raymond Lotta writes:

China is no longer socialist. In 1976, Deng Xiaoping led a coup that overthrew proletarian rule. The capitalist roaders that Mao was leading people to struggle against won out.

The policies of this new capitalist class have led to extreme economic and social polarization. China has been turned into a cheap-labor platform for transnational corporations. Yes, some people in China have gotten very wealthy, and a new middle class is rapidly expanding. But what does all this mean for the broad masses of people? A quick snapshot :

✍ Factories in special economic zones subject workers to unbearably long hours, substandard food, cramped dorms, abuse of workers by managers.

✍ Peasants are subjected to exorbitant taxes and non-payment by the state for crops. Local governments in league with developers are involved in massive land grabs. This has sparked waves of protests by peasants.

✍ 200 million peasant-migrant laborers are roaming the countryside and streaming into cities in search of work, with no guarantee of job or shelter.

✍ Between 1995 and 2000 alone, 48 million workers were laid off from state enterprises.

✍ Prostitution is rampant in the cities. There is now a burgeoning world market for unwanted female babies in China.

✍ The disbanding of the communes in the countryside has led to the collapse of the rural public health care system. This was a major factor in the spread of the SARS epidemic of 2003. The burgeoning sex industry, the rise of intravenous drug use, and the fact that desperate peasants are now selling blood to survive have contributed to an AIDS crisis.

✍ The introduction of free-market practices in the countryside has meant that rural schools are now being financed by tuition and other charges. The result is that many poor villagers can no longer afford to send their children to school.

✍ Cities are choking on pollution; industrial wastes are pouring into rivers; forest reserves are being depleted—this is the environmental price of a reckless economic juggernaut in China that is glorified in the West.

Where Mao said, “serve the people,” Deng Xiaoping said, “to get rich is glorious.”

Capitalism has been restored in China.

The defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1976 marks the end of a stage. The first wave of proletarian revolutions has come to an end. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was the first breakthrough in seizing power and using that power to build a new society. The Chinese Revolution, especially the Cultural Revolution, represented a leap beyond the Soviet experience.

Mao Tsetung was searching for a means and method to prevent a new capitalist class from seizing power. He broke new ground in trying to solve this problem. He forged a path of revolutionary transformation that was more liberating, and more consistent with the means and goals of communist revolution, than was the case with the Soviet Union when it was socialist in the years 1917-56. Nonetheless, the proletariat was defeated in China.

There are no socialist countries in the world today. But toilers are still at a point of societal development where humanity has to move beyond capitalism.

Capitalism is not the end of history. It is actually the chief impediment to realizing the potential for a different world. ~~████████~~