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The High Cost of Communism

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The High Cost of Communism

The principal argument or appeal of Communists when they want to sell their system to what they call "the masses" is that Communism takes the wealth which workers produce and distributes it equitably to all the people. Under a Red regime, farms and factories, banks and bus-lines are all owned and operated by the Government. Therefore, they say, the profits obtained from them do not go to fatten the bank accounts of lazy capitalists, or to provide them with extravagant luxuries. Instead, they are shared to raise the people's living standards, or are spent to meet the running expenses of the Government.

And since what constitutes in other systems the profiteer's share of the wealth goes to take care of State expenses, the tax burden on individual citizens is light or non-existent. Communism, they claim, is inexpensive.

With respect to such claims, the first obvious question is this: Do the people actually enjoy more material wealth, a higher living standard in Communist countries than in other lands? In other words, what really is the take-home pay of their average citizens and workers? What food and clothing, what housing and comforts do they receive for how much work?

You will get different answers to this question from various people. But we must not close our eyes to certain facts. What are some of these facts? A steady stream of fugitives from Red China reaches Macao even now, despite grave physical dangers and political threats against those who do not succeed in their escape attempt. Without collusion or previous contact with one another, these refugees describe in consistent detail extremely hard living conditions in the communes of farmers and fishermen. They must do heavy work at least 12, and often 14 or 16 hours a day, to receive two slim meals of three ounces of rice each (for adults). At most, an adult worker gets 70% (360 grams) of the *minimum* amount of food (500-600 grams) which medical standards say he needs to remain in health. The fishermen relate that when they bring their boats to land, they have to turn over the whole catch to Red government functionaries who market them or export them for a profit the fisherman never sees. Besides rice, this fisherman gets about 3 or 4 ounces of fish to eat in a month. Neither he, nor the farmers of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, have any meat to eat the year round.

"More wealth, better distributed, at no extra cost," is the claim. I do not think we should too readily admit their claim of better distribution. In 1957, during the short-lived period of push-button free speech, I read protests from the people in the Red Chinese news-

papers. "A soldier lives twice as well as a worker," they said, "and a worker twice as well as peasant." This was described as a "common saying." It did not touch the enormous and semi-sacred *kanpu* class which has grown up under Communist auspices—the politically reliable functionaries of the Party or Government who enjoy many privileges in housing and rations, in opportunities to educate their children, in power to intimidate and exploit their neighbors. Under the Red flag "all men are equal, but some are more equal than others," as George Orwell, sharp of eye and well-informed, observed.

But that is not my main point. My main point is this: Even if Communism offers a good amount of material goods, distributed fairly, what would we have to give up in order to have it? "You have nothing to lose but your chains," Marx tells the workers in the Manifesto. But it is perfectly possible to trade them for another set of chains, heavier and more tightly, more cruelly binding. When men fall under a Red regime, what must they pay to the State in terms of goods that cannot be measured in pesos and centavos: liberty and loyalty, decent friendship, intellectual integrity, family affection and privacy, religious freedom, the things we sum up in the phrase, personal human dignity. Would any material gains compensate for the non-material sacrifices?

During my second year in prison, the authorities let me read a Soviet story, entitled "Verkhovina, My Land So Dear." It was about the annexation—they called it the liberation—of eastern Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union through the Red Army at the end of World War II. In the early chapters of the story, the author described the earlier Nazi occupation of Verkhovina. He spoke of the dark hour of midnight, when the Gestapo prowled the streets, and good citizens cowered in their homes dreading a knock on the door that would mean prison, exile, perhaps death; certainly the end of any happy family life together.

They gave me this story to read as part of their program to re-educate me, to make me benevolent toward the Soviet way of doing things. But what effect could it have? The Red police had arrested me also near midnight, under cover of darkness, lest the people of the neighborhood who knew us priests well should make a demonstration against them. Ten or twelve of the Security Police crowded into my small room and searched it. They found nothing wrong, but they took examination papers and class schedules from my files and piled them in great disorder on the desk. They forced me to stand there while they took a photo, presumably to prove that I had been sending dangerous letters all over China. Then, handcuffed, I was led with the muzzle of a revolver in my back to a waiting car that brought me to prison.

When I was released a full four years later, some of the friends I met inquired, "What about those guns, Father?" When I asked them what they meant, they told me that the authorities published in the newspapers and over the neighborhood public-address system that they had found three revolvers in my desk. So I was not a simple two-gun man, but probably carried a shoulder holster, too! During my long trials, they never mentioned revolvers to me. But this is a detail which indicates how they fabricate false evidence, and lie to their own people if that serves their ends, although they say they make their arrests at the demand and will of the people.

For a 14-month period, my one cellmate in prison was a Chinese university professor, the father of five children. He told me how one night, after the Japanese war and before the Communists came, he and his wife had gone to a movie about the family of an engineer in Czechoslovakia. The family had been united and peaceful, but when the Nazis came and the father would not comply with orders against the good of his country, he was clapped into prison, his wife was forced to work in a factory, his children were scattered to far parts of the land. My cellmate told me: "As we were walking home that night, my wife clutched my arm and said: 'Wouldn't it be terrible if something like that happened to us?'" He laughed at the idea and comforted her, sure that he had not harmed anyone or made enemies, confident that his own countrymen could not be cruel and unjust like the men in the movie.

"Yet look at us now," my cellmate said. "I'm in prison. My wife does factory work to keep alive. My eldest son has been sent to the North. I don't know what will become of the others."

Our row of cells was near the prison gate. Too often, at night, we would hear a car or jeep approach, the sentries' challenge, the answer. A prisoner would be bundled out, brought around to our block, shoved onto the floor of a cell. "Two rules," the guard would shout. "No talking. If you have to stand up or move, get my permission first." Then the bar of the cell door would clang back, the key in its turn. My friend would roll on his side and moan: "There! Another family smashed. Like mine was!"

How often do you think that happens in Red China? In September 1955, I was in the third prison to which I had been removed. We were six men in a cell eight feet long, five and half feet wide, built for one or at most two prisoners. We could not stretch out full length at night, but were jammed head to toe, so that if one man moved, we all woke up. And every cell in the prison seemed equally crowded. I asked my companions, men from different walks of life and different parts of China, how many of their acquaintances had been arrested since the Communists came to power. They

did not answer hastily, but thought my question over. They agreed that, from 1949 to 1955, at least one of every ten men who were between the ages of 20 and 60 had been put into prison. This number, checked against the general population figure, would amount to more than 15,000,000 men.

I was told by those in a position to know that the proportion of political to criminal prisoners, at least until 1956, were nine to one. There were nine men in jail for political reasons to each one for a criminal offense. This estimate conforms to my own direct observations in five different prisons where I was held.

In the fourth of these, the Ward Road or Tilaichiao prison in Shanghai, there were 30,000 prisoners. If a man slept in one cell the first night and moved to another the next night, it would take him 15 years to get through them all. There we were confined five each to small cells built for one or two at most.

You may ask: what happened to these 15,000,000 men arrested in China from 1949 to 1955, and what has probably happened to the millions taken into custody since then? The Peking authorities release no direct or complete statistics. But in the summer of 1957 Premier Chou En-lai, in a report to what corresponds to a congress in Peking, said that of the political prisoners arrested in the regime's first six years, 17% had been executed, 42% were sentenced to reform-through-labor, 32% were, after re-education, sentenced to surveillance, and 8 or 9%, also after re-education, were shown leniency or received light sentences from the government.

Let us break down these figures a bit and try to see what they mean. The executions, 17% of 15 millions, would amount to 2,500,000 in the six years, or more than 400,000 a year. This comes to more than 1,000 men executed in cold blood each day, day after day for six years with no rest for Sundays, holidays, or any other day—and this by the central government. I recall seeing in one day's newspapers in September, 1950, the names, ages and native places of more than 150 persons who were executed in one city, Shanghai, the day before, and news of other mass executions there appeared repeatedly.

The Chinese have an expression: "Strike one man and you frighten a thousand." A non-Catholic friend of mine was a Shanghai high-school history teacher. In the first year or so under Communist rule, he was slow to follow the Party line in his lectures. One morning, the political science adviser in the school,—a Communist, for at least one such adviser was assigned to each school to see that Party directives were carried out—approached him and said: "There will be a mass execution at the airfield this afternoon. I think it would be a good idea if you came along to attend it." My friend tried to excuse

himself, saying that he had a weak stomach. But the Party man said bluntly: "If you are wise, you will come along in the car with us."

He told me how he saw more than a hundred political prisoners, mostly men, a few women, kneeling on the runway, hands tightly bound behind their backs. A soldier stood behind each of them with a revolver pointed at the base of the brain. A single command was given, the shots rang out, and the bodies slumped lifeless to the ground. My friend rode back to the city in a car behind a truck in which bodies of executed persons were piled. "After that," he told me, "I taught my history as it is made in Moscow, not the way I had learned it, the way I really thought it had taken place."

The second item on Premier Chou En-lai's list was 42% sentenced to reform-through-labor: *Lao-kung Kai-tsao*, a polite name for slave labor camps. Using our basic minimum figure for arrests, this would mean at least 6,350,000 to the end of 1955. During the time in prison when I was close to men receiving labor-camp sentences, the shortest terms for political offenses were three to five years. But longer terms, up to 15 years, were common enough.

The men thus sentenced were sent in cattle cars or by the boat-load to build dams or dykes, to dig out canals, to try to reclaim marginal farm land which in years of good weather might yield a passable crop, but in ordinary years do not produce enough to live on. Food and housing in the labor camps are poor, because often tens of thousands of workers are brought together almost overnight. Sanitation is primitive. I have spoken to men who came back from the camps, and they said the mortality rate of workers was at least 10% a year. So if your sentence was light, say a 5-year term, your chances of coming back alive to your family would only be 50-50. Suicides are frequent. The day I reached Hongkong in 1957, a Catholic family there received word that their son, who had attended our Jesuit high school in Shanghai, had committed suicide by throwing himself on the tracks in front of a train in a Manchurian labor camp.

You might think it a relief, then, to look at Chou En-lai's statement and note that 32% or 5 million political offenders were sentenced to surveillance after re-education. It does not sound so bad. But the re-education takes place in prison. It is the so-called brain-washing process, rarely completed in less than a year. The prisoner has no right to demand a trial, but must submit to indoctrination as long as the authorities want. Among the priests condemned to long prison terms recently, one was arrested eight years ago, six were arrested in 1953, seven in 1955. During all that time they were being "re-educated"—a nice name for a nasty process.

A man sentenced to surveillance has no civil rights. In the political discussion meetings which everyone, neighborhood groups, factory

workers, teachers and professional groups must attend each week, this man may venture no opinion of his own. He may not speak up unless he is expressly asked to do so. Each week he must report to the police whether he has visited anyone or received any visits, and what they spoke about; whether he has written or received any letters, and what was mentioned in them.

When he has been re-educated and sentenced to surveillance, the man is assigned his job by the authorities, not by free choice. In 1957, during the month or so that free speech was allowed, I read a letter in the Shanghai Communist daily. The writer cautiously remarked: "Isn't it regrettable that now, when our schools are so crowded and short of teachers, men of the former lawyers' profession, who have college or university degrees, are employed as coolies in crematories, as orderlies emptying slop-buckets in hospitals?" About a year after the Red regime took over, all the members of the former law profession were indoctrinated, under internment conditions, for a long period. Afterwards, they were re-assigned to new jobs. About 8 per cent or more simply disappeared. Seventy per cent were given work which had no connection with what their studies and experience qualified them for. The Reds want to degrade men, break the self-respect of suspected or potential non-conformists, so that they will submit like sheep to Party control.

Nine per cent, or 1,340,000 received "leniency" or light sentences after re-education, Chou En-lai affirmed. Let me give you one concrete example of what this bland phrase can cover. In the latter part of 1957 the Peking PEOPLE'S DAILY launched a bitter attack on Huang Shao-hung, a Cantonese delegate to the Congress, but a non-Communist. It accused him of sympathizing with reactionaries and enemies of the people.

Because of his position as a delegate, Huang was able to make an inspection tour through the main cities of China, and he saw such abuses in the courts and police units that he threw caution to the winds and spoke out in an angry official protest. He cited twelve cases as samples of how the rights of people were flagrantly ignored.

One of the instances was this. In Shanghai the mother of a Catholic college girl told Huang that nine months after her daughter's arrest, she still could not find out where her daughter was held. Another instance: A Protestant of Canton, for refusing to turn his 83-year-old father over to the police, was sentenced to three years in prison. The father was arrested, but, after a year-long investigation the charge against him was dropped and he was set free. The son, however, who would not denounce him or tell the police where he was, still had to serve his long prison term.

The PEOPLE'S DAILY tried to refute Huang's charges and to vilify him as a man who did not think right because of bourgeois prejudice. The paper said that its reporters gleaned these facts about the girl's case, for instance, from interviews with the comrades of the police and judiciary units.

The girl was Miss Wu Jeng-yi, a student in the First Medical College, Shanghai. In 1949 she had joined the Legion of Mary in Sacred Heart High School. In 1950 she was vice-prefect of the Immaculate Conception branch of the Legion. In 1951 the government suppressed the Legion of Mary. The elite of Catholic youth belonged to it, because as members they could study their Catholic faith better, encourage each other to receive the Sacraments more often, and as lay apostles try to spread the faith and win converts more effectively. The government labeled the Legion members counter-revolutionaries, tried to intimidate them and in that way to paralyze all Catholic activity and study.

At this time, Miss Wu refused to register with the proper authorities, the PEOPLE'S DAILY said. Actually, registration was tantamount to a false avowal of political crimes, tantamount to a false grave accusation against fellow students. In these circumstances the members refused to register almost unanimously. If one registered as a counter-revolutionary, he was told that he must either be punished, or merit government clemency by organizing Marxist study groups, or units for the schismatic church!

What is more, the PEOPLE'S DAILY claimed, Miss Wu on two occasions destroyed by fire such incriminating evidence as a banner and handbook of the reactionary Legion of Mary, and the register of the members in her *praesidium*. She knew, and everyone else knew, that these objects would be desecrated in the hands of the Reds. The authorities had plenty of Legion of Mary handbooks—there was nothing secret or subversive about them. She burned the list of members because she did not want to do the unjust work of the police for them; she wanted to protect her schoolmates from cruel pressure and danger to their faith.

There were two more crimes. In 1953, during the so-called anti-imperialist, patriotic movement, she reviled and struck two so-called patriotic Catholics. That is, she had an honest quarrel with two schoolmates who were weaker of faith than she was. In 1955, during the "suppression of counter-revolutionaries" movement, she reported to her parish priest that some Catholic students were wavering about making confession of guilt to the Government, and she tried to prevent another girl, Yen Ehr-liang, from making this sort of confession.

On the basis of such crimes, and acting with the approval of the municipal prosecutor, the Public Security Bureau of Shanghai had

her arrested on April 3, 1955. Now comes the aggravating circumstance. The PEOPLE'S DAILY said: "Following her arrest, Wu Jeng-yi was given 18 interrogations in preliminary examinations. During the first 15 series of hearings, until February of the next year, she persistently refused to admit her guilt. It was not until her 16th set of interrogations that she began to confess her crimes little by little. She made five admissions of guilt in writing, and also wrote a letter of repentance."

So for ten long months, with little to eat, in a squalid prison, this Catholic schoolgirl, alone, had stood off batteries of clever, hard-bitten Red interrogators.

The Communist newspaper said that during her detention, Miss Wu asked five times that her family might send her things she needed. Two of these requests were transmitted to her mother, the first in December, or more than eight months after her arrest, and the articles were given to her. Bitterly cold weather usually hits Shanghai after the first week of November, and cells in prisons there are not heated. We would have 30 or 40 days of sub-freezing weather in a Shanghai winter. In prison, not seldom we had to crack our chopsticks apart on the floor before we could use them for the morning rice; if there was any moisture on them, they froze together during the night.

The PEOPLE'S DAILY concluded: "In consideration of her admission of guilt and declaration of repentance, the People's Court of Shanghai, on September 22, 1956 decided to spare her criminal punishment. She was released after education, and allowed to resume her medical studies in college." So, more than 17 months after her arrest, the girl was restored to her good, worried mother. Her father would not have dared to make the protest that the mother had made, because reprisals fall more swiftly on men than on women. The girl was probably haunted by anxiety or fear that she had offended God and her conscience by untrue accusations against herself and her friends.

These well-authenticated incidents, which can be multiplied indefinitely, give us a fair idea of the high cost of Communism. A prisoner in Communist hands is completely helpless. He has no rights. He can communicate with no one outside the prison nor insist on a trial at any given date. The judiciary is an instrument of the executive power. The executive is entirely in the hands of the Party. And the Party is avowedly merciless towards every non-conformist, towards everyone who dares to disagree with them. "We don't stop beating a mad dog when he stops barking," they told me; "We keep beating him until there's no power to do harm left in him. We don't have pity on an enemy because he is down."

Communism is dehumanizing, because it is godless and soul-less. Materialism is a vital part of Marxism, and materialism, of course, denies God and the human soul. When God is denied, there is no one over the State to limit its power or to curb its excesses. If a man has no soul, he does not really differ from brute beasts. He can be tamed and trained, by some means or other, to jump through hoops, without thinking, at the crack of a whip.

Most of the many political prisoners whom I knew in China were *men*, quiet, but courageous and decent. There was a line which they would not cross, a depth to which they would not stoop, because they wanted to remain men. They would not abandon the hope, nor deny the right, of the mind of man to search for truth, and to state it honestly. They would not give up or deny the right of the will and heart of man to search for what is decent and good, and to defend it bravely. If we bought Communism, we would pay for it with a most precious birthright, our human dignity.

CHARLES J. MCCARTHY

What Makes Stereo Stereo?

The question is often asked: What is the difference between high-fidelity and stereo? The answer is that high-fidelity may be found in monophonic as well as in stereophonic sound and it simply means that the sound is a realistic reproduction of the original, or at least that the reproduction closely simulates the music heard in actual performance. Now this in detail implies that monophonic as well as stereophonic reproduction be free from noise. Or as the hi-fi jargon puts it: "There must be high signal-to-noise ratio." Then there must be conspicuous clarity undistorted by the hi-fi mechanism. Thirdly, the sounds of the highest and of the lowest pitch, together with their harmonics or overtones, must be heard. That implies that there should be a frequency response ranging from 30 to 15000 cycles and that this response be uniform or smooth throughout the whole range. Fourthly, high-fidelity requires that the range between the loudest and the softest sounds of a live performance be substantially retained. That means that the mechanism should be capable of producing these sounds without strain or distortion. It does not necessarily have to equal the intensity of the original, but there should be a reasonable approach to the original level.

Now to come to the characteristics of stereophonic sound that make it not different from monophonic sound but superior to it,