

Workers' Paradise

Kevin Carson

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In the past, I've noted neoliberal portrayals of Red China as an exemplar of the "free market." Its so-called "market reforms" and "liberalization" have made it the promised land for offshored production by American corporations. To add some substantive content to those cliches, just consider the Chinese government's repression of independent labor activists, and of local resistance to "rampant industrial pollution" and "widespread evictions and land seizures by corrupt local governments in cahoots with increasingly powerful property developers..." ("Land of 74,000 Protests").

Here's another story on the same topic. From Independent World Television Blog: "China's New Activists"

Rural unrest throughout China is on the increase. The government says 3.6 million people took part in 74,000 "mass incidents" last year, up from 58,000 in 2003. In April, villagers in Huankantou, in Zhejiang province, beat off 1,000 riot police in a dispute over pollution from chemical factories built on disputed property. In June, six residents of Shengyou village, in Hebei province, 125 miles south of Beijing, were killed by 300 government-hired men seeking to seize farmland from villagers. Last month, hundreds of farmers in Meishan county in Zhejiang staged a demonstration against a battery factory. Hundreds of smaller incidents are thought to go unreported every week.

The natives are also restless in the workplace. Here's how the rules of labor organization work in the "dictatorship of the proletariat":

The country's only legal union, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, is an 80-year-old Communist Party institution that for decades has aligned itself more closely with management than workers; in some cases its local branches are even headed by factory owners. Independent unions are banned, and workers suspected of organizing strikes are routinely jailed.

The collusion between Western sweatshop employers and the Chinese "people's state" reminds me a lot of that scene in *Animal Farm*, when the pigs hold a summit conference with the neighboring farmers: "If you've got your lower classes, we've got our lower animals!"

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