

[On Communism and Laziness]

Remarks by Mao Zedong at the Beidaihe Conference, 30 August, 1958.

Our communism, as well, started in the army. China's party is a very special party. Through several decades of battle, it always practiced communism. During the eight years of the anti-Japanese war and four years of the war of self-defense, the masses witnessed our hardships [and] supported us at the front. There were no wages; [they] brought their own food. In battle people died; even so they supported us the way they did. Some say [that] egalitarianism produces idlers. In the past twenty-two years, how many idlers have been produced? I haven't see many idlers. Only gradism¹⁰⁵ produces idlers. What are the reasons? Primarily putting politics in command, class struggle, beating Japan, beating the reactionaries, sharing a common goal, and suffering on behalf of the majority of the people. Now [we] struggle with imperialism abroad, and at home our main struggle is with nature. Our goals are also clear. We're now engaged in production and construction. Whom do our more than 10 million cadres throughout the land serve? They serve the happiness of [all] the people, not just a few. Today, if one invents something, one is given 100 yuan [i.e., a small sum], which in the end will produce laziness and strife, but not activism.¹⁰⁶ Were the many creations and inventions of the past bought with money? Piece-rate wages are not a good system. I don't believe the adoption of the supply system will make people lazy, inventions fewer, or activism lower. Because decades of experience prove otherwise. The sources [of our problems] are two-fold: one is socialism, which has been borrowed from Elder Brother [the Soviet Union] and the second is capitalism, which is home born and bred.

From R. MacFarquhar, et. al., *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 436–437.

¹⁰⁵ I.e., worrying about ones rank in the cadre scale.

¹⁰⁶ Mao's contempt is given added bite by the relative paltriness of the sum he quotes. In fact, when the Academy of Sciences set up a system of science prizes in 1955, the sums involved—10,000 yuan for first prize, 5,000 yuan for a second, and 2,000 yuan for a third—were extremely attractive by comparison with a 350 yuan salary range for the highest paid scientists. See Richard P. Suttmeier, *Research and Revolution* (Lexington, Lexington Books, 1979), pp. 61-2.