

OBSERVATIONS ON MALOTT AND LINGER

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Malott (1993, this issue) and Linger (1993, this issue) have written interesting and informative accounts of some aspects of contemporary Cuban society. Malott's treatment is more balanced than some presented by others, who have been uncritical, if not naive about Cuba. Cuba *has* achieved some success in improving the well-being of Cubans, but there have also been failures. Reportedly, a joke making the rounds says that the three main accomplishments of the Cuban revolution, "are, as Castro says: education, medical treatment and sports. The three main failures are breakfast, lunch and supper" (Farah, 1992). There is another failure I will address below.

I agree with Malott that natural, direct-acting contingencies "often cause people to act in ways that are counter-productive to long-term humanitarian objectives..." (Malott, 1993, p. 103). I also agree that, "often the issue of working for the well-being of humanity gets naively confused with working free of aversive control..." (Malott, 1993, p. 107). That is, people may often be acting so as to avoid aversive consequences rather than for the well-being of humanity. Those persons may, of course, state that they are working only for the well-being of humanity.

This is not to deny that "...many people will act in selfless or altruistic ways for the long-term common good" (Linger, 1993, p. 130). What is needed is information about the incidence of such altruistic behavior in various societies. What is also needed is a delineation of the variables responsible for the development and maintenance of altruistic behaviors.

Greedy self-interest is not limited to market economies. It has long been known that the rulers and nomenklatura of the former Soviet Union (Lamal, 1991) and People's Republic of China enjoyed a range of material incentives not available to the rest of the populations of those countries. Deep and pervasive corruption of many state officials has been a fact of life in a wide variety of societies (including socialist), over, perhaps, thousands of years.

Malott asserts that Cuba "is one of the greatest cultural experiments in history" (Malott, 1993, p.112). Just what this means is unclear. In at least two

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domains, however, the results of this experiment are not encouraging. They are not encouraging either in terms of the Cubans' economic well-being, or in terms of their freedom from aversive control ("human rights").

Both Malott and Linger discuss the concepts of material and moral incentives and their putative roles in Cuba. Proponents of socialism clearly favor moral over material incentives, assuming that everyone in a society has sufficient of the latter for a decent standard of living. The reason for this preference is not, however, clear and those who hold it need to spell it out for those who are not necessarily convinced that material incentives are somehow intrinsically inferior to the moral variety. What *is* clear is that material incentives are necessary if a society is to develop. The Chinese experience is instructive. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) the denigration of material incentives was accompanied by decreasing productivity and living standards. It became clear to the Chinese leadership that systematic and widespread use of material incentives was necessary for achieving their modernization program (Lamal, 1984). In Cuba, the experiment of removing material incentives also demonstrated their necessity (Malott, 1993).

I realize that neither Linger nor Malott intended to address the issue of human rights in Cuba and one cannot quarrel with that. An author cannot, it seems to me, be legitimately criticized because he or she writes one paper rather than another. Nevertheless, the human rights record of Cuba is an important issue. One facet of this issue that recently has been brought to light is the perversion of psychiatry in Cuba. This apparently dates to Castro's ascension to power in 1959 (Brown & Armando, 1991). According to Brown and Armando, dissidents have been committed to mental hospitals solely because of their political beliefs. Brown and Armando present data showing when, where, and how psychiatric abuse of real or suspected dissidents has occurred. This abuse includes the misuse of psychotropic drugs and electroconvulsive therapy. One does not have to rely solely on the word of Brown and Armando, there are also reports from the respected organizations America's Watch and Amnesty International. But in one sense it is hardly news that socialist societies are not immune to the practice of severely aversive control.

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