

Khalil Hassan responds

I appreciate the comradely spirit of Max's response. The following are a few quick thoughts.

Let's start that Max is correct that the stand that people like me took during the '70s and early '80s that the so-called "capitalist restoration thesis" had to be a bottom line for unity, was incorrect. While I believe that a new class society — probably state capitalism — emerged in the USSR, the manner in which this debate was used to divide the Left was overwhelmingly unproductive, if not outright destructive. Max is right to point this out.

Having said that, I believe that Max and I, while agreeing on so much, simply have a significant difference of opinion on a few things. Max points out that Maoism was a strident defender of Stalin. He raises this in opposition to my position that Maoism was an attempt to address the crisis of socialism, and represented a critique of Stalinian Marxism from the Left (and within a Marxist-Leninist paradigm). The problem is that Max is not looking at the whole picture.

Max Elbaum: It's the Maoism, stupid.

Khalil Hassan and the Editors: Oh, puhleeze...

The Chinese Party did uphold Stalin in opposition to Khrushchev but when one looks deeper at Maoism — leaving aside the various tendencies within it — one sees a critique of the Soviet experience under Stalin. This included the question of the Comintern, industrialization (and the peasant question), the theory of dialectics, the notion of class struggle under socialism. In fact, the Party of Labor of Albania, when it broke with the Chinese in the 1970s, attacked the Chinese for being insufficiently Stalinist and alleged that the party had never really upheld Stalin. I think that Max is overstating the case and missing some key ingredients in Maoism.

In order to avoid going into a lengthy exchange, let me suggest that Max uses slanders against China (e.g., an alleged alliance with apartheid South Africa —

not even the US suggests this) in order to bolster his position that the Chinese undermined national liberation movements. The problem, and I tried raising this in my original piece, is that comrade Max is interestingly silent on the role of the Soviet Union in numerous national liberation struggles, e.g., Algeria where the USSR was, at best, *very* late to the table.

He also ignores a very important question: was the USSR an actual threat to China? Based on various revelations — as mentioned in my original text — that there were at least two Soviet initiated discussions about a nuclear bombardment of China, this might help one understand some of the peculiarities in Chinese foreign policy.

The main point, however, is that one can learn from both the Soviet and

Chinese experience that foreign policy, regardless of the rhetoric, is driven by various factors. For those of us on the Left in the USA to be advancing our strategies and programs based mainly or solely on the political line of a party in power in another country is, at best, risky. No successful Left movement has

ever built its line around the foreign policy of another country. Unfortunately, many of us — and certainly including those of us who came through the Maoist experience — recognized this a bit too late.

In Struggle,
Khalil Hassan
