

Warning: Made in China

by John Horvat II

For decades, American businessmen have been outsourcing production and setting up factories in Communist China. They cite a large and industrious work force with minimal labor costs as the reason that supposedly allows them to manufacture a product at the lowest possible costs. American manufacturers employing American workers are hard-pressed to compete.

Behind the façade of Asia's industrial powerhouse, however, is the tragic reality of a society without morals. Chinese labor conditions are notoriously horrible with little or no provisions for worker safety. Wages are low, free trade unions not allowed and living conditions can be scandalously inadequate. Human rights violations, such as forced abortion, are common. Illegal factories abound and cases of slavery are reported. Corruption and bribery are endemic, making the rule of law questionable at best.

China fails the test in all the major areas for the proper running of industry in the West. While the West must pay dearly for environmental damage or carbon offsets, China is a massive environmental disaster. Violations that would shut down many a Western business seem to have no effect on its Chinese counterpart. Food regulations are ignored and all manner of toxins, bacteria, illegal pesticides, outlawed antibiotics and carcinogens are commonly found in Chinese food imports. China is immune from damages that would trigger multimillion dollar lawsuits in America.

Far from being the new economic miracle, China is actually the West's gigantic sweat shop, churning out cheap goods to insatiable Western consumers.

Safeguarding Americans

While Chinese have long suffered, it is now Americans who are becoming victims. The Chinese government's blatant disregard for

elementary sanitary standards is beginning to become public.

The Chinese food scandal first began when dogs and cats started dying from pet food processed in the United States and Canada using melamine-contaminated wheat flour from China. Over 100 pet food brands were recalled.

The scandals have now extended to foods directly threatening the health of American consumers. Seafood, toothpaste and other consumables were found to contain dangerous substances. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that as many as 20 million chickens and thousands of hogs in several states may have been fed contaminated Chinese feed.

Now Chinese mismanagement and shoddy practices are affecting the most helpless of victims – American children. Chinese-made toys containing excessive amounts of lead now threaten countless children to dangerous exposure.

Indeed, Fisher-Price recalled nearly 1.5 million toys because of the problem. Mattel has just announced a worldwide recall of more than 18 million toys from store shelves and homes because of lead paint and hazardous magnets.

Cheap Goods

Those who claim Chinese goods provide cheap wares to American consumers would do well to take a second look.

Such cheap goods come at great cost to the Chinese workers who frequently work in substandard sweat shop conditions. They are now coming at a great price to American business in the form of recalled goods and ruined reputations.

Finally they cost dearly to American consumers and particularly children whose health is endangered by substandard, chemical-laced goods and foods.

Such costs are to be expected from a Communist government that has long had a callous disregard for human life and holds itself to no standards save that of its immoral philosophy.

However, now that American lives are directly threatened, it should serve as a wake-up call to question seriously the wisdom of continuing present trade policies.

It should at least serve to alert the public that "Made in China" is no longer a manufacturing label but a warning. ■



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Environmental Disaster

► "Pollution has made cancer China's leading cause of death, the Ministry of Health says. Ambient air pollution alone is blamed for hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. Nearly 500 million people lack access to safe drinking water..."

► "Only 1 percent of the country's 560 million city dwellers breathe air considered safe by the European Union."

(*The New York Times*, 08-25-07)

Forced Abortions

► "During the past week, dozens of women in southwest China have been forced to have abortions even as late as nine months into the pregnancy..."
(*NPR, Morning Edition*, 04/23/07)