

HAS SOCIALISM FAILED? AN ANALYSIS OF HEALTH INDICATORS UNDER SOCIALISM

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This article analyzes the widely held assumption in academia and the mainstream press that capitalism has proven superior to socialism in responding to human needs. The author surveys the health conditions of the world's populations, continent by continent, and shows that, contrary to dominant ideology, socialism and socialist forces have been, for the most part, better able to improve health conditions than have capitalism and capitalist forces. In the underdeveloped world, socialist forces and regimes have, more frequently than not, improved health and social indicators better than capitalist forces and regimes, and in the developed world, countries with strong socialist forces have been better able to improve health conditions than those countries lacking or with weak socialist forces. The socialist experience has, of course, also included negative developments that have negated important components of the socialist project. Still, the evidence presented in this article shows that the historical experience of socialism has not been one of failure. To the contrary: it has been, for the most part, more successful than capitalism in improving the health conditions of the world's populations.

A major intellectual position reproduced in today's academic and mainstream press is that the historical conflict between two approaches to human social development has been resolved in favor of capitalism: capitalism has proved superior to socialism in responding to human needs. This position, first articulated by the U.S. State Department official, Francis Fukuyama (1), has gained wide acceptance in intellectual centers of the Western world. The position is not only descriptive but normative; socialism is to be avoided, and capitalism is to be promoted to resolve the dramatic realities of our world, where one child dies of hunger every two seconds and 15 million children die of malnutrition every year (2).

As stated by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (quoted in 3):

Should capitalism be the goal of the countries now making efforts to rebuild their economy and society? Is this the model which ought to be proposed to the countries of the Third World which are searching for the path to true economic and civil progress? . . . If by capitalism is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the

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