The good life is a narrative one, a story about how history is supposed to work. The characters who walk about in this story in their ten-league boots are the working class and the party, triumphing over enemies, marching together into the new dawn of prosperity for all. The good life, in Stalin's classic Economic Problems of the USSR, is measured in tons of steel and bushels of wheat without any of that namby-pamby goodness and light stuff. This is science, after all. Science which is the sole property of the party, administered through the plan on behalf of homo faber - the workers.

What could this possibly have in common with the economics of Walsh and Haupt? Well, everything, really. In economic dogma, there is also a utopian blueprint hidden away inside the scientific jargon. The outer surface of this ideology, too, is all hard algebra and tough logic, while the soft-hearted innards contain a vision splendid of the good life hereafter which will result from the logical workings of the market plus the vigilant guidance of economists and their sagely interventions in favour of deregulation. The connection between the rhetoric of science and the utopia of the good life is a narrative one, a story about how history is supposed to work. The characters who walk about in this story in their shiny new shoes are the investors and the economists, triumphing over enemies, marching together into the new dawn of prosperity for all. The good life, for economists also, is measured in tons of steel, bushels of wheat, and kilos of home entertainment centres — not any of that namby-pamby goodness and light stuff. This is science, after all. Science which is the sole property of the economists, vigilantly overseeing the true workings of the market on behalf of homo economicus.

The structure of these two ideologies is thus pretty much the same. Where they differ is in the masters they serve and the enemies they denounce. In its stalinoid perversion, communism is an ideology which serves the state. In its quirky new economic version, this communist rhetoric of the good life, with pop-up toasters for all, serves capitalism. The demonology of stalinism naturally picked on the market as the source of all evil, for the market is ideologically linked to capital.

Reading the opinion columns by economic journalists in the Sydney Morning Herald I can't help feeling that it is all written by communists. It may seem absurd to suggest that Max Walsh, Robert Haupt, Michael Denholm et al are communists, and before the abovementioned start reaching for the phone to speed-dial their defamation lawyers, let me explain what I mean. Neither these economic-communists nor old style stalinist-communists were ever very big on theoretical specification - and this is not the least thing they have in common.

Both are long on remarkably similar rhetorical devices; both offer a cure-all ideology which explains everything. In stalinist dogma there is supposed to be a difference between utopian and scientific theories about communism, the latter being superior to the former. A closer peek at stalinist rhetoric uncovers the fact that the utopian blueprint has merely been hidden away inside the scientific jargon. The outer surface of this ideology, so to speak, is all hard algebra and tough logic, while the soft-hearted innards contain a vision splendid of the good life hereafter which will result from the logical workings of history plus the vigilant guidance of the party and the plan.

In short, the connection between the rhetoric of science and the utopia of the good life is a narrative one, a story about how history is supposed to work. The characters who walk about in this story in their ten-league boots are the working class and the party, triumphing over enemies, marching together into the new dawn of prosperity for all. The good life, in Stalin's classic Economic Problems of the USSR, is measured in tons of steel and bushels of wheat without any of that namby-pamby goodness and light stuff. This is science, after all. Science which is the sole property of the party, administered through the plan on behalf of homo faber - the workers.

What could this possibly have in common with the economics of Walsh and Haupt? Well, everything, really. In economic dogma, there is also a utopian blueprint hidden away inside the scientific jargon. The outer surface of this ideology, too, is all hard algebra and tough logic, while the soft-hearted innards contain a vision splendid of the good life hereafter which will result from the logical workings of the market plus the vigilant guidance of economists and their sagely interventions in favour of deregulation. The connection between the rhetoric of science and the utopia of the good life is a narrative one, a story about how history is supposed to work. The characters who walk about in this story in their shiny new shoes are the investors and the economists, triumphing over enemies, marching together into the new dawn of prosperity for all. The good life, for economists also, is measured in tons of steel, bushels of wheat, and kilos of home entertainment centres — not any of that namby-pamby goodness and light stuff. This is science, after all. Science which is the sole property of the economists, vigilantly overseeing the true workings of the market on behalf of homo economicus.

The structure of these two ideologies is thus pretty much the same. Where they differ is in the masters they serve and the enemies they denounce. In its stalinoid perversion, communism is an ideology which serves the state. In its quirky new economic version, this communist rhetoric of the good life, with pop-up toasters for all, serves capitalism. The demonology of stalinism naturally picked on the market as the source of all evil, for the market is ideologically linked to capital. Economism as an ideology can think of nothing more original to do than turn this on its head and denounce regulation. Regulation is the business of the state. Both these ideologies concur in claiming to be on the side of us poor folk with neither state power nor the money power to stand by us, when in reality neither is in our interests at all. This, after all, is what communist ideology is for: to delude otherwise sensible people into thinking that all is well, that acquiescing with the dominant view of things will benefit us and not just the powers that be. The communist promise either way is a good life of more and better things for us to buy and have.

Both the economists and the communists are prepared to make great sacrifices to reach this promised land. They are further prepared to sacrifice us. We all have to chip in for the good of production, be it for the five-year plan or micro-reform. Both want to abolish any complex and messy social relations, cultural hang-overs from the past, safeguards of traditional patterns of life, all in the name of a rational model of the future, the future of the plan or the market — take your pick.

Both have a vision of communist man. The stalinists saw him as a collective entity, a model of perfect altruism. The Herald's economists have completely flipped this on its ear. Their model of communist man is a pure atom of individualism, motivated only by self interest. Whether he be homo economicus or homo faber, this model is a reductive one. On the one-dimensional model of man, economists and stalinists build a one-dimensional model of the good life. As we well know, therein lies its terror. The dark satanic mills of old laissez faire England could be found just as readily in Stalin's Russia. Needless to say, there is no place for minority cultures in this vision splendid. All will be reduced to equal but opposite norms.

Lest one become critical of these high minded ideals, both stalinists and walshist economists have a
Confused by Computers? — Baffled by Bytes? — Mystified by Megahertz?

Now’s your chance to change all that

The Sydney New Left Party is offering you a rare opportunity to get professional computer training at a very affordable price. Starting in 1991, we will run introductory classes in computing, specially tailored to the needs of ordinary users, particularly those in campaigning and voluntary groups who don’t have much money.

Whether you’re completely new to computers or you already know a bit and want to find out more, these classes will help you to take control of your computer and get the most from it.

For more details write to: NLP (Computer Training), Box 19, Trades Hall, Goulburn St, Sydney 2000. or ring (02) 267 6820 during office hours.