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*Socialism and the Re-making of Man: A Far Cry?
Yet the Prime Proud Quest*

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Communist Leader

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A Far Cry? Yet the Prime Proud Quest***

It is a pleasure to respond to an invitation I just could not decline. Puran Chand Joshi, notable in our time, was to me a dear friend through the ups and downs of our life in the Communist movement. I could also not escape Professor Panikkar's kindly summons since I had assisted at the birth of this University, whose first Vice-Chancellor, my friend since 1930 in Oxford, G. Parthasarathi, died the other day—a wrench that hurts still.

Two disparate personalities—P.C. Joshi, unusually sensitive for a 'professional' politician, and Muzaffar Ahmad, staunchest among our Communist pioneers—helped me most to find my feet in the party where, in spite of many unhappinesses, I have had my being for some sixty years. I can reminisce over PCJ's experience of 'democratic centralism', unexceptionable in theory but in practice sometimes damaging to its aims, as Irfan Habib and Ashok Mitra (in whose eminence I rejoice, being almost in *loco parentis*) have noted from this podium. In early 1948, breaking an undeclared quarantine in party headquarters, I had seen a shattered PCJ in an agony of 'self-criticism'. In February–March 1948 at the 2nd Party Congress in Calcutta I watched his pitiful 'confession' of political error which, even as I agreed with the then party 'line', filled me with a certain dismay. In a perpetual 'war' with the class enemy, discipline—even on occasion 'regimentation' (a bad word)—was obligatory, but there should be no forgetting Marx's humane vision of 'the Party in the grand historical sense of the term' (cf. letter to the writer Freiligrath, Feb. 29, 1860). Hindsight has taught that the 1948 slogan: '*Yeh Azadi Jhooti Hai*' ('this freedom is a fake') was correct and at the same time incorrect, but dialectical understanding was beyond us. B.T. Ranadive was not too far wrong, inveighing against PCJ's alleged view of the Party as 'a happy family' while it was, BTR stressed, 'a fighting revolutionary

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organization', but it was very unfair to PCJ and to the prevailing ambience. I am unhappy it hurt PCJ, disorienting him for quite some time though he persistently served the cause till his last breath. A certain pathos pertains thus to the life of this brilliant person, youngest of the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33), who could not emerge to heights he might have scaled. The French philosopher Merleau-Ponty once gibed that Communism demanded '*un oui trop massif et charnel*' ('a "yes" to massive and heartfelt'), perhaps with a little envy at its entrancing call to dedication. Marxism, being human, cannot be without taint and propensity to pitfalls, but, proudly, the universe is its province, its *weltanschauung* all-embracing. Firm in its basic tenets and flexible on a principled basis, while facing problems and predicaments thrown up by History's 'cunning' (in Marx's sense), Communism bent on changing our world has faced challenges over the last 150 years, encountering defeats but shaking the earth, as it were, and 'storming the heavens'—Great October (1917), the seven Soviet decades, the monumental victory over fascism (1945) that had been fostered and fed by 'democracy'—mouthing imperialism, the 40-year phenomenon after 1945 of one-third of the globe run on the lines of the rather infelicitously termed 'real, existing socialism'. Expectations thus arose of facile advance towards world liberation, darkly shrouded at the moment and nearly shattered by Counter-Revolution, *no less*, with a big C. This is an eclipse, necessarily short-lived, but one cannot be sure how long and excruciating the interval would be.

Like so many others, I have felt flabbergasted (*bouleverse* as the French would put it) by the events of 1987-89 Mikhail Gorbachov's initially innocuous call for 'perestroika', 'glasnost' etc. and with sly demagoguery, 'for Socialism, More Socialism, Always Socialism', hiding with a sort of jargon-free, if garrulous elegance, the vile aim of 'contriving' the 'annihilation' of socialism (as Fidel Castro has put it). The cat came out of the bag when in August, 1991, after a dubious 'coup', Gorbachov was outplayed by Boris Yeltsin and no longer needed by 'western' patrons who had amply rewarded his treachery and found a more malleable villain. In a book *The August Coup* (HarperCollins, 1991) Gorbachov solemnly solaced himself: 'I made my choice long ago. . . My mission is fulfilled.' It is noxious to recall such calumny and see how the Soviets' epic effort for 'the remaking of man' as the main aim of socialism has faltered and failed. In terms of real life, it was not implausible, though by no means desirable, for a Gorbachov to have climbed the political ladder, but what must have come over Lenin's Party that lumbering louts like Yeltsin could be in its Politburo, with countless others doubtless in tow! How grievous has been this human failure—and how initiated and extended in the Soviet Party with 19 million members, it is difficult to imagine!

This ugly phenomenon must be rectified in spite of deterioration having gone such lengths that there is no dearth even of communists admiring the global consequences of the repudiation of Marxism-Leninism. Sanitised, as it were, by what someone once described as 'the dreary drip of democratic drivel', their idea seems to be that 'there is no alternative' to the restoration of the detested thralldom of Capital—'TINA' being the cry which the U.S. Professor R.M. Sweezy has denounced so much more strongly than communist parties almost all over the place. This disastrous disavowal of Stalin's long-unheeded warning about intensification of class struggle with the advance of socialism and this stupid disregard of Mao's perennially precious instruction: 'Never forget the class struggle', must be shed or not only the struggle for socialism but a credibly human society would be soon a lost cause.

The price will have to be paid for deterioration, not only in the former 'socialist' countries but in the entire movement that cannot plead having been unaware when its integrity was being violated over the years, stealthily but badly enough. Allergy towards ideology, erosion, even repudiation of proletarian internationalism, growing illiteracy in Marxism in the leading ranks, indifference towards revolutionary ethics, minimisation of the strength and guile of the class enemy, growing contentment with lollipops from 'democracy's electoral confectionery', inability to sense and to repair breaches in the link with ever-suffering masses, etc. represent the cumulative causation of the debacle whose foul shadow hovers heavy over our good earth. History does nothing; it has no obligation to help our wish-fulfilment; it is man, proud man who has to act and shape his destiny. Our moral-political stagnation, our acquiescence in wrong-doing, our forgetfulness that we have to change ourselves before we can change the world—all this and more has led to the crisis that plagues civilization.

A typical academic, with somehow a radical reputation, Fred Halliday who teaches in London rejoiced in a *Mainstream* (Delhi) article (Jan. 8, 1994) that 'communist states had been returned, chastened and re-subjugated, like escaped labourers to their place in the international capitalist hierarchy'. For good measure he gloated that 'the historic importance of 1989' was that 'the period that began with the French Revolution in 1789' had ended! How like Margaret Thatcher's callow boast in Paris at the 200th anniversary (July 14, 1989) that Magna Carta and all that were a lot more vital to humanity than the French Revolution—a boast that the then President Mitterand, his proud chin visibly receding, had to stomach! Shades of Charles James Fox in the House of Commons over 200 years ago hailing the Fall of the Bastille: 'How much the greatest even in the history of the world and how much the best!' However, Great October (1917) and

the French Revolution (1789) have written as with a sun-beam in the rolls of history which nothing can erase. Meanwhile, for the time being, Counter-Revolution has come to prevail and the stink rises from ex-socialist states. Didn't Shakespeare warn : ' Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds'.

It is a fact of life that a new 'corruptalism' operated by mafia malignity seems to be the world norm. The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. The wages of our failure have been, for how long one does not know, the death of our dreams. I say this in sorrow and humility for as a partisan for years, I must share, however minutely, in our movement's historic guilt.

Jawaharlal Nehru once wrote in his 'Autobiography' (1938) that communists had a knack of 'irritating others' but he envied their sense, like Lenin's, more or less, of being 'in the stream of history'. In late 1952 that fine British Communist, Harry Pollitt warmed our hearts by averring: 'As sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, socialism will come everywhere'. The alluring assurance that 'the historical locomotive' would reach us to our goal had its dangers and long ago Lenin warned Plekhanov against the illusion that things were pre-determined. 'The historical locomotive' could only move if there was varied, exacting and prolonged human activity. Our movement still pays, with compound interest, for the complacency thus generated, 'stagnation' having been a feature not only in Brezhnev's USSR but in various forms and shapes almost everywhere. One wonders if the rot could not be traced to the 1943 self-dissolution of the Communist International, prompted by perhaps ineluctable contemporary needs but contributing to a kind of slackness and an invitation to Yugoslav and often types of freelancing.

No conscientious person becomes a Communist *because* of a calculation that it is sure of success. He or she is moved by the sight of misery, of poverty in the midst of plenty, of 'the shame, the filth, the inhumanity' (Marx) of capitalism. It is his experience, his emotion and his reason that leads him to his belief. It is a process very unlike the case of, say, Arthur Koestler whose dalliance with Communism had followed a 'conversion' he himself described: 'The new light seems to pour from all directions across the skull; the whole universe falls into a pattern like the stray pieces of a jig-saw puzzle assembled by magic at one stroke.' This is wretched rigmarola and no wonder Koestler's 'God' 'failed' soon. No wonder he went ahead, delightedly affirming that while capitalism was a minor malady like measles, Communism was like concern—this in an issue of the U.S. 'Collier's Magazine' in early 1950, featuring the theme of an imaginary-victorious American war on the USSR! Intellectuals anticipating fairly 'instant' success of revolution sink soon into a bored, grey, dreary disillusion driving the likes, say, of Stephen Spender to retreat to a sort of superior stupor. How fine, in contrast, is the great African-American W.E.B. du Bois'

affirmation that 'the only possible death is to lose faith in the truth of socialism, because it comes slowly, because Time is long'.

One learns too late how harmful, for example, was Khrushachov's boast that in fifteen years the USSR could overtake the U.S. (We'll bury you). Even Mao-Tse-Tung, in a rare whimsy, once said that China's 'Great Leap Forward' would in a decade establish economic superiority over Britain. Mao, always zealous for rapid, yet basic transformation, was of a different mould. He knew what Stalin meant when in *Foundations of Leninism* (1925) he had called for combination of Soviet spirit with American—yes, *American* efficiency. Mao had the philosophic patience that old civilizations foster and so could say that Socialism might take centuries, even thousands of years. Once, reportedly, he thought aloud that the Sino-Soviet tussle would last 10,000 years, but when he saw the crushed visage of comrades around, he observed that Kosygin, the Soviet spokesman had argued so well that he would knock off one thousand years! Thoughts of easy and early triumph have enfeebled socialism even as its enemies ceaselessly sharpened their claws.

Far more vile than we imagined, the world bourgeoisie, whatever their internecine dissensions, never forgot their failure to strangulate the infant Soviets, never forgot the Soviet victory over fascism in spite of 'democratic guile, never forgave the post-World War II stir for freedom in many continents, never relented in the *Delenda est Carthago* resolve to destroy the 'focus of evil', the Soviet Union, never stopped lulling Socialism into 'democratic' coma. While Stalin's warnings were disregarded, except in China, even the reputed R.P. Dutt, whom I hold in high respect, could indulge in fancies as around 1961 when, he wrote in *Labour Monthly* that if one-sixth of the world could go the socialist way a hundred years after Marx's birth (1818), perhaps in a hundred years after Marx's death (1883) much more than a third of the world, already practising 'real, existing socialism, 'would find itself over much of our earth (perhaps even three-fourths, as a reputed analyst, Russell Warren Howe wrote some years later). Enemies of Socialism were more realistic. In 1980, the infamous ex-US President Nixon published a book *The Real War*, emphasising the need of ceaseless readiness to destroy the Soviets who could, he wrote, win the global contest 'even without war' if capitalism's vigilance failed. To be 'caught unawares' is for us no plea, for nothing fails like failure, and there can be no denying U.S. Secretary of State, Warren Christopher's recent boast, without diplomatic hush-hush, that the dismantlement of the USSR was the U.S.'s doing. How to get out of the mess should be the predominant concern for the socialist movement which, unhappily, is still dizzied and debilitated by 'democratic' delusions.

It so happens that I was in the Kremlin meeting (Nov. 1987) as a delegate from India when Gorbachov gave his report, and disturbed by

the tenor of things I spoke to Oliver Tambo and some others, and my celebrated South African friend advised : 'Comrade, we have to live with all this!' My misgivings increased with our movement's unconcern over emerging Counter-Revolution's manoeuvres (*pace Moscow News, New Times* etc.) that amounted to abject 'surrender without battle' and 'abandonment of positions already occupied', that Marx had warned against. This has gone on so that even in 1991 the late Joe Slovo, estimable as white man who had led the Communist Party of South Africa, chose to write that 'Socialism produced a Stalin and a Ceausescu but it also produced Lenin and (believe it or not!) Gorbachov'. This was found worthy of reproduction in 1995 without comment in the Party press and by 'Left' periodicals (e.g. *Mainstream* 28 Jan. 1995).

The Soviet state has been the 'pilot project' launched with 'the first 100 million people' of our planet, Kautsky whom Lenin called 'the renegade' denounced it as 'Tartar Socialism', while Rosa Luxemburg, unafraid of even criticising Lenin, snapped back that if the Soviets failed it would be the doing of German Social Democracy. In keeping with its tradition since Stuttgart (1907) where our Madame Cama discovered European Socialism's horror of colonial liberation, the Weimar Republic (1918), 'the freest in the world', turned out to be what it did. Communists may have been at fault but Social Democracy, over the years, has behaved so that Stalin's angry outburst (1924) about its being 'a moderate wing of fascism' finds warrant. The once expected progress in advanced countries from 'democracy' to Socialism, however, did not happen, thus hindering the other process started by Great October, in retarded conditions, from an unavoidably authoritarian 'socialism' to democracy. Incidentally, in India, (1938) on the occasion of Marx's death centenary, the Socialist International's sole representative, my colourful friend George Fernandes, chose to reprint in his *The Other Way* an old Lohia article (1948) describing Communism as 'a conspiracy of Europe against Asia'.

If 'muzhik' Russia could rise to be a colossus, in spite of flaws in 'the steel that was tempered' by Revolution, if in recent decades, little Hungary, described in 1938 to be 'the land of three million beggars', could be transformed—yes, yes, yes, there had been a transformation even under handicapped socialism!—what a picture could emerge if Social Democracy had meant business in France, Britain, etc? The 'West' opted otherwise and so to-day neo-imperialism reincarnates fascism with a 'liberal', 'globalist' mask.

Not just allergy but disdain for Communism has, exceptions apart, haunted Social Democracy, evoking an unfortunate reciprocation. Even a generous, un-labeled Isaac Deutscher, aware of Great October's historic glory but peeved with his discovery that there was in Soviet life the co-existence of the "Promethean hero and the acquiescent slave", said in his Cambridge lectures on the Russian Revolution (1967)

that he yearned for Socialism purged of its dross—in unusual ardour, quoting Shelley, 'to hope till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates'. All this has a sublime sound but it turns ridiculous with ex-Communists (always more vitriolic than anti-communists!) like Jean Elleinstein (in books like his *The Stalin Phenomenon*, 1978) rules China and India out of civilised reckoning and after denouncing the USSR proclaims (p. 218): 'It now remains for us to build socialism on the basis of a developed western capitalist economy.' Perhaps one should say 'Amen!', but what made these worthies show no signs of doing the job which was left to hellishly harassed and superiorly reprobated, 'semi-Asiatic' communists as the the only force answerable to civilization?

All revolutions—from France and Russia to Vietnam and Cuba have thrown up hordes of emigres, but deadlier has been the so-called 'internal emigration' from Marxism. Earl Browder with his *Teheran* (1944), Santiago Carrillo with *Euro-Communism*, (1978) etc. high-ranking witnesses before U.S. Congressional Committees claiming from the early eighties how Italian communists were as good as in their bag and the more dour French might follow suit—all this shows only the tip of an iceberg. How piteous is France today, where Marxism was once the *lingua franca* of ideological discourse, with affluence and the arrogance thus begotten, parading a strange chauvinism that is betrayal of the best in her past! In 1956 the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, revealing uglinesses in Soviet reality, made formulations that, though good in parts, were damaging to the roots of revolutionary belief and caused a schism debilitating the world struggle. People's China had responded then with its 'Long Live Leninism!' calls, but except for Togliatti, who died soon after, the movement's response was tepid and worse. Confabulations of 'Twelve' (1957) and the 'Eighty-one' (1961) parties were insipid, the heart having gone out of the movement. The snapping of Sino-Soviet friendship after 1958, caused by insensitivity on the Soviet side and China's injured pride on the other made China determined to 'go it alone' and emerge, as she did, as a powerful even often puzzling though path-breaker for Socialism. Meanwhile, with the USSR and China, unable like two huge porcupines to hug each other, international tasks were shelved; the splendid communist-led upsurge in south-east Asia fumbled and fell, the ghoulish massacre (1965–67) of millions in Indonesia where communism had spread roots could take place and by clever 'democratic' propaganda now wiped out even of Asian memory. Perhaps what we learn from history is that we do not learn from history.

However, our enemies today have made us swallow tales that debase and deny the positive side of the seven Soviet decades and falsifications of China or Vietnam or Cuba etc. pass muster. Denigration of the Soviet role in the defeat of fascism (1941–45) and

resistance subsequently to the vilenesses of neo-colonialism has been thrust down our throats. Indira Gandhi—(of all people!) spoke in her 1983 Prebisch Lecture in Belgrade about the likes of us in the deprived world being 'step-children of the Industrial Revolution' (a phrase Marx would have liked), bound for ever to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, 'the wretched of the earth'. I wish I could cite some contemporary and comparable communist wisdom.

How I wish also that in these days of 'globalist' near-frenzy, of pragmatist pilgrimages for foreign investment and five-star bonanzas, there were a few voices at least echoing Gandhi's statement in Court (March 1922)—'The miserable little comforts of the *town-dwellers* [i.e. bourgeoisie] in India represent the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, the profits and the brokerage being sucked from the masses. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dwellers in India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unparalleled in history'.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, believers in 'the inevitability of gradualness', could write the two-volume classic, *Soviet Communism, a New Civilization* (1st edition 1935), affirming that 'In Place of Profit' 'The Good Life' could, on Soviet evidence, be also organised elsewhere. On the basis of massive evidence, they described a unique crusade for 'the Re-Making of Man'. They were not hesitant to stress shortcomings as in the chapter on 'The disease of Orthodoxy', even 'The Cult of Science'. The revised edition of 1941 carried Beatrice Webb's long introduction answering critics and affirming that the Soviets were 'the world's most inclusive and equalized democracy'. No G.E.D. after that, but such things are obliterated just as the Paris Commune (1871) was from syllabi in our time.

The Communist John Reed's 'Ten Days that Shock the Wworld', contemporaneous account of Great October, is today just a collector's item. His fellow-American Walter Duranty's 'Russia Reported 1923-34' (1935) interests nobody though it was a liberal correspondent's ringside view as printed in the *New York Times*. Even the Webbs, lionised as among the world's foremost sociological scholars, were pooh-poohed by the *London Times* as admirers of 'a society of the bee', and are perhaps fashionably disregarded as doddering old folk. Who cares for David Low's delicious *Russian Sketch-book*, with commentary by the famous 'liberal' editor Kingsley Martin? The Irish Playwright Sean O'Casey's once celebrated observation that he was devoted to the Soviet Union because, one, it had the finest collection anywhere of modern French painting, and two, it looked after its women and children better than any country in the world will perhaps, produce superior smirks. Edmund Wilson's remark in 1937, the year of the Treason trials, that in Moscow he felt in 'the world's moral summit' will be thought incredible. The Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, the

very Rev. Hewlett Johnson's charming classic, *The Socialist Sixth of the Earth*, has a chapter entitled, 'Love is the Fulfilling of the Law' as descriptive of the new society. It will annoy, even astound only those who do not know or care for the dialogue between Religion and Marxism, the phenomenon that was Pope John XXII, the fact, for instance, that fascists in Salvador killed Cardinal Romero on his own cathedral steps, that in Nicaragua's Sandinista government (dubbed 'Stalinist' by *N.Y. Times*) there was Father d'Escoto (whom I discovered to my delight in Moscow) a Catholic priest as Foreign minister. That Dialogue has not been resumed even though one finds good practising Christians in the World Council of Churches formulating the thought in relation to recent 'globalisation' gimmicks that 'growth', 'jobless growth', 'growth for growth's sake', unrelated to a better life for man is intolerable, such growth being 'in the nature only of cancer cells'.

In the '70s there was much glib talk on the 'New Soviet Man' that is better forgotten. There can be no devaluation however, of such things as Sergei Eisenstein's view (1925) of the impact of Revolution: 'I turned into 'We', and in this 'We', there was a place for me'. Asked by an American interlocutor if in the Vnoi people laughed at all, that great maker of grim revolutionary films replied: 'Oh yes, of course, they will, when I tell them about you'.

One Paul Hollander published in 1979 a fat volume *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba* socialist (Oxford University Press) to prove that countries managed by overwhelming hospitality to procure effusive praise from some of the great ones of our earth. Few would say that Jawaharlal Nehru did not have his wits about him, but even as India's Prime Minister, in the summer of 1955 after a three-week visit he wrote that he was 'leaving (in the USSR) a part of his heart'. Typically, the *New York Times* editorial gibed that Jawaharlal had left 'part of his brain there also'.

For myself, during many visits between 1954 and 1987, I have witnessed the miracle of change, especially in Soviet Asia (excluded by Gorbachov from his concept of 'our common European homeland'). I cannot forget, for example, the Firdausi National Library of Tajikistan whose woman director told me how Russian women had worked for emancipation, braving death as they hid in Tajik homes. I learnt later that her own mother had been the first to throw off the horse-hair veil (*paranjah*) one had to wear or be stoned to death. I cannot forget Bibi Palmanova, Turkmenia's education minister whom I came to know well—the lone survivor in a family of fourteen brothers and sisters who died in infancy during the bad old days. Dzheren Mamedova, another Turkmen poet and minister, was born in a family of thirteen children, nine dying early and one daughter cast away to perish in the rocks. Maybe the Soviet nationalities policy was not as good as once

thought to be by friend and foe, but such things—and so much more—I cannot push out of my thoughts.

I remember reports of a Vietnan Party Congress (1966) where Secretary Le Duan said he had two motherlands, his own Vietnam and the USSR which, he said, had shared 'rice and water' to help achieve Vietnam's freedom. I recall Soviet citizen's pride over comradesly help to Vietnam, Cuba, Mongolia, Angola etc. as well as to East European States with higher standards of living. This pride I noticed to be nearly gone during my visits in 1983 and 1987 and the fear entered my mind that the party, mammoth-sized and infected by the craze for consumerism spreading in the age of electronics, was failing its Marx-given role of 'the social intellect, the social heart and the conscience of its time'. Thus a Yeltsin, unaware that not affluence but the non-exploitative society was the aim, needed one look at a western department store to sing the virtues of capitalism. Thus, the internationally celebrated Kirghiz writer, Chinghiz Aitmatov, hailing from a country doomed to death under the Czar, yet under socialism throwing off illiteracy and celebrating Shakespeare's 400th anniversary better than in Britain, said once that he would glorify great October 'to his dying day', but in 1988-89, under the Gorbachov spell, saw Sweden and felt it was the model to follow—a totally unhistorical statement forgetful of the gap in time that the Asian Soviets had to cover. Not to speak of intellectual sophistication, 'the new Soviet man' seemed to lack the sense of history that life under socialism should have instilled. This is not, of course, to forget the magnificent Soviet feats, among them the epic victory in the antifascist war and path-breaking sorties into space by Yuri Gagarin and Valentina Terashkova.

World War II brought out the best in Soviet man schooled in Socialism. Ilya Ehrenburg reported from the front around 1942 that ferocious fascist atrocity had made 'coals of revenge glow in the Soviet heart' but a firm 'No' to reprisals came from the Party. Thus, in the War Memorial in Berlin the dominating architecture is that of a Red Armyman cradling in his arms a German baby he had saved from being crushed by tanks (this had actually happened). How beautiful was Konstantin Simonov, poet and war correspondent, averring 'there is no alien grief', for Socialism aims to wipe tears of sorrow from *all* eyes, for we are 'members of one another'. This scriptural expression reminds me of the Hungarian Janes Kadar's joke at a Party Congress in 1982 or so, that the Ten Commandments, 'the earliest party manifesto', were still disregarded after 3000 years, but he hoped the Communist Manifesto of 1848 would be followed up at a speedier rate.

That hope seems crushed, with 'the end of ideology', 'the end of History', globalisation of the economy guaranteeing an eternal empire of greed and exploitation. What C. Wright Mills wrote long ago about 'money as the one unambiguous criterion of success, the sovereign

American virtue' is the world's new motto. Nobody worries if a very few live in more than Babylonian luxury, a sizable number wallow in the callous comfort of 'conspicuous consumption', while the overwhelming majority are degraded by deprivation, their children driven to licking throw-away icecream cups in railway stations (a sight that stirs nobody in India). It is no pleasure to know that in Washington infant mortality is higher than in Kerala, in Harlem more than in Bagladesh. But it should be infuriating that 5000 children die in India every day from malnutrition in spite of bumper food crops, that over the last 30 years the gap between the top 20 per cent and the bottom 20 per cent of the world's population has doubled, that about two of the world's 5.7 billion have no access to electric power, let alone the latest lap-top computer!

Meanwhile, once strident calls for a new International Economic order have ceased, the Manmohan Singhs and 'Left' economists jubilating over 'globalism'. Gone with the wind also are calls for a New International Information Order, journalists once effusive over Afghanistan's *Saur* republic, the *Saharwi* resurgence etc. having found—on how—juicy jobs like reporting Socialism's debacle. The result is that no 'democratic' mouse squeaks about Kabul, and such things as the calumny that is Bosnia, where democracy's triumph has released the wickedest forces, cruelties continue for years, leading especially to agony in the world's one-billion Muslim hearts (though the second largest Muslim-populated country India seems indifferent, perhaps because the West fears, with the French thinker Monnerot that 'communism is the Islam of the 20th century') the world has had a surfeit of what Jean-Paul Sartre once said about 'the strip-tease of European humanism', but who cares for humanism (which Marx once equated with communism) in these heady days of 'globalist' gratification.

It is no pleasure to cite the words of one of the U.S.'s most powerful men, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives (cf. *Time*, Nov. 21, 1994) about his own country: 'It is impossible to maintain civilization with 12-year-olds having babies, 15-year-olds killing each other, 17-year-olds dying of "aids", and 18-year-olds receiving diplomas they cannot read'. The aptly named Newt's bonafides are suspect, but this picture of perversion and amorality threatens to engulf the earth in the grip of greed. Must our energies be spent in pettifogging pursuit for a fraction of political power, to emerge marginally a little more than what Jawaharlal in 1946 twitted Communists for being, namely, 'a ginger group'? Do we remember Rabindranath Tagore's last message (July 1941) castigating the West for betraying its best traditions and hoping that perhaps the light would come again from the East? (cf. Tagore's 'The Crisis of Civilization').

and imaginary appetites' bred by 'private property that does not know how to change cruder need into human need.' We in India seem to have no thoughts about 'intermediate technology', the 'small is beautiful' idea, the linking of socialism with the best in *our* own past. Even Gorbachov's predecessor Andropov had said in 1985 that 'material boons must increase but they should not dominate man, for it is man's spiritual wealth that is truly boundless'. To pursue the gospel of money, as 'democracy's pre-conditions, is to give up all hope for a truly human advance. That would be the end of History with a shimper unworthy of *homo sapiens*'.

In Vol. I of *Capital*, at the end of the historical chapter Marx cites one Augier's words: 'when money comes into the world it has a congenital blood-stain on its cheek', He (Marx) adds that when Capital emerges, 'it drips with blood and dirt from every pore in every limb'. How this is in tune with the Mahabharata's *Shantiparva* when Bhishma, wisdom's epitome, tells us: *Na Chhitva paramarmani, na kritva Karma dushkaram / Na hatva matsyaghatiyam / prapnoti mahateem shriyam*'. ('You cannot achieve great wealth / Big Money / unless you tear the hearts of others, unless you commit wrongs, unless you can kill like the fisherman kills his prey').

Forgive me this long tirade—a cry from the heart of one who wishes, following W.B. Yeats, that 'I may seem / though I die old / A foolish, passionate man'. But do not even the wise among us look around and ask what long ago Wilfrid Owen had said: 'Was it for this / The clay grew tall? / O, what made fatuous sunbeams toil / To break earth's sleep at all?' Ah, I better shed this Celto-Bengali mood but say quietly that I stay impenitent in my socialist faith, in my confidence that if only little candles can be lit, the sky will once again be aflame. And to make you laugh and forgive my anecdotage, let me say like Graham Greene (whom I admire) telling Cuba's paper *Granma* around 1982, that if driven to it, It would spend my last days rather in Gulag than in California'.