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**DRI Seminar
Papers on
'The October
Revolution &
Its Impact on
World
Civilisation'**

Journal of Deendayal Research Institute



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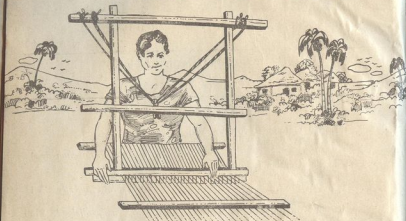
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Dear Reader :

Namaste ! And a Happy Varsha Pratipada to you!

Deendayal Research Institute broke new ground when, on Feb. 13-14, it held a seminar on the 'Impact of Russian Revolution on World Civilization'. The CPI deputed two of its seniors - Shri A.B. Bardhan and Shri Subrata Banerjee. Shri E.M.S. Namboodiripad could not attend, but he sent us a Paper. Also present was BJP's Dr. Murlī Manohar Joshi.

We had leading academicians like Prof. Bimal Prasad, Prof. M.L. Sondhi, Dr. Jayashekar and Prof. Intiaz Ahmed (all of JNU). There was Dr. Ashok Modak of the Bombay University Centre of Soviet Studies, Pradeep Bose of the Indian Centre for Democratic Socialism, Shri Nagarajan editor 'Red Star' and Shri Bhanu Pratap Shukla, editor 'Panchjanya'. We also had the privilege of having Dr. J.D. Sethi, former member of Planning Commission, and Shri Inder Gujral, our former envoy in Russia. From the DRI, we were Sarva Shri Nana Deshmukh, Sailen Ghosh, Mahesh Sharma, Dr. Bharadwaj and Malkani.

The Papers received in time were circulated in advance. Shri Namboodiripad felt strongly enough about Malkani's Paper to send us a "Supplementary Paper". Prof. M.S. Agwani, Vice-Chancellor, JNU, on the other hand, found it "excellent"—and wished he could join us, but for the Commonwealth Universities meet in Australia on the same dates.

We had a total of four sessions. We started with an "Overview" of the Russian Revolution. The discussion was led by Shri Sailen Ghosh. The afternoon session dealt with the Impact of Russian Revolution on World Politics. Discussion was initiated by Prof. Sondhi. The following day we discussed the Revolution's Impact on World Economy, with Shri Subrata Banerjee initiating the discussion. At this stage Dr. Sethi made a masterly analysis of capitalist and communist theory and practice. The concluding session dealt with the Impact of Russian Revolution on 'Life and Culture—in Russia and Abroad'. On this occasion Shri Gujral gave a very perceptive account of life and culture in the USSR.

The Papers are so valuable, that we are publishing them all in this volume of 'Manthan'. The proceedings of the seminar were, if anything, even more valuable. These we expect to carry in the next issue of 'Manthan'. Hopefully, both, the Papers and the Proceedings, will be published in book form before long.

Readers will find all the material very educative and enlightening and, if I may say so, in parts, even entertaining. Rarely has so much information, analysis, assessment and insight been contained in so few pages !

Yours sincerely,
'M'.

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The October Revolution And A New World Political Order

By : A.B. BARDHAN

Secretary, National Council, Communist Party of India

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION was a turning point in world history. It heralded a new epoch. Seventy years of the Revolution have shown that the Soviet Union and socialism are decisively shaping and influencing international relations, and contributing in changing the political physiognomy of the world. The time, when a few metropolitan countries ruled over scores of colonies, where a handful of imperialist powers determined the fate of mankind, has gone, never to return. The time, when a minority of exploiting classes monopolised the resources and means of production and exploited the overwhelming majority of people, has begun to change.

True, the problems of backwardness, poverty, illiteracy and disease persist for the vast masses in many countries. Economic and social inequality continue to haunt people. The world's South lags far behind the world's North. Nevertheless, it is changing, and changing for the better. And if one event in human history has, more than anything, stimulated these changes, it is the October Revolution. Friends, and even the most inveterate foes, agree on this point, though from different angles. The October Revolution and the victorious ideology of Marxism-Leninism were the catalysts for the emergence and growth of communist parties and the working class movement in all countries. Its success inspired and invigorated the national liberation struggles in the colonies. Today, the World Communist Movement, together with the national liberation movement, and the working class movement in all countries, are the vital forces striving for peace and social progress.

For the first time in world history, the October Revolution made the common people, its makers, the active subject and not the passive object of their destiny. Hitherto, potentates or an exploiting minority (feudal chieftains or the bourgeoisie and its petty bourgeois camp-followers), manipulated the masses, brought political changes and even 'revolutionary' upheavals. But all this only served their narrow ends. Occasionally, even this impelled forward the cause of freedom and human progress. But it was the October Revolution which made the people themselves, the architects of their life and future.

It graphically demonstrated that the working class in close alliance with the peasantry and the intelligentsia can break the hold of the capitalist and feudal classes, and take the reins of power in a vast country. Despite heavy and insuperable odds, despite imperialist blockade, intervention and a civil war, the proletarian power could raise a most backward country literally by the bootstraps, and make it into a powerful

industrially advanced country, and end poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. The economic might of socialism, and the political and moral unity forged, enabled this country to completely smash the fascist aggressors. It suffered unheard of devastation and sacrificed 20 million dead. And yet, within a short period, it could rebuild the country from the ashes, and become the first to blaze the trail to outer space.

All this has inspired the working people in several countries to organise, and basing themselves on their specific situation and treading their own path, to end the power of the exploiters on their territories. A socialist system embracing a score of countries in several continents and spread over a third of the world, has come into being. It exercises a powerful influence over world politics and economics.

Lenin's call for uniting the Socialist Revolution with the National Liberation Movement in one front of struggle against imperialism, his renunciation of Czarist annexations and conferment of the right of self-determination on countries groaning under Czarist subjugation, the radical transformation literally spanning centuries of development that the Revolution brought about in the Asian backwaters, thereby showing that Bolshevik words are matched by Bolshevik deeds, gave an impetus to the freedom struggle in all colonial countries. It is worthwhile noting how national leaders reacted to the October Revolution and drew lessons from it.

Despite the strictest censorship, and little news trickling through, Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal, Jawaharlal Nehru as well as newspapers and magazines that moulded people's thoughts like Kesari, Amrit Bazar Patrika, Tribune, Andhra Patrika, Modern Review, and a host of others, enthusiastically hailed the October Revolution, and drew lessons from its experience. Wrote Jawaharlal, in his 'Discovery of India': "I have no doubt that the Soviet revolution had advanced society by a great leap and had lit a bright flame that could not be smothered, and that it has laid the foundation for that new civilisation towards which the world could advance."

Indian revolutionaries made hazardous journeys to Moscow, for personally imbibing the experience of the Revolution, and seeking help and guidance from it. The Congress also sent a delegation consisting of Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal, to study the Revolution at first hand. On his part, noting that 'Asia was seething with discontent and revolt' Lenin addressed a message to Indian freedom fighters in the following words: "I am glad to hear that the principles of self-determination and the liberation of oppressed nations from exploitation by foreign and native capitalists, proclaimed by the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, have met with such a ready response among progressive Indians, who are waging a heroic

fight for freedom. The working masses of Russia are following with unflagging attention the awakening of the Indian workers and peasants. The organisation and discipline of the working people and their perseverance and solidarity with the working people of the world are an earnest of ultimate success. Only when the Indian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Persian and Turkish workers and peasants join hands and march together in the common cause of liberation — only then will decisive victory over the exploiters be ensured. Long live a Free Asia."

As in India, so in China. The leader of the Chinese people, Sun Yat-sen wrote in 1924: "In this struggle (of China), I rely on your great country whose friendship and assistance may enable me to free China from the tight grip of imperialism and to restore our political and economic independence." As he lay dying, Sun Yat-sen dictated his 'Testament', in which he said: "This union of free republics is the genuine heritage left by the immortal Lenin to the world of the oppressed nations. Relying on this heritage, the peoples languishing under imperialist oppression will uphold their freedom and achieve liberation from the existing world system which has been based on slavery, wars and self-interest since ancient times."

Ho Chi Minh, the great leader of the Indo-chinese people fighting against French imperialism, testified as follows: "The October Revolution brightens like sunshine all the five continents, awakening millions of oppressed and exploited people."

We can give more examples. But this is enough for the present purpose.

The rout of fascism, mainly by the forces of the Red Army, weakened world imperialism and brought about a qualitative leap in the colonial peoples' struggle. Favourable international conditions for the collapse of the colonial system had been created by the October revolution and the victory over fascism. No longer could the colonial people be kept subjugated by force of arms. First one, and then another, and finally an avalanche of hitherto enslaved countries broke their chains and emerged as free countries. More than 100 countries awoke to freedom and independence, launched on the path of development to overcome the colonial legacy of backwardness, and subsequently joined together, along with some of the socialist countries, to build the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Soviet Union and the socialist countries extend fraternal help in building the economy of these developing countries, enabling them the better to withstand imperialist pressure, and develop their self-reliance.

The developing countries united in the NAM are struggling to end the unequal economic relations imposed on them by the developed



capitalist countries, and to restructure world economy along the lines of a New International Economic Order. This cause too enjoys the full support of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries.

In brief, the October Revolution established a living and vibrant bond uniting the Communist movement and the national liberation movement. Several newly liberated countries are openly adopting the path of socialist orientation, and proclaiming Marxism-Leninism as their guiding ideology, applied to their specific situations.

The first act of Soviet power was the Decree on Peace. It came like a breath of life to a world wearied of war. For the first time, a revolution and the state power that it had installed, firmly anchored itself to a policy of peace on earth, abandoning the old imperialist concept that 'war is a continuation of politics by other means'. The socialist system brought forth by the October Revolution, does not require unjust wars of aggression either for profits or for its aggrandisement.

From its birth, it actively championed the slogans of collective security and disarmament, even while it had to reluctantly arm itself against imperialist attacks. The concepts of collective security, regional security, equal security, nuclear and then total disarmament, mutual dialogue and non-interference, have become the rallying calls of all peace-loving forces in the world today. Foreign policies and internal policies of nations are judged today on the basis, how far they advance the cause of Peace and Disarmament.

Following the repeated peace initiatives of the Soviet Union, the year 1987 has ended with the signing of the INF Treaty. A world heavily burdened with the most dangerous weapons, and exhausted by the constant fear of living under the threat of total destruction, could welcome the New Year with a sigh of relief. For the first time in history, weapons are to be scrapped. The prospect of following this up with agreements on putting a stop to nuclear tests, on cutting down, and then totally eliminating strategic, chemical and conventional weapons has opened up. A nuclear test-free and weapon-free world at the turn of the century is no longer a distant dream. This opens up possibilities of diverting vast resources and talent for fighting poverty, disease, illiteracy, and solving the problems of food, clothing and shelter for the billions of deprived people and for utilizing the achievements of science and technology for all-round development. This is no exaggerated optimism, provided peace-loving humanity continues to move along the path initiated by the October Revolution.

For many newly liberated states, on whose territories there are several nationalities and ethnic communities, and which are moreover at different levels of development, the October Revolution has provided an

example how they can be united on the basis of equality and fraternal help. This does not imply that the example is to be copied. Of course, not! The specific situation, the historical circumstances, differ in each country. But certainly, useful lessons have been, and are being, drawn from that experience.

The building of a new society, a new socialist system following the revolution, had to proceed without any precedent, without any blueprint, so to speak. Therefore mistakes and distortions did creep in. It has been well said that only the foetus in the womb and the dead in their coffins are free from mistakes. This is not to provide an alibi for avoidable, unwarranted and even wilful blunders, which involved needless sacrifices and sufferings, and blurred the image of socialism. But the October Revolution has been the source of that undying spirit and ideology which enables its children to go back to the working people whenever in doubt or crisis. The revolution advances by constantly criticising itself. The socialist renewal that is under way, the restructuring or 'Perestroika' in economy, in social and every other sphere of life, along with the flowering of democracy and openness in society, as also the new political thinking initiated in the new world situation, has given an impetus to social progress. It has invigorated the world revolutionary processes, and shown that the revolution continues. International relations, which in the final analysis are vital for the future of the world, and for each individual country, are being reshaped on the basis of peaceful coexistence, non-interference, and the right of the people in each country to determine their future and their own social system.

We can sum up this exposition by stating that repeatedly the October Revolution and its creation, the Soviet Union, has brought succour to mankind, and shown the road to life and salvation.

First, by building a new socialist system, by inducing several countries to break away from the capitalist system and others to liberate themselves from the clutches of imperialism, by thus completely changing the balance of forces;

Second, by saving mankind from fascist slavery;

Third, by establishing historical parity in military capability, and thereby smashing the monopoly of imperialism, with which it used to blackmail the world;

Fourth, by demonstrating the force of example of socialism, and inspiring the present generation for revolutionary social change, for building a new world;

And Finally, by championing and laying the basis for world peace.

M.S. Gorbachev ended his report on the 70th Anniversary of the Revolution with justifiable optimism, when he said :

"We can see today that humanity is not really doomed to always live the way it did before October 1917. Socialism has evolved into a powerful, growing and developing reality. It is the October Revolution and socialism that show mankind the road to the future and identify the new values of truly human relations :

- collectivism instead of egoism;
 - freedom and equality instead of exploitation and oppression;
 - the true power of the people instead of the tyranny of the few;
 - the growing role of reason and humanism instead of the spontaneous and cruel play of social forces;
 - mankind's unity and peace instead of discord, strife and war.
- And then finally,

"In October 1917, we parted with the old world, rejecting it once and for all. We are moving towards a new world, the world of communism. We shall never turn off that road."

Impact on World Culture

If this is the impact of the October Revolution on World politics, what is its impact on world culture?

The Revolution was not merely the political replacement of the power of one class by that of another; it was a revolution in every sphere of society and life. Power in the hands of the proletariat and its allies created the conditions for a revolution in culture. The Revolution not only freed the masses from political and economic slavery but also from cultural slavery. The fountain-springs of culture released by the Revolution, overflowed the boundaries of the USSR.

Hitherto, culture and all the material and spiritual prerequisites for it were meant for the elite, for the privileged upper layers of society. As to the masses, they were condemned to ignorance, illiteracy and superstition. From now on, the masses themselves were to have full access to culture. As Lenin wrote :

"In the old days, human genius, the brain of man, created only to give some the benefits of technology and culture, and to deprive others of the bare necessities—education and development. From now on all the marvels of science and the gains of culture belong to the nation as a whole, and never again will man's brain and human genius be used for oppression and exploitation."

It would be wrong to take culture, its accessibility and its further development, for granted. The attitude of the exploiting minority has always been for a cultural monopoly, for restricting it to the privileged and leisured classes, even while outstanding representatives of these very classes were creating products of art, science, literature and other value that were universal in scope and would survive through the ages. Even when Britain was coming up on top of the world, and busy carrying out its self-arrogated 'civilising mission', bearing the 'white man's burden' in its far-flung colonies, the Bishop of London observed in 1830, that, "it is safest both for the government and the religion of the country to let the lower classes remain in that state of ignorance in which nature has originally placed them."

It would not be out of place to recall that our own "Chaturvarna" and 'Jati Vyavastha', sternly prohibited the lower castes from studying the 'Vedas' and other scriptures,—the fountainhead of our own culture, on pain of severe penalties. They were condemned to a state of ignorance and deprivation by birth, with the result that even today, they suffer from actual inequality, notwithstanding formal equality before the law and special constitutional provisions for their upliftment.

As to the fascist attitude towards culture, it was succinctly and forcefully expressed in the following words of Hermann Goering : "Whenever I hear the word 'culture', I reach for my gun". One remembers how books were consigned to the flames in Germany after the ascension of Hitler to power.

After October Revolution, a veritable 'cultural revolution' was unleashed in USSR. I hasten to add,—a 'cultural revolution' that has to be distinguished from the so-called cultural revolution in the 60s in China which was nothing but a *Hung Peiwung* and a 'Gang of four' assault on culture. The latter put back the clock of history in China by two or three decades, and was rightly repudiated by the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Revolution.

At the time of October Revolution, 75 per cent of the adult population in Russia was illiterate, while in most of the non-Russian regions, especially the Asian part, illiteracy was total. The Revolution addressed itself to the priority task of eradicating illiteracy and of opening the doors of knowledge for all, fully realising that never has ignorance been a force or condition of social and cultural advance. Communities with no written languages, were given scripts suited to their languages. Newspapers and books poured forth in all languages. Theatres, cinemas, libraries, museums, institutions of art and science, sprang up everywhere. Subsequently in all countries where the socialist revolution triumphed, or where, following liberation, the country adopted the path of socialist orientation, the battle

for literacy and mass popular education has been one of the first battles to be fought and won.

But of course, culture is not merely literacy or popular education, though without this foundation the edifice of culture cannot rise high. Culture is the totality of art, science, literature, education, the summation of knowledge, and in short everything which determines, moulds and permeates a community's and its individual constituents' outlook on life. It reflects their 'world outlook'.

The vigorous debate on culture initiated by the Revolution rejected the theory of two cultures,—one for the elite, and the other for the masses. Indeed, history shows that, against the feudal and bourgeois monopolisation of culture, the common people have always brought forth from their midst down-to-earth geniuses who have created the wonders of folk culture. We know for instance, about the hoary tradition and extremely rich variety of our folk culture, which has always voiced the widest range of experiences, feelings and emotions of our people, and given them expression through a profundity of forms, notes and 'ras'. The spiritual wealth of this culture has sustained our people, and kept the flame burning through the darkest days of invasion, internecine strife and subjugation.

British domination brought our people into contact with the rational, scientific ideas of the West. At the same time, it tried to stultify our cultural development under the influence of hybrid comopolitanism. To protect ourselves from this 'cultural offensive,' there was a sort of revivalism and indiscriminate glorification of the past. The pall of gloom was however torn asunder by the cultural renaissance that took shape under the powerful impact of the national liberation movement and the October Revolution.

Tagore hailed the October Revolution as the 'dawn of a new age'. Prem Chand described it as the 'Sun of a new civilisation.' He emphasised its universality in these words: "That this civilisation is incompatible with the social structure of religious ethos or environment of any particular country, would be thoroughly unfounded 'logic.'" Evidently, these arguments were trotted out from the very first day by certain elements. Those who repeat them today in several keys, are not being very original.

The cultural movement unleashed by October Revolution was a far more powerful movement in scope and effect than the Enlightenment or the Renaissance of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, or the similar Indian phenomenon of the 19th and early 20th centuries. A powerful cultural trend came into being imbued with the ideals of humanism, hatred of all forms of hypocrisy and injustice, of the right of the people to enjoy the fruits of their labour free from exploitation and bondage, and an optimis-

tic faith in the future of the people, of the revolutionary masses as the makers of their own destiny.

In the realm of world culture, there arose such colossus as Gorky, Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, Romain Rolland, Thomas Mann, Sholokhov, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Lu Hsun, Pablo Naruda, Picasso, Einstein, Chaplin, Robeson, Brecht, and our very own Tagore, Premchand, Bharati, Iqbal, Mulk Raj Anand, Krishnachand,—to name only a few. They are the standard-bearers of the cultural renaissance of the present epoch. These giants in the cultural field, found confirmation of their own humanistic outlook in the ideas of the Revolution, and drew further inspiration from it. It goes without saying that each of them gave expression to his Muse in his own way, 'through his own subjectivity', interacting with his own people and the whole of humanity. Therein lay the individual genius and uniqueness of each, and at the same time his universal appeal.

The World Progressive Writers' Movement, as also the Progressive Writers' Association and Indian Peoples' Theatre Association, are the products of this new trend. It is not the fate of these organisations that matters, but the trends they generated and strengthened, in the wide field of culture.

The October Revolution integrated the three main sources of the cultural development of this epoch:

First, it firmly rejected any nihilistic attitude towards the thousands-year old cultural heritage of Man, of each people. Lenin demanded that we regard the priceless heritage with reverence and love, for it is the product of the peoples' genius, the sum-total of their knowledge and experience. If there is a need to filter it through any strainer, we should retain everything that expresses their spiritual and moral values, that is aesthetically true, socially useful and humanistic, and reject only that which is outdated, divides the people in the present day world, and retards social progress. Addressing the Youth on 'Proletarian Culture', Lenin said:

"Unless we clearly understand that only by acquiring exact knowledge of the culture created by the whole development of mankind and that only by re-working this culture, can a proletarian culture be built, we shall not be able to solve this problem." "Millions", he said, "should assimilate everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of thought and culture."

The Revolution thus made available the classics of all early epochs to the masses, and gave folk culture its deserved place, overcoming its limitations in the matter of the most developed knowledge, techniques and

forms of art. It established the unity of form, content and technique, essential for its further development.

Second, it draws inspiration from the revolutionary struggle of the masses against injustice, oppression and inequality, for building a new socialist life. In the course of this struggle, the people themselves undergo a change and remould their outlook and attitudes.

Third, every national culture interacts with world culture, drawing from the treasure-house raised by the whole of mankind, and regarding the contribution of every people with profound respect and a deep desire to learn from all. Healthy assimilation, and not a subordination of one by the other, is the guiding spirit.

It is these principles which have given the world cultural movement an unprecedented momentum. It has drawn man from the world of illusion to the world of reality. It has given him the spiritual strength and energy to carry forward the struggle for the total emancipation of man and for putting an end to this alienation from nature and society.

A Comintern Confession

As Dimitri Manuisky, referee for German affairs in the Communist International, put it at an executive committee meeting in Moscow, on December 15, 1931 :

"Our principal enemy is not Hitler. The main enemy is rather the system, Severeing, Bruening, Hindenburg...With his (Hitler's) help, we shall first smash the Social Democratic Party, then the Bruening administration. In the present stage of development of the German revolution, Hitler is indisputably our ally "

(Page 147)

From "A Basic History of Germany"

by

Hubertus Prince zu Lowenstein

"Verlag Heinrich Scheffler, Frankfurt-on-Main

The October Revolution and the New World Economic Order

By : Subrata Banerjee
Secretary, Central Party
Office Branch, C.P.I.

WHEN DISCUSSING the impact of the October Socialist Revolution on the world, one has to bear in mind the fact that a revolution is not just an event. It is a process. It has a past, a present and a future. As Lenin put it, "The Russian Revolution is but a single link in the chain of the World Revolution." (1)

Elaborating the idea further, he said :

"The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can end only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie." (2)

The revolution in Russia on 7 November 1917 did not achieve socialism. It only opened the road to the transition from capitalism to socialism, not only in Russia, but in the whole world. It only marked the beginning of a process that still continues. Hence when we discuss the impact of the October Revolution we have to look at it in this historical perspective.

On that historic day of 7 November 1917, in what kind of a world did this revolution see the light of day? What did it have to offer to its people and to the world? It was a world in the midst of a war; a war which, by the time it ended, had caused the death of 20 million people in just four years, economic dislocation, unparalleled inflation and deterioration in the condition of the most deprived sections of the people the world over.

It was a war being fought not for the liberation of humankind from political domination and economic exploitation. On the contrary, it was a war for the domination of an increasing number of small and weak nations among a handful of powerful nations. It was a war for a redivision of the world among the international trusts, monopolies and oligarchies of the biggest capitalist power.

In 1914, when the world war began, UK, Russia, France, Germany, USA and Japan between them had colonial possessions covering 65 million sq. km., with a total population of over 523 million. Thus the world was divided between two groups of countries : those owning colonies, and the colonies and dependent countries. Seventy per cent of the population of the world belonged to oppressed nations.

At 2.35 pm. on 7 November 1917, when the attack on the Winter Palace in Petrograd was continuing, the meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies met to hear of the victory of the revolution. The meeting adopted a resolution on the immediate programme of the "workers' and peasants'" government that would be created. This programme :

- *proposed a just and democratic peace to all belligerent nations;
- *declared immediate abolition of landed proprietorship and handing over of land to the peasants;
- *institution of workers' control over production and distribution of goods;
- *establishment of national control over banks.....

Next, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies met and, in its appeal to workers, soldiers and peasants, added :

"guarantee all nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right to self-determination."

Then followed the famous Decree on Peace, the first decree of the new government. It proclaimed equality for all nations, big and small, and liberation from colonial rule. This was followed up within a few days by an appeal by the Council of Peoples' Commissars or the government of revolutionary Russia, 'To All Working Muslims of Russia and the East' :

"...Muslims of the East, Persians and the Turks, Arabs and Indians, all those whose souls and property have been traded for hundreds of years by the greedy predators of Europe, all those whose countries the plunderers, who have started the war, wish to divide up. You yourselves must be the masters of your countries. You yourselves should build your lives according to your own pattern and wishes." (3)

In January 1918, the Constituent Assembly, in a resolution on the 'Declaration on Rights of the Working and Exploited People', expressed 'its firm determination to wrest mankind from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism, which have in this most criminal of wars drenched the world in blood...', and went on to say :

"With the same end in view the Constituent Assembly insists on a complete break with the barbarous policy of bourgeois civilisation, which has built the prosperity of the exploiters belonging to a few chosen nations

on the enslavement of hundreds of millions of working people in Asia, in the colonies in general, and in the small countries." (4)

Thus, within the first few days and weeks of the revolution was projected a vision of socialist reconstruction of the whole world and for the working peoples of all nations. The measures taken were primarily economic, but politics was in command, as these measures were the result of political decisions.

It is understandable that their immediate impact was felt in Europe, from which the armies were at that very time invading Russian soil to crush the revolution. Thus peace and economic reconstruction or development became an integral part of Soviet policy from the very first day of the revolution. The revolution could not survive without peace. The revolution could not survive without the implementation of the socialist economic policies and the creation of political institutions for that purpose. This was possible only under conditions of peace. The revolution could not survive without creating conditions for the world revolution. This was possible primarily through the example of the domestic and foreign policies of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

David Lloyd George, the then prime minister of the UK and one of the leaders of the military intervention against the October Revolution, realised the vital importance of peace for the success of the October Revolution. He wrote in his memoirs :

"If Russia remains at peace, then the revolution will become one of the greatest factors in fashioning the destiny of the masses in all lands which mankind has ever witnessed or experienced." (5)

The slogan of "Peace and Bread" that came out of the October Revolution, had much wider international dimensions. This was the first time that there was a recognition, particularly in the back-ground of devastating and economically debilitating world war, of the integral link between the restructuring of national economies in the context of the restructuring of international economic relations and problems, and limiting the drive for armaments, of disarmament and the strengthening of national security.

The October Revolution for the first time recognised the fact that advance of political and military detente was necessary for the consolidation of universal peace to help normalise the world economic situation. At the same time the progress in the process of restructuring international economic relations would contribute to the deepening and extension of detente. This was also an integral part of the process of national liberation.

Treaties of Friendship

Three inter-related components of the October Revolution: peace, national and international economic restructuring and national liberation have had an immediate and continuing impact on the world. In the words of Lenin :

"Human history these days is making a momentous and most difficult turn, one might say without the least exaggeration, of immense significance for the emancipation of the world. A turn from war to peace, a turn from a war between plunderers who are sending to the shambles millions of the working and exploited people for the sake of establishing a new system of dividing the spoils created by the strongest of them, to a war of the oppressed against the oppressors for liberation from the yoke of capital, a turn from the abyss of suffering, anguish, starvation and degradation to the bright future of communist society, universal prosperity and enduring peace." (6)

This was not mere rhetoric. Alongside the economic and political reconstruction of Russia, following the defeat of the intervention and in the midst of a devastating famine, the revolutionary government began to take steps to implement its pledges to the international community. The October Revolution confronted the world with a new type of international relations, which had both political and economic dimensions.

The situation that emerged by 1920 was that the revolutions in Europe had been crushed. Thus the working class was in power in only one country surrounded by the hostile capitalist world. Had socialism triumphed simultaneously in all or the majority of the developed capitalist countries, the impact of the October Revolution would have been immediate and more widespread.

Yet the foreign policy initiatives of the Soviet Government as also its domestic efforts to build its economy in a new way had their immediate if limited impact. Even before the victory of the revolution in Russia, Lenin, at the height of the first world war, had promised that the victorious revolution would call for freedom to the colonies and to all dependent and oppressed peoples deprived of their rights.

As early as 1916, Lenin had visualised the need for 'fostering association' with nations 'more backward and oppressed than we are', to 'help them pass to the use of machinery, to the lightening of labour, to democracy, to socialism'. He considered this also essential in the interest of the revolution, as 'otherwise socialism in Europe will not be secure'. (7)

This understanding found expression in Soviet economic diplomacy from the beginning of the twenties. This has continued even today. It has been a persistent battle for limitation on, and eradication of, an

outdated exploitative colonial order from world trade and international economic relations and the introduction of new, equitable and democratic norms. New foundations were laid for trade and political relations which have served in more recent times as levers for restructuring international economic relations, including the process of economic decolonisation that has only now got under way.

This new concept of economic diplomacy was very clearly outlined by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, G.V. Chicherin in a couple of notes to J.V. Stalin, then Chairman of Nationalities Affairs, and to envoys in different countries. For instance on 22 November 1921, he wrote to Stalin :

"In the course of the present historical period, whose duration we do not know, we can be the mainstay of the struggle of the eastern states against their economic absorption by the Entente world capitalism."

A few days earlier, in another note to Stalin, Chicherin had pointed out that 'The struggle for national liberation cannot alone adequately counter the world economic laws ..' In June 1921 he wrote to the Soviet envoy in Afghanistan :

"Friendship implies mutual assistance and, in keeping with our desire to make every possible contribution to friendly Afghanistan's development and florescence, we are prepared to give it all the assistance in the peaceful area .. We tell the Afghan Government: You have one system, we have another; we have our ideals, you have yours; .. We do not interfere in your internal affairs or the independent actions of your people; we assist every development that plays a progressive role in the advancement of your people."

Similarly, in January 1922, he wrote to the Soviet envoy in Iran :

"The whole eastern policy of Russia will continue to be diametrically opposite to the eastern policy of the imperialist powers and will be directed towards independent economic and political development of the eastern peoples and will help them in that in every possible way. The people and the Soviet government of Russia deem it their role and their mission to be natural and selfless friends and allies of the peoples fighting for complete economic independence and political freedom." (8)

These were not mere pious words. In 1921, between 26 February and 16 March, the Soviet Government signed treaties of friendship with Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. Each of these treaties either helped undermine domination of imperialism over these countries or

consolidated their independence and sovereignty. At the same time, while still trying to overcome the economic dislocation caused by the interventionary war, the Soviet Government rendered financial aid to these countries, while renouncing every political and economic privilege enjoyed by the Tsarist government.

The value of the property which passed into the hands of the Iranian peoples amounted to 600 million roubles in gold. Apart from other technical and commodity assistance, Afghanistan received an interest-free loan of a million gold roubles. Turkey received financial aid amounting to ten million gold roubles; its people received agronomical and technical education in Soviet Russia.

With regard to China, too, the Soviet Government renounced all the special rights and privileges enjoyed by the Tsarist government. In Mongolia there was a revolution. The Soviet Government relinquished the plundering agreements of Tsarist times, annulled Mongolian debts and helped the revolutionary Government liberate the territory from the white guards. With the Soviet-Mongolian Agreement of 1921 began an era of political and economic cooperation that has helped Mongolia overcome its age-old backwardness and move from a nomadic society to socialism without having to go through the stage of capitalist development.

This proved Lenin's thesis that 'with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system, and through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage'. (9) During this period also, in response to the slogan of land to the peasant of the October Revolution, and in the process of the civil war, independent Soviet republics came up in Bokhara, Azerbaijan and Armenia, which had been part of the Tsarist empire. All this proved Lenin's claim that the 'bolsheviks are establishing completely different international relations which make it possible for all oppressed to rid themselves of the imperialist yoke.' (10)

The main impact of the October Revolution on the world economy has been through this Revolution's own example of building international economic cooperation for international peace, structuring the economy of socialism in Russia, helping the dependent and colonial countries achieve political and economic independence from the stranglehold of international monopolies and imperialism, and reorganising the world economy as visualised by Lenin at the eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

The first major effort, after the development of bilateral relations with the neighbouring dependent countries and also with the advanced capi-

talist countries, after the failure of the intervention, was evident in the role played by the Soviet Government at the International Economic Conference at Genoa in 1922. The impact of Soviet economic diplomacy was felt even during the preparation for this conference.

The Allied Supreme Council meeting at Cannes in France, which passed the resolution convening the conference and inviting the Soviet Government to it, also declared that no nation could appropriate the right to dictate the internal economic system and mode of administration to other nations. It also maintained that every country had the right to choose the system it preferred. It was the first international recognition of the reality created by the victory of the October Revolution—the existence of two systems and the inevitability of relations between them. It was also a recognition of the right of self-determination of nations. Thus, in practice, the principle of peaceful coexistence of two social systems as enunciated by Lenin was internationally recognised.

A Tremendously Important Conference

The Genoa conference is of tremendous international significance for the understanding of the impact of the October Revolution on the world economy. It has relevance even today. In his draft directives of the central committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), on 6 February 1922, for the delegation to the Genoa conference, the proposals put forward by Lenin included:

“* annulment of all debts;

“* granting of loans on favourable terms to the countries most ruined by war and too much weak to recover their own feet while being the most important for the world economy as essential suppliers of vast quantities of food and raw materials;

“* agreement among a number of countries for coping with the fuel crisis and on measures for the most rational and economical use of power resources on the basis of unified planned electrification;

“* agreement among a number of countries on measures to combat inflation and depreciation of money; and

“* the same regard to the most urgent measures for recognising and improving international transport to handle deliveries of raw materials and food.” (11)

Lenin's directives were followed up by its elaboration in a letter to him by G.V. Chicherin in which he made some very important points:

"...the present international political and economic forms serve as permanent fig leaves covering the predatory acts of the imperialists;... We have to introduce something new into the customary modern international forms to prevent these forms from being turned into tools of imperialism;..."

Recognising the reality of the intensification of the liberation movements after the October Revolution, as in the India of 1920, Chicherin wrote in his letter :

"Our international programme must bring all oppressed colonial people into the international scheme...The novelty of our scheme must be that the Negro and other colonial peoples participate on an equal footing with other European peoples in conferences and commissions and have the right to prevent interference in their internal affairs."

Another new feature was the inclusion of three members of the All-Russia Central Trade Union Congress in the Soviet delegation to Genoa. And Chicherin wrote in his letter to Lenin :

"Another novelty is the obligatory participation of working class organisations...We must lay down that one-third of the votes in the international organisations we are going to propose should belong to the working class organisations represented in each delegation..."

"...the principle of non-intervention on the part of the international conferences or congresses in the internal affairs of various peoples. Voluntary cooperation and aid for the weak on the part of the strong must be applied without subordinating the former to the latter."

As a result we have a very bold and completely new proposal—A WORLD CONGRESS with all peoples of the world participating on a completely equal footing on the basis of the declaration of the right to self-determination...The purpose of the Congress will not be compulsion of the minority but complete agreement. The congress will help by its moral authority. In practice it will set up technical commissions for the implementation of our extensive economic programme of world-wide rehabilitation."

Chicherin's proposal regarding the World Congress was different from the concept of the League of Nations which was under discussion at that moment, but more like the United Nations Organisation as 'an arena of discussions aimed at reaching agreement'. The technical commissions of the World Congress were conceived as institutions for guiding 'the implementation of a broad programme of world-wide rehabilitation'. Some of the components were spelt out in Chicherin's letter to Lenin :

"Aid will be given to the weak...In general, aid from the strong for the weak will be the basic principle of world rehabilitation which must be based on economic geography and the planned distribution of resources...this is in the interest of all since world ruin affects the strong countries as well, giving rise to unparalleled unemployment even in America. The strong, by helping the weak, are opening up for themselves markets and sources of raw materials. Proceeding from these premises we shall propose the planned distribution of the gold that is at the moment lying idle in the vaults of the American banks. This planned distribution of gold in all countries must be combined with the planned distribution of orders, trade, supplies of scarce materials, in general, with all-round economic aid for the ruined countries. This aid may take the form of loans..."

Chicherin also conceived of 'instruments for the planned, World-wide distribution of essential commodities and a means of rendering aid to weak countries by the strong, they would be essential components of an extensive programme and economic rehabilitation'. The international technical commission must elaborate, in very general outline, a programme for the planned distribution of fuel and energy resources." (12)

The emphasis of different types are by Lenin. He also wrote the word 'Precisely' on the margin against Chicherin's proposal of the role of the technical commission in implementing the economic programme of rehabilitation.

At Genoa the Soviet delegation did make these proposals. In its declaration at the first plenary session it formulated the concept of peaceful coexistence of two social systems :

While retaining the point of view of the principles of communism, the Russian delegation recognises that, in the current historical age, making possible the parallel existence of the old and the emerging new social systems of property is absolutely essential for a general economic revival." (13)

Emphasising the mutual recognition in the Cannes resolution of different systems of property and different political and economic forms existing in different countries, the declaration of the Soviet delegation went on to assert the integral relationship between peace and economic rehabilitation :

"Yet all efforts bent to restore the world economy would be futile while Europe and the world are threatened by new wars, possibly even more destructive and devastating than those we have suffered in recent years..."

"The establishment of universal peace should, in our opinion, be carried out by a World Congress, convened on the basis of full equality of all people and the recognition of the right of all of them to decide their own fate." (14)

The declaration also enunciated its basis of international economic nations as 'business relations with the governments and trade and industrial circles of all countries on the basis of reciprocity equality and unconditional recognition.' (15)

The relevance of these historic documents is evident in the developments of the last forty years and more. The battle for the implementation of some of the concepts formulated in these documents started in the immediate post-Second World War period with the emergence of India as an independent nation and the beginning of the process of decolonisation.

Lenin has spoken of the need for reorganising the world economy. This issue became a living reality by the mid-fifties of the present century. The questions of increased development aid, stabilisation of commodity trade and shipping freight rates, all came up at Bandung. The setting up of UNCTAD after the formulation of economic issues at the formative summit of the non-aligned at Belgrade, almost fulfilled the Leninist concept of a technical commission of the world congress represented by the UN.

It was at the Cairo summit of the non-aligned that for the first time 'sound and solid economic foundations' were related to peace. There was even a demand for 'a new international division of labour'. The Political Declaration of the Algiers Summit related 'genuine independence' to the elimination of 'foreign monopolies and taking over control of national resources and utilising them for the benefit of the people'. It even called for the establishment of 'the right to use their own programmes of development without economic aggression or any other form of pressure'.

It might be recalled in this connection that it was at the plenary session of the World Economic Conference on 14 June, 1933 that M.M. Litvinov, Chairman of the Soviet delegation, for the first time raised the issue of economic aggression. He called for a 'pact on economic non-aggression'. He defined economic aggression as 'all sorts of methods of discrimination against individual countries, customs wars, waged openly or in concealed form, currency wars, ban on imports or exports to and from individual countries and various sorts of official boycott'. (16)

The Soviet delegation had presented a draft resolution on this issue at the conference and even a Protocol on Economic Non-aggression. Of course all this had fallen on deaf ears.

It was after the Algiers Non-Aligned Summit that the UN Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order and Programme of Action was adopted in May 1974. This was followed by the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States in December the same year.

It is significant that practically every single point in the Soviet documents related to the Genoa Conference of 1922 found expression in these two UN documents.

The principles formulated in the Declaration include, apart from sovereign equality and self-determination and non-interference in internal affairs, the following which are relevant to the issues raised by the Soviet delegation at Genoa :

- * "broadest cooperation of State members of the international community, based on equity, whereby the prevailing disparities in the world may be banished and prosperity secured for all ;
- * "full and effective participation of all countries in solving of world economic problems in the common interest of all countries bearing in mind the necessity to ensure the accelerated development of all the developing countries...;
- * "the right to every country to adopt the economic and social system that it deems to be the most appropriate for its own development and not to be subjected to discrimination of any kind...;
- * "full permanent sovereignty of every state over the natural resources and all economic activities...;
- * "just and equitable relation between the prices of exports and imports of developing countries;
- * "assistance without political and military conditions;
- * "favourable conditions for transfer of financial resources to developing countries ; and
- * "access to science and technology."

In the Programme of Action, the section on trade covers such issues as progressive removal of trade barriers and restrictive business practices against developing countries; equitable participation in shipping tonnage; and measures to eliminate instability of the international monetary system, particularly fluctuation of exchange rates.

It would not be quite correct to see these formulations as the result of the experiences of the post-colonial period alone. In reality the Soviet experience in building up the economy of backward Russia after the October Revolution and its relationship with the world capitalist system had already influenced the political and economic thinking of the national liberation struggles, particularly after the thirties onwards. This was because of the first success of the domestic policies of the October Revolution, in the background of the economic crisis that hit the capitalist economy.

A Proud Record

The success of the domestic economic policies of the Soviet Union were such that Litvinov could declare at the World Economic Conference of 1933 with supreme confidence :

" Thanks to the specifics of the economic structure of my country, the world crisis cannot and does not in any way affect the steady rise of its economy, as is confirmed by the absence of such phenomena as overproduction of commodities, accumulation of stocks that cannot be sold; unemployment; increasing foreign indebtedness, bankruptcy and falling wages". (17)

The most powerful impact on the economic thinking of the major part of the world population came from two fundamental principles of international economic relations as formulated and practised by the Great October Revolution as institutionalised in the Soviet state. These are :

- * recognition of the need for a rational international division of labour, based on equal rights, to narrow and ultimately close the gap between the levels of economic development of individual countries; and
- * the principle of the developed countries assisting the less developed and backward, to speed up the economic and social progress through the full mobilisation of their internal resources, the development of agriculture, industrialisation and production and trade diversification.

The Soviet experience also proved that it was possible to end centuries of backwardness within a short period; curb the monopoly of certain countries in exporting equipment, granting credits and technical assistance; and the possibility of economic and technological development without having to go through the process of capitalism. This concept of the non-capitalist path of development was already translated into practice in Mongolia and in the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union, giving shape to Lenin's formulation while discussing the Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question at the second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920.

Lenin discussed the experience of activities in the former tsarist colonies and pointed out that it was not 'inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation' to have to go through 'the capitalist stage of economic development'. There was one major proviso : 'the backward countries can emerge from their present stage of development when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Republic extends a helping hand to these masses and is in position to give them support'. (18)

It was the success of the experiments in the thirties that inspired the poet and the politician alike in India. Tagore spoke of his visit to the Soviet Union as a 'pilgrimage', because he saw with his 'own eyes how the Russian peasants have left the Indian peasantry behind in less than a decade'. He was impressed by 'the tremendous effort for the improvement of agriculture'. He saw the success of Soviet achievements in 'turning the tide of wealth from individual to collective humanity'. Tagore was also impressed by the way the various nationalities of erstwhile tsarist Russia were being 'trained to avail themselves freely of the benefit of civilisation'; some two hundred nationalities—which, only a few years ago, were at vastly different stages of development—marching ahead in peaceful progress and amity'. (19)

Jawaharlal Nehru, too, 'was impressed by the reports of the great progress made by the backward regions of Central Asia under the Soviet regime. I was all in favour of Russia, and the presence and example of the Soviets was a bright and heartening phenomenon in a dark and dismal world'. (20) He also recognised the fact that the 'problems of the capitalist order had ceased to exist' in the USSR in the thirties.

In his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in 1936, Jawaharlal defined his concept of socialism in its 'scientific, economic sense' and the need for its establishment in India :

" That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. In short, it means a new civilisation, radically different from the present capitalist order. Some glimpse we can have of this new civilisation in the territories of the USSR. Much has happened there which has pained me greatly and with which I disagree, but I look upon the great fascinating unfolding of a new order and a new civilisation as the most promising feature of our dismal age. If the future is full of hope it is largely because of Soviet Russia and what it has done, and I am convinced that if some world

catastrophe does not interfere, this new civilisation will spread to other lands and put an end to the wars and conflicts which capitalism feeds." (21)

The greatest impact of the October Revolution has been felt during the last 40 years. India was the first to draw from the experience of the October Revolution in trying to transform within the shortest possible time a backward, semi-feudal, peasant-dominated economy into a modern, independent industrial nation. The major instruments were long-range planning, large-scale capitalist engineering, liquidation of landlordism and the introduction of basically a middle peasant economy in the rural areas, and economic alliance with the advanced countries to strengthen large-scale industry and integrate the multi-structured economy.

Starting with India, most of the newly liberated countries adopted this course of development, which had the general features of state capitalism. Whether this has ultimately led to the development of the post-colonial type of capitalism or socialism in these countries has depended on the class or classes in power. The common feature of both types of development has been that the basic strategy has been born of a political decision consciously taken, as in the case of the October Revolution, and not like the classical type of capitalist development.

Explaining this strategy of development, known as the New Economic Policy, Lenin pointed out, in the specific conditions of Russia at that moment of time :

"At present petty bourgeois capitalism prevails in Russia and it is *one and the same road* that leads from it to both large-scale state capitalism and to socialism, through *one and the same* intermediary station called 'national accounting and control of production and distribution'." (22)

In the case of the newly liberated countries there were greater options than those open to Lenin. India and the newly liberated countries have been able to have an economic alliance with both the advanced capitalist countries and the advanced socialist countries led by the USSR. The resources thus generated have been utilised to move towards socialism or to develop capitalism. It is the Indian experience that without mixed economy and planning as instruments of state capitalism and without assistance from the Soviet Union, it could not have been possible to achieve the level of economic development that has been reached in the 40 years of independence. It has also brought socialism on the agenda of every newly independent country, as visualised by Lenin :

'It is perfectly clear that in the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will perhaps play a much more revolutionary part than we expect.' (23)

The present stage of economic development of the newly liberated countries would have been inconceivable without the October Revolution. The concept of a new international economic order would have been inconceivable without the October Revolution. It is the continuation of the process initiated by the October Revolution that is today building the new international economic order.

Lenin had visualised the concept of peaceful co-existence of two social systems as valid for the entire epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism. Today, in the complex world of science and technology and the nuclear-space age, the two social systems contend and interact. A third element, the developing countries, constitute a component of this relationship. This dialectical relationship between the two contradictory systems can find full play only under conditions of peace. This is the condition for universal economic cooperation for the fullest utilisation of the potential of the scientific and technological revolution at the global level. Economic cooperation is a condition for the lessening of political and military tensions.

The reorganisation of the world economy which Lenin had visualised is taking place today through the process of dialectical relationship between the three components of the world economy—advanced capitalist states, advanced socialist states and the developing countries. The emergence of the world socialist system has already constricted the sphere of imperialist exploitation and thus set in motion the process of building a new international economic order. The imperialist monopoly over the world market has ended. The October Revolution has reversed the historical condition in which the backward economies constituted the unwilling resource base for the industrial development of the capitalist countries. Today the Soviet Union and the advanced socialist community provide the willing resources, following the principles formulated by Lenin even before the October Revolution.

The process of building the whole world on rational economic foundations and converting international relations into an instrument of the all-round development of national economies, as conceived and set in motion by the October Revolution, achieved a new dimension with the creation of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance by the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Europe in 1949. The Council was later joined by other socialist countries of Asia and Latin America as they

emerged out of the national liberation struggle. This marked the coming together, for the first time in world history, after the formation of the Soviet Union, of relatively developed countries with diversified industries such as the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, agrarian-industrial countries such as Poland and Hungary, former agrarian appendages of imperialist powers such as Rumania and Bulgaria and countries with virtually no industries such as Mongolia, Cuba and Vietnam, and a greater power, the Soviet Union.

Despite mistakes and problems leading to conflict situations, there is no doubt that mutual cooperation on the basis of equality has helped overcome the basic disparities in the level of economic development among these countries within about three decades. The process has been one of mobilising the resources of the less developed and extensive assistance from the more developed to evolve the international socialist division of labour.

The CMEA has introduced new forms of economic relations between states. This new relationship is marked by coordination of economic planning involving balance between the objectively necessary proportions for each member country and the socialist community as a whole; a combination of international specialisation of production with all-sided economic development of each member country for the fullest and the most rational utilisation of the natural and economic prerequisites of production, including labour power, of the entire socialist community; and the levelling up of the economic development of every member country.

Poland, for instance, specialises in mining, chemical, metallurgical, shipbuilding and transport engineering industries; Czechoslovakia in power engineering, chemical engineering, forge and press and chemical equipment and electrical and diesel engines; GDR in chemicals, precision engineering, instrumentation and brown coal and so on. Such specialisation does not interfere with competition on foreign markets with common products. There are also joint enterprises, inter-state power grids, hydro-technical projects and so on. There are other international organisations such as Intermetal and International Freight Wagon Pool for cooperation in the respective areas. There is the International Bank of Economic Cooperation for credit relations settlement and the International Investment Bank for loans for capital constructions. There is of course an integrated socialist market.

The CMEA provides an example of effective cooperation based on equality, mutual respect for sovereignty and national interests of each state regardless of its size or economic potential. Within this relationship are developing some of the components of the new international economic order, through the structuring of an entirely different system of international economic relations.

It is in this context that the current changes taking place in the Soviet Union are of particular significance. Perestroika and Glasnost have international dimensions. Basically there is a return to Leninism in the concept of equal economic security for all countries, as also in a major re-entry of the socialist community into the world economic system through the new forms of economic relations with the non-socialist world.

Perestroika and Glasnost will also have an impact on the relationship that has developed between the socialist community, particularly the Soviet Union, and the developing countries, which started in the fifties with the first trade agreement between the Soviet Union and India, followed by the agreement on the construction of the Bhilai steel plant in the state sector.

The pattern of Soviet development aid that has emerged over the years is aimed at strengthening the material and technological base of the developing countries. The major share of Soviet credits has gone into industry, power and engineering. It has helped create agricultural and industrial complexes in these countries. The institutions created with Soviet assistance help stimulate independent economic development through the creation of a diversified economy, potential for higher living standards for the people and for the progressive social and economic structural changes on the foundations of modern science and technology. With joint ventures and co-production, the relationship established within the socialist community is now being extended to the developing countries, thus expanding the process of building a new international economic order. This is being further strengthened by the emerging cooperation among the advanced capitalist and socialist countries and the developing countries in industrial and infrastructural facilities in developing countries. It is such a triangular relationship that is building up the new international economic order.

The process of international economic interaction, born out of the continuing process of the October Revolution, is now reaching out to cooperation in scientific research among the three components of the world economy today. This would lead to the universalisation of the benefits of science and help the developing countries leap-frog into the frontiers of new technology and bridge the current development gap.

With Perestroika and Glasnost, the October Revolution is today carrying out Lenin's behest of 66 years ago of taking the revolution right into the camp of imperialism, not through confrontation but through cooperation, without which human survival would be endangered in the nuclear-space age, with its potential of human survival at a higher level.

In the final analysis, the impact of the October Revolution on the world economy is the progressive undermining of an undemocratic preda-

tory, exploitative, unjust, unequal world economic system and its progressive replacement by an emerging system which is just, equal, democratic and ensure universal economic security as an essential condition and component of comprehensive universal system of international security as formulated in the report of the Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the CPSU. What Lenin said in his closing speech at the Tenth All-Russia Conference of the R.C.P. (B) on May 28, 1921, rings more true today :

"We are now exercising our main influence on the international revolution through our economic policy. The working people of all countries without exception and without exaggeration are looking to the Soviet Russian Republic. This much has been achieved. The capitalists cannot rush up or conceal anything. That is why they so eagerly catch at our every economic mistake and weakness. The struggle in this field has now become global. Once we solve this problem, we shall have certainly and finally won on an international scale. That is why for us questions of economic development become of absolutely exceptional importance." (24)

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—Thank God, if there be a God...

IF WE COULD have the revolution over again, we would carry it out more sensibly and with smaller losses. But history does not repeat itself. The situation is favourable for us. If God existed, we would thank him for it.

—Khrushchev
to Western Ambassadors,
Moscow, 18-11-1956

The October Revolution and the Indian Communists

—E.M.S. NAMBOODIRIPAD
General Secretary, CPI (M)

I am one of the few Indians who had the privilege of participating in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in November last. Listening to the report made by General Secretary Gorbachev on November 2 on the great achievements of the first socialist state in the world, I noted that he did not mince matters when it came to the mistakes which occurred in the process of building the new society in the USSR. If only our ruling classes and the ruling classes of other (developed as well as developing) capitalist countries were at least half as self-critical, humanity would have been spared much of the trials and tribulations through which it is now passing.

The emergence of the Socialist Soviet Union was no revolution in a single country; the Czarist empire was (and the present Soviet Union is) half-European and half-Asian. Making as it did the first breach in the solid fortress of capitalism, it was the beginning of the end of world capitalism, as had been envisaged by the founders of dialectical and historical materialism. Beginning with the joint work produced by the two path-breakers of the international working class, *The Communist Manifesto*, through the monumental work *Capital*, all the smaller and bigger works produced by the two revolutionary thinkers gave the perspective of the inevitable transition of humanity from capitalism to socialism. The 1917 October Revolution in Russia was the beginning of the process, envisaged in the erudite works of the two revolutionaries.

Marx and Engels were not sages and prophets like our Rishis. They did not know where, when and how the process of transition from capitalism to socialism—from class society to the classless Communist social order—would begin. Being the scientists of proletarian revolution in the age of capitalism, however, they knew that such a transition was as inevitable as the earlier transitions from one social order to another. Hence the characterisation of Marx's *Capital* as "the Bible of the Working Class" (Engels).

It will be interesting to note that, in a three-part newspaper article he wrote in 1853 on India, Karl Marx raised the question whether the British working class would overthrow their own bourgeoisie first, or whether the Indian people would become strong enough to throw the British yoke off their shoulders. Proletarian revolutions establishing the new socialist social order in developed capitalist countries and the success

of the national liberation movements in subject countries were, in other words, part of the same process, as analysed by Marx.

Marx and Engels produced their works at a time when capitalism was growing. It, therefore, required tremendous moral courage and intellectual conviction typical of all genuine revolutionaries, for anybody at that time to envisage the decay of capitalism and its replacement by socialism. The same revolutionary outlook enabled Marx to forecast the possible liberation of India from British hands even before the British and other colonial empires were overthrown by the working class of the respective metropolitan countries.

Marx and Engels, it will be recalled, made a close day-by-day study of the epochmaking national revolt which shook Britain's Indian empire in 1857. (The articles written by the two co-founders of historical materialism, have been brought together in a volume under the title *The First War of the Indian Independence*). A few years later, when signs of popular discontent appeared again after the suppression of the 1857 revolt—the discontent which prompted the British civilians in India to bless (if not initiate) the move for founding the Indian National Congress—they noted the revival of the Indian people's anti-British upsurge. The two co-founders of the revolutionary working class movement in Europe were thus consistent champions of the national liberation movement in India, seeing the latter as the natural ally of the former.

Carrying forward as Lenin did the revolutionary heritage of the two co-founders of historical materialism, he further developed and defended their revolutionary theories. His monumental works such as *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Philosophy), *Imperialism* (Political Economy), *State and Revolution* and other works dealing with the science and art of proletarian and national revolutions, constituted the further development of the Marx-Engels theory, developed in the light of the transformation of the earlier competitive phase of capitalism into its monopoly or last stage.

While developing the Marx-Engels theory in all respects, Lenin applied it in his practical-political activity, both as a Russian as well as an international revolutionary leader of the working class. Fighting against revisionism of the right and subsequently of the "left", he elaborated the strategy and tactics which enabled his party to carry out that genuine revolution in his own country which began with the bourgeois democratic stage but developed into the socialist. As opposed to the revolutions in several other countries led by the revisionists in the international movement and which failed in their objectives, the revolution led by him in Russia became a source of inspiration for the proletarian and national revolutionaries of all lands.

The 70th anniversary of that epochmaking event was therefore the occasion when the Communists, the Socialists and Social Democrats, National Revolutionaries of the Third World, representatives of governments from several newly-free countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, champions of peace and struggle against nuclear war even in developed capitalist countries—all assembled at the Kremlin for participating in the grand celebration on November 2 and 3. It was a get-together of all those who had carefully noted and imbibed the inspiring message of Lenin who developed the Marx-Engels call, "Workers of the World, Unite" into "Workers and Peoples of the World, Unite".

The comprehensive report presented by General Secretary Gorbachev, which proudly recalled the great achievements of the Government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, led by Lenin to begin with, and then by Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Despite the failings and mistakes committed after Lenin's days, it was pointed out, Soviet society has been advancing and attracting to itself the workers and the common people throughout the world. This was because, while no doubt failing in some respects and committing mistakes in others, the Party was by and large following the behests of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Had it not been for these failings and mistakes committed by those who followed Lenin, the achievements would have been far greater—such was the message conveyed in the Gorbachev report.

As an Indian Communist of over 50 years' standing, I considered it my privilege to listen to the Gorbachev report as it was delivered, and subsequently to read the printed text. I recalled to my mind the tough jobs undertaken by the pioneers of the Communist movement in India—those national revolutionaries who were inspired by the "Ten days that shook the world" and began to follow closely how the young Socialist State in the formerly Czarist Russia was progressing. Out of these national revolutionaries in India emerged a number of groups which called themselves Communists and who had to bear the heavy hand of British repression. A small number of them braved the rigours of the trek through the Himalayas to reach the new land of world revolution. Still others used other routes to reach the same destination.

Let us, however, note that those who remained in India and formed scattered Communist groups all over the country—in Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab, Madras and so on—constituted the first nucleus of the Communist Party of India. Those who crossed the borders and reached the land of socialism, were assisted and guided by the Communist International in their own transformation and the transformation of the comrades at home from national to proletarian revolutionaries.

The International, directly guided as it was by Lenin, paid a good deal of attention to the task of moulding the national revolutionaries from the then colonial countries into proletarian revolutionaries. Turning his guns against "left-wing childishness" (which he characterised as "infantile disorder"), he told the young revolutionaries from the colonial countries that they have to—

- (a) organise themselves as an independent revolutionary party of the working class, even though the elements of such a class party were then extremely weak in these countries;
- (b) have relations of united front with other anti-imperialist classes, including the bourgeoisie;
- (c) above all, he pointed out, it is the peasantry which genuinely represented the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Worker-Peasant unity is thus the axis of the national liberation struggle.

Most of the right and "left" deviations into which subsequent generations of Communists in the then colonial countries (including India) fell, were the products of the failure to assimilate this essence of the Leninist teaching—falling into the error of either sectarianism or tailism to the bourgeoisie which played the role of opposition to imperialism. The struggle against these deviations were facilitated by the Communist International founded on the initiative of Lenin. Gorbachev was fully correct in taking the opportunity of the celebration of the 70th anniversary to say :

"For all the drawbacks and errors in its activities and for all the bitterness the recollection of certain chapters in its history may evoke, the Communist International is part of our movement's great past. Born of the October Revolution, the movement has become not only a school of internationalism, an effective instrument furthering the interests of the working people and promoting the social progress of big and small nations. It has produced a whole galaxy of true knights of the 20th century, men of honour and responsibility, of lofty aspirations and unflinching courage who took the sufferings of the millions of oppressed all over the world as their own who heard their pleas and roused them to struggle."

While thus recalling the Communist International and the role it played in its time, Gorbachev said : "The time of the Communist International, the Cominform, even the time of binding international conferences, is over. But the world Communist movement lives on. All parties are completely and irreversibly independent. We declared that as early

as the 20th Congress. True, the old habits were not discarded at once but today this has become an unalterable reality..... This has been actually proved by our relations with fraternal parties in the course of Perestroika."

It was as a representative of such a fraternal party, equal with all other fraternal Communist Parties, including the Soviet Party, that I was participating in the celebrations. Unlike in the days of the Communist International whose leadership took decisions binding on the Communist Parties in all countries (including my own undivided CPI), every party is today responsible to the people of its own country. All of them are, and should be, interested in exchanges with other fraternal parties, since they are part of the same anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movement. Having exchanged information and views, however, every party takes its own decisions, irrespective of the views expressed by the Soviet or other fraternal parties.

Coming to the Communist Party in our own country—the undivided CPI till 1964 and the CPI (M) since then—I can confidently assert that our practice conforms to the principles enunciated here.

The undivided CPI did certainly take guidance from the CPSU in a period of one of the most intense inner-party crises in history, 1949-50. A delegation of the party had detailed discussions with a delegation of the CPSU who helped the temporary resolution of the crisis. When this job was done and our delegation was returning to India, the leader of the CPSU delegation (Comrade Stalin) advised our delegation to reject or amend the advice tendered by his party if it does not meet acceptance in the Party. Pleading their lack of knowledge of Indian conditions, he pointed out that it was for the Indian delegation to go back, unite the Central Committee and then the entire party with whatever modifications are found necessary in the light of inner-party discussions.

Within less than half a decade, the advice tendered by the CPSU on the basis of which the 1951 programme was adopted, proved incorrect. The Party, therefore, unanimously decided to prepare a new programme. It was on the content of the new programme that the Party came to be sharply divided, leading to the split in 1964.

Ever since that split, I can claim that the CPI (M) had to come out in public against certain positions adopted by the CPSU as well as by the CPC, though we held, and still hold, the two parties in great esteem and respect. For almost two decades since we reorganised ourselves as the CPI (M), we had to go it almost alone; nobody can accuse us of having

been the camp-followers of the Soviet, the Chinese or any other party. At the same time, we refused to adopt anti-CPSU or anti-CPC positions. We in fact pledged ourselves (in our Party Programme) to work for the reunification of the world Communist movement through consistent struggle against revisionism and dogmatism, right and "left" opportunism.

It was therefore, a matter of rejoicing for me to participate in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Great October revolution along with a delegation headed by the CPI General Secretary, Comrade Rajeswara Rao. Almost 3 years earlier, a 2-member delegation of our Party had participated in the 27th Congress of the CPSU along with a CPI delegation. Almost three years earlier still, I had, along with two other comrades, visited the People's Republic of China which culminated in the restoration of fraternal relations between the two parties.

Another important development of this period is the establishment of party-to-party relations between the CPSU, the CPC and other fraternal parties of the Socialist countries, with the Indian National Congress here. The significance of this new development is that the Governments of Socialist countries and their ruling Communist Parties find in the non-proletarian but peace-loving governments of the Third World countries allies and comrades in the common struggle to save humanity from nuclear destruction, India being very important among such countries and its government pursuing a policy of peace and non-alignment. Hence the participation of a delegation of the Indian National Congress along with the delegations of the two Communist Parties of India.

Does this mean that there is no difference, in the CPSU's perception, between the CPI (M) and the CPI on the one hand and the Indian National Congress on the other? No. On the other hand, the Gorbachev report makes clear distinctions among the several groups that constitute the countries which have a place in the struggle for world peace: those led by Communist and Workers' Parties; Socialist, Social Democratic and Labour Party-governed countries; developing countries "representing a wide spectrum of conflicting interests, needs, aspirations, ideologies, claims and prejudices". The characteristic feature of the last (which includes India) is that it "is a world of its own, seeking organisational forms for effective and equitable participation in solving problems common to the whole of humankind."

India being the largest and most populous of countries in this group the Soviet Government and the CPSU are interested in strengthening their relations of friendship and co-operation with her. This is the rationale of the continuing cooperation in the international sphere between

successive governments of India from Nehru to Rajiv and the Soviet leadership of the time.

The two CPIs for their part have their own special relationship with the CPSU. Being three contingents of the international working class movement, their relations are fraternal. Not only do they have a common world outlook (Marxism-Leninism) and a common political objective (humanity's transition from capitalism to socialism and then to Communism) but also the common immediate objective of a world without nuclear arms, so that the huge amounts that get diverted today to the stockpiling of destructive arms can be used for rapid development of the third world countries.

Now for the differences. Being parties of proletarian opposition to the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes, the two CPs of India have the political objective of removing the bourgeois-landlord classes from power. Being the leading contingent of the world Communist movement, the CPSU too has a sense of solidarity with the Indian comrades, but it is basically an internal problem to be solved by the Indian Communists. Furthermore, as the ruling party in the leading country of the socialist camp, the CPSU has to maintain friendship and cooperation with the ruling party in India.

The two Communist Parties of India are also interested in India, its ruling classes and the Government, remaining in the camp of peace in international affairs. They, however, cannot slow down the pace of the Indian toilers' struggle against the ruling classes; even in the field of foreign policy, they have to fight the vacillations, compromises etc. shown by the ruling party which weaken the anti-imperialist elements of its policy.

The CPI (M) in its Programme adopted in 1964 said that :

- (a) the basic aim of the Party is building the people's democratic front; this inevitably pits the working class and its party into clash with the present Indian state led by the big bourgeoisie;
- (b) the Party, however, takes into account the contradictions and conflicts that do exist between the Indian bourgeoisie, including the big bourgeoisie, with imperialism on issues of war and peace, economic and political relations with socialist countries, terms of aid from foreign monopolies, finding adequate markets for our exports, foreign policy and national defence. On all such questions where our ruling classes come into clash with imperialism, the Party will lend unstinted support to the government ;

- (c) the Party, however, does not entertain any illusion of a strategic unity or united front with the ruling Congress party.

This in fact is the concrete application of the revolutionary tactics evolved in the Communist International under Lenin's direct guidance — the independent party of the Working Class (the Communists) in colonial and semi-colonial countries forging relations of united front with the bourgeoisie to the extent to which the latter fights imperialism. It integrates Indian patriotism with proletarian internationalism, fights anti-Soviet and other forms of hostility to the socialist camp internationally and combats all forms of revivalism, obscurantism, separatism etc. which disrupt the unity of Indian people based on caste, religion, language and region.

Pope denounces 'structures of sin'

On Feb. 19, 1988, Pope John Paul II issued a major encyclical that condemns the ideological rivalry between East and West, saying it subjects poor nations to imperialistic "structures of sin" that deny them freedom and development.

The 20,000-word document, whose English title is "The Social Concerns of the Church," provides an authoritative Roman Catholic analysis of global politics and directs Church views on many social issues. An encyclical letter is the highest form of Papal teaching, and Catholics are expected to give its message, assent and obedience.

The very fact that the world is divided into rival ideological blocs, he writes, "is a direct obstacle to the real transformation of the conditions of underdevelopment". He lays the blame on "an unacceptably exaggerated concern for security, which deadens the impulse towards united cooperation", and he complains that "each of the two blocs harbours in its own way a tendency towards imperialism."

The Pope makes four specific recommendations :

- *To change the international trade system, which, he says, is "mortgaged to protectionism and increasing bilateralism" that discriminate against developing economies;
- *To change the world monetary and financial system, which he sees as "marked by an excessive fluctuation of exchange rates and interest rates, to the detriment of the balance of payments and the debt situation of the poorer countries";
- *To find new forms of technology transfer, because "there are frequent cases of developing countries being denied needed forms of technology or sent useless ones";
- * "Careful review and possible correction" of the workings of international organizations, to improve their operating methods. Such a review "presupposes the overcoming of political rivalries and the renouncing of all desire to manipulate these organizations."

Soviet Communism : Is it a New Civilization ?

By : Pradip Bose

President, Indian Centre for Democratic Socialism, New Delhi.

ON 7TH NOVEMBER 1987, the Soviet Union completed its 70th year of communist rule. Even in our fast-moving scientific-technological age, this is not a brief period. During this time vast revolutionary changes have occurred not only in the Soviet Union, but all over the world.

Since Mikhail Gorbachev took over as the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in March, 1985, it is now the third generation of leaders who are shaping the destiny of the Soviet People.

The first generation—Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Zinoviev Kamenev, Bukharin and others—made the revolution in November 1917, and laid the foundations of a communist state. The second generation—Khrushchev, Bulganin, Brezhnev, Kosygin, Andropov, Chernenko and others—developed the Soviet Union into a super power in military terms.

The third generation of leaders like Gorbachev were born in the late 20's or early 30's and grew up without any recollection of Czarist rule. Their memories even of the second world war, which had cruelly disrupted the Soviet experiment for four devastating years, killing nearly 20 million people and reducing to ruin the more developed regions of the country, were those of adolescents, too young to participate in the fighting.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was not intended to presage a change of power from one exploiting class to another. It was to enact the seizure of power by the working classes themselves. They were determined to banish class exploitation for ever, in order to establish the first human socialist society in world history, which would eventually lead to communism. This inevitably meant the creation of a new civilization, a new culture and a new man.

Therefore, after seventy years of the longest, the most conscious, the most articulate and massive social experiment in human history, it is legitimate to ask the question: has a new civilization and a new man emerged in the Soviet Union? Is there any sign that they will emerge in the foreseeable future?

I : The Webbs—A New Civilization

In the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, world capitalism faced its deepest crisis, when the biggest economic depression in its history caused

widespread and uncontrollable unemployment and inflation. It was this development which largely contributed to the rise to power of Nazism in Germany, the traditional cradle of Marxian Socialism. While the Social Democrats in the industrially advanced countries were unable to provide any inspiring leadership in the midst of this crisis, the Soviet Union, with its bold, innovative method of planning, was forging ahead economically. For many people throughout the world, Soviet Communism held out the only hope of salvation for mankind.

Two of the most outstanding converts to communism during this period were Sydney and Beatrice Webb. Until then, they had been the foremost theoreticians of Social Democracy, and, as founders of British Fabianism, they provided, from the late 19th century onwards, the most formidable intellectual weapons against Marxian Socialism in Britain.

After two visits to the Soviet Union, they published in 1935 their last major book: "Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?" By the time the second edition of this book appeared in 1937, they had decided to omit the question mark at the end of the title. By then, they must have been convinced that a "new civilization" was already in the making in the Soviet Union.

What exactly did they mean by "a new civilization"?

The Webbs visited Russia in 1932 and saw there the rapid industrialization and rural collectivisation, the expansion of educational and social welfare services and an improvement of opportunities for women. They visited model schools, prisons, collective farms and factories.

After their return from Russia, Beatrice Webb wrote on 20 July, 1932, that the Soviet Government "represents a new civilization and a new culture with a new outlook on life involving a new pattern of behaviour in the individual and his relation to the community—all of which I believe is destined to spread to many other countries in the course of the next hundred years."

About a year later, on 8 July, 1933, she wrote: "The longer we study the USSR, the more sure we are that it is a new civilization—crude and cruel and definitely inefficient in some of its manifestations—but nevertheless an immense step forward in the development of a better human nature, alike in physical health and intellectual advancement, personal ethics and social relationship."

In the Soviet Constitution they found the "tripod of political democracy, vocational organization and consumers' cooperative movement".

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widespread and uncontrollable unemployment and inflation. It was this development which largely contributed to the rise to power of Nazism in Germany, the traditional cradle of Marxian Socialism. While the Social Democrats in the industrially advanced countries were unable to provide any inspiring leadership in the midst of this crisis, the Soviet Union, with its bold, innovative method of planning, was forging ahead economically. For many people throughout the world, Soviet Communism held out the only hope of salvation for mankind.

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In the Soviet Constitution they found the "tripod of political democracy, vocational organization and consumers' cooperative movement".

They approved "the presence as the dominant and decisive force of a religious order, the Communist party, with its strict discipline, its vows of obedience and poverty. Though not requiring chastity, the communists are expected to be puritans in their personal conduct, not to waste energy, time or wealth on sex, food or drinks."

All this might sound too idealistic to be true but they believed what they wrote and made their observations on this "new civilization" on the basis of their personal experience. Communists, not only in the Soviet Union, but all over the world fully agreed with their analyses and certainly with their conclusions.

The Webbs' book "Soviet Communism" became the single most important and favourable document on the subject outside the Soviet Union. It stated plainly that two most outstanding Social Democratic theoreticians had come around to the view that Soviet Communism was not only a new civilization but also "the wave of the future". ("Beatrice and Sydney Webb: Fabian Socialists" By Lissane Radice.)

The Webbs' formulations can provide a sound foundation for assessing Soviet society today. Some may object to their "one-sided" view of Soviet reality, or to the "naivety" of their evaluation and conclusions, especially on the basis of facts about that country which are now widely known.

However, in spite of the many detrimental and shocking revelations regarding the Soviet Union—both official and non-official—this same touching naivety still persists among many champions of the "real existing socialism" of the Soviet Union all over the world. Therefore, such an approach still has relevance.

Today's Soviet Union is quite different from that which the Webbs visited in the '30s but the fundamental Leninist theoretical foundation on which the country was built remains intact and sacrosanct. The official spokesmen of the Soviet Union as well as pro-Soviet communists throughout the world continue to accept the Webbs' basic political assumptions. These should be a good enough basis from which to enquire whether "a new civilization" has actually emerged or not.

II : Soviet Economic Life

Since the Marxist-Leninists of the Soviet Union are believers in the theory of "economic determinism" which gives primary importance to economic factors, it will be appropriate to begin with the economic record of Soviet civilization during the last quarter of a century.

Although the Soviet economy had been growing at an impressive and steady pace since the end of the second world war, its economic performance in recent years, in comparison with other rival economic blocs, has been profoundly disappointing. The following figures eloquently reveal the current state of affairs :

GNP in billions of US \$

	1960	1970	1980	1986
USA	509	990	2,602	4,200
European Community	191	480	2,765	3,400
Japan	43	205	1,040	1,800
Soviet Union	223	435	1,050	1,230
China	40	122	400	600

In 1960 the USSR was still the world's second most important economic power, trailing behind the USA, but ahead of the European Community (EEC). Japan had not yet arrived on the world economic scene. Therefore, it was not surprising that in late '50s and early '60s the Soviet Leader, Nikita Khrushchev used to threaten the capitalist nations with the warning: "We will bury you", through economic performance. He hoped that by 1981 the USSR's GNP would be higher than any of the countries of the West.

However, by 1970 the EEC had narrowed the gap to the USSR. In 1980 the EEC, contradicting Khrushchev's prediction, already produced twice as much, and Japan had almost drawn level with the USSR. Now Japan, with less than half of the USSR's population, produces much more.

Respective shares of world GNP today are : The USA has 30% share; EEC 25%; Japan 14%; and the USSR 8%. This is soon expected to drop to 7%—indeed a dismal economic picture.

(The population tally of these countries is : USA-240 million : EEC 320; Japan 122 and USSR 280 (Werner Obst : "Sueddeutsche Zeitung", Munich, 10, December, 1986).

The pace of Soviet economic decline since the mid-70s has been spectacular. Some observers consider that the present weakness of the Soviet economy has reached a new historic dimension and it will no longer be capable of getting out of the rut while at the same time maintaining its "traditional" framework of policies.

The lack of discipline, corruption, fraud and the country's worst ill, alcoholism, are eating up the vitals of the economy. The country is suffering from the handicaps of inefficient central planning, poor quality

products, inadequate use of production capacity, misuse of natural resources, excessive damage to the environment, low productivity and the slow introduction of new technologies.

In Mikhail Gorbachev's regime of *Glasnost* (or, openness) all these ills are no longer being brushed under the carpet, as has been done for nearly six decades, but are coming out in open. Such revelations have shattered the positive image of the "first model workers' state", which has been meticulously projected over the years by the efficient Soviet propaganda machinery.

Alvin Toffler, the well known author of 'The Third Wave', has succinctly evaluated the USSR's economic performance in a historic perspective in "The Times of India": "The Soviet Union has failed spectacularly with its agriculture, or 'first wave' sector. Its industrial, or 'second wave' sector, is a mess. And now, it is in danger of failing irreversibly behind the USA, Japan, Western Europe and perhaps even China as they race to build 'third wave' economies."

With the largest land-mass in the world and with a population of only 280 million, the USSR is still not self-sufficient in food, after seventy years of communism. Every year it imports roughly 30 to 40 million tonnes of food and what is politically so embarrassing is that the bulk of this comes from its superpower rival, the USA. The single biggest export item of the Soviet Union, with its massive industrial-military complex, is raw materials.

No one faced with these facts could possibly conclude that a new civilization had emerged in the economic sphere for others to emulate.

III. Political Life

On political issues, Soviet Russia started its career on less sure ground. As Lenin and his Bolshevik Party dissolved the popularly-elected Constituent Assembly by force of arms and suppressed all other political viewpoints and parties, including those which were socialist-inclined, in order to establish "the dictatorship of the proletariat", there were stringent criticisms of his policies both from the 'right wing' and the 'left wing' of the international socialist movement.

Karl Kautsky, "the pope of Marxian orthodoxy", representing the Social Democratic viewpoint, wrote that the "hereditary sin of Bolshevism has been its suppression of democracy through a form of government, namely, dictatorship which has no meaning unless it represents the unlimited and despotic power, either of one person, or of a small organization intimately bound together".

He described the dictatorship of Lenin as "the most oppressive of all despotisms in Russia hitherto", adding that "Democracy is the one and only method through which the higher form of life can be realised and which Socialism declares is the right of civilized men". (Vide "Terrorism and Communism", 1919.)

Rosa Luxembourg, speaking for the radical wing, while extending enthusiastic support to the Russian Revolution, strongly criticised what she called the "Lenin-Trotsky dictatorship".

In her incomplete essay, "The Russian Revolution", she wrote: "Lenin and Trotsky ... decide on dictatorship in contradistinction to democracy and thereby in favour of dictatorship of the bourgeois model."

She continued: "But socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as a sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginning of the destruction of the class rule and the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Vide "The Russian Revolution" 1919.)

Rosa Luxembourg argued that in an atmosphere of complete suppression of democratic rights in Russia, it would not be possible to preserve democracy within the ruling Communist Party. She made the prediction that the dictatorship of proletariat in Russia would soon be transformed into the dictatorship of the Communist party, which in its turn would become the dictatorship of the Polit-bureau and eventually lead to the dictatorship of one personality.

This proved to be uncannily correct: within ten years of her prediction, Stalin had established firm and unquestioned control over the party. Trotsky, his only major rival, was expelled from the party in 1927 and he left the country in 1929.

Lenin, a master in polemics, was not to be cowed down by his critics. "The transition from a capitalist society- which is developing towards communism—to a communist society," he wrote, "is impossible without a political transition period and the state in this period can only be that of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." ('State and Revolution').

He posed this question: "What then is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?"

He rejected bourgeois democracy because he said it was in reality "democracy for the minority, only for the possessing class, only for the rich."

"From this capitalist democracy...", he wrote, "development does not proceed simply, smoothly and directly to 'greater and greater democracy', as the liberal professor and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, development towards communism proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat; it cannot be otherwise, for the resistance of the capitalists cannot be broken by anyone else or, in any other way."

What is of interest today is his following observation :

"Only in a communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely broken, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e. when there is no difference between members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production) only then does the state cease to exist and it becomes possible to speak of freedom. Only then will really complete democracy without exceptions, be possible and be realised... people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social life... they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for compulsion, which is called the state."

In brief, Lenin was saying that "complete democracy" can be achieved only when (a) the capitalists have disappeared (b) when there are no classes; (c) when the people become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of the society without being forced.

The question may now be asked whether after seventy years of communism these preconditions of democracy, laid down by Lenin, have been achieved in the Soviet Union; if they have, then what is the condition of democracy today.

The capitalists (and also the landlords) disappeared from the Soviet Union many decades ago. The rules of the Soviet Union today say that there are no more classes as the Soviet State now belongs to the whole people. It is to be assumed that after seventy years of Soviet education people have at least been taught to observe "elementary rules" without compulsion.

There ought now to be, according to Lenin's prognostication, a full-fledged democracy in the Soviet Union, which should be on a much higher level than that of "bourgeois democracy" grossly stained by class exploitation.

That this has already been achieved was the official Soviet assumption till recently. Under Gorbachev, however, the lack of democracy is being cautiously discussed and some steps are being taken to overcome some of its obvious deficiencies.

The freedom of the press, for which the working class movement from the time of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had fought valiantly, has been, and still is, non-existent in the Soviet Union. The press is strictly controlled by the ruling party and the government. So also are the other media like radio and television.

The trade union movement has none of the autonomy for which Lenin had pleaded in the early '20s on the ground that even though the state is controlled by the working class party, it has "bureaucratic distortions" and an autonomous trade union movement should have the right to counter these trends.

The ruling party itself, with its system of "democratic centralism" provides the leadership with the capability to manipulate the party and it became a one-man show under the leadership of Stalin.

Khrushchev, in his "secret" speech at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, said :

"After Stalin's death the central committee of the party began to implement a policy of explaining concisely and consistently that it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a god. Such a man supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything, is infallible in his behaviour. Such a belief about a man, and specifically about Stalin, was cultivated among us for many years."

In fact, Stalin was the unquestioned leader of the Soviet Union for nearly a quarter of a century—from the late '20s to 1953. The cult of the personality of Stalin, according to Khrushchev, was "the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious and grave perversions of party principles, of democracy, of revolutionary legality."

Khrushchev gave hair-raising details of Stalin's brutalities. He revealed that of the 139 members and candidates of the party's central committee, who were elected at the 17th Congress, 98 persons, i.e. 70 per cent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937 and 1938). Out of 1966 delegates who attended the Congress, more than half, 1108, were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, which, according to Khrushchev, was "a mass terror against the party cadres".

If Stalin treated his own party men with such contempt, how would he behave towards those who were not communists? Khrushchev asserted that during the second world war there were ruthless "mass deportations from their native places of whole nations" such as the Chechens, Ingush and Balkars.

Khrushchev accused Stalin of originating the concept of "enemy of the people". "This term", he said, "automatically rendered it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man or men engaged in a controversy be proven."

In other words, there was no rule of law.

No press freedom, no trade union rights, no rule of law, with thousands of people being persecuted, imprisoned, exiled and killed, what kind of proletarian democracy has it been?

The whole system is such that it has the inherent tendency to create conditions where power is concentrated in the hands of one individual. While talking of "collective leadership", Khrushchev increasingly arrogated to himself more and more power till he was overthrown by the Politbureau, which installed Leonid Brezhnev as General Secretary.

Brezhnev stopped the process of reforms initiated by Khrushchev and restored a moderate neo-Stalinist regime. Now he is being accused by the new leadership of having run a virtual collegiate racket, which is responsible for an unprecedented era of stagnation, corruption leading to virtual decay of Soviet Society for over a decade.

Gorbachev, the new reformer, has made the "bold" proposal that party leaders at all levels should be elected by secret ballot. Until now the election has been by show of hands. This was the easiest way of getting re-elected again and again, for who would dare show open dissent and opposition to an established leader? The rank and file only had the task of applauding (and not discussing or criticising) the policy decisions taken at the top and handed down to them for "formal approval" to maintain a facade of democracy.

What of the democratic system of the country as a whole? The Soviet Union held elections for various bodies from the local to the central level with one candidate in one constituency selected, of course, by the party. Thus the farce of "fighting" to get elected with no other candidate in the field has been regularly repeated year after year.

Now Gorbachev has come forward with the "daring" proposal that there should be more than one candidate in a constituency, who should of

course be suitably approved by the ruling communist party. If this happens it will be an epoch-making advance for the Soviet "democracy".

The Marxist concept of the "withering away of the state" is, at least in the short run, a romantic illusion. It is, however, curious that after seventy years of communist rule even the "limited" democratic rights and civil liberties which are enjoyed in "bourgeois democracies" have not been given to the Soviet People.

Thus the unelected government and self-appointed coterie of leaders control all aspects of Soviet life—the economy, politics and culture. Any one questioning any aspect of their rule is branded as a counter-revolutionary or simply as a hooligan or a criminal, and sent to jail; or, is branded mentally sick, and promptly despatched to psychiatric hospital, or forced to exile within the country, as was done to Andrei Sakharov, or outside, like Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

"The greatest illusion was that industrialization and collectivisation and the destruction of capitalist ownership would result in a classless society. In 1936, when the new Constitution was promulgated, Stalin announced that the 'exploiting class' had ceased to exist. The capitalists and other classes of ancient origin had in fact been destroyed, but a new class, previously unknown to history, had been created", wrote Milovan Djilas in his 'The New Class'.

It is fruitless to argue whether this is a new "class" or a "stratum" or an "elite". The fact remains that individuals of high rank acquire power over resources and over other people. The inherently hierarchical nature of the decision-making process ensures that the holder of a particular rank can define the privileges that go with that rank and he has also the power to prevent any public discussion of such privileges. For instance, every one in the Soviet Union knows that high party and state officials have access to special shops, where goods unobtainable by ordinary citizens can be bought at low prices, but so far nobody has dared to mention openly such a blatant discrimination.

One of the basic problems of Soviet communism is that it sprang from the grimy earth of Czarist Russia, one of the most backward, despotic and imperialistic countries. Thus Bolshevism carried all the birthmarks of that *ancient regime*, the Czarist secret police and Siberian prisons, press censorship and limitation on political and trade union activities, an authoritarian system of government and a colonialist temper (as reflected in Eastern Europe).

What is significant and intriguing is that after seventy years of communism, and despite vast revolutionary changes bringing about impressive economic development and cultural advancement, the Soviet Union has not yet been able to shake off some of the darker sides of its Czarist heritage.

The most positive achievements of the Soviet Union have been the spread of education and development of a welfare state. But at the end of the 20th century these are no longer any distinctive achievements. Western Europe, for instance, has built up highly developed welfare states without sacrificing any of the basic human and democratic rights.

That is why the appeal of Soviet communism as a "new civilization", with its welfarism combined with autocracy, has been steadily eroded in all industrially advanced countries. The Eurocommunists, who were once long-standing supporters in Western Europe of the Soviet way of life, are still trying to maintain the appeal of communism, but only by distancing themselves from the Soviet model. Even this effort has already proved that they are fighting a losing battle.

Thus neither Marxism, basing its hopes for revolution on the industrial working classes in advanced countries, nor Marxism-Leninism as evolved in the Soviet Union, provides any impetus in the West for the creation of a new civilization of the Russian type.

However, the appeal of Soviet Communism as a model for bringing about rapid industrialization of backward economies still has some attraction for the Third World. But this appeal too is wearing thin. The Soviet-supported 'model' communist states in the developing world are Cuba and Vietnam, which, unfortunately, can sustain themselves only with ever-increasing Soviet subsidies. Consequently, they do not provide shining examples for others, especially since, because of its own economic weakness, the Soviet Union cannot afford to go on indefinitely financing communism in the developing world.

This situation is already occurring in those countries with pro-Soviet radical governments in Africa—Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia. The Soviet Union can help with unending supplies of arms but not with sufficient economic assistance. During the great Ethiopian famine, which roused the conscience of the world, the Soviet Union could make only a symbolic gesture by sending only 20,000 tonnes of food; but in the Third World, for building of socialism, bread and butter are more important than Kalashnikov rifles and helicopter gunships. Thus the Soviet Union, because of its economic weakness, has already begun to lose its ideological battle in the Third World. The most glaring example is Afghanistan

IV. Social Life

The Webbs rightly observed that a new civilization and a new culture would call for "an immense step forward in the development of a better human nature..."

The Marxist-Leninist ideologists believed that given the appropriate economic, social and political structure, man was eventually perfectible and a "new Soviet man or woman", freed from the vices of earlier exploitative societies, would eventually emerge.

Whether man is perfectible or not, is a controversial issue, and it is not easy to measure the quality of an individual's life which varies at different stages.

What one can, however, do is to look at the basic facts of the economic, social, political and cultural life of a society and to examine the behaviour pattern of individuals.

The 27th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the first congress under the leadership of Gorbachev, was held in Moscow from 25 February to 6 March, 1986. There Gorbachev declared that he would like to remedy many of the irrationalities of the Soviet system and bring about a change in the mentality of party bureaucrats.

There was, however, more criticism of past policies at the congress than emphasis on present problems. Although Brezhnev was not specifically mentioned, there were repeated references to inertia, laxity and stagnation during his leadership. Although Gorbachev tried to remove Brezhnev's men, more than half of the Central Committee members elected during Brezhnev's last congress, remained.

The up-and-coming leader, B.N. Yeltsin, Moscow Party Secretary and a candidate-member of the Politbureau, asked at the Congress, why, after so many years, the roots of bureaucratism, social injustice and abuses had not been eradicated. "Why is the demand for radical change getting stuck in the inert layers of time-servers in possession of party cards?" It is not surprising that Yeltsin has now been removed from his party posts.

He told the embarrassed audience that when discussing matters of social justice with workers, he found that there was blunt talk about special benefits enjoyed by the leaders. Such benefits, including special shops, he said, should be abolished "where they are not justified".

The official organ of the Soviet Communist Party, *Pravda*, published on 13 February, 1986 an unusually frank letter from a veteran party member which said:

"Party, Soviet, Trade Union and Komsomol (young communist) leaders, sometimes themselves deepen our inequalities by making use of special restaurants, special shops, special hospitals" etc.

Of course, the "new class" has enjoyed their special privileges for so long, it will be very difficult to persuade it to relinquish them.

Gorbachev drew attention to the "weak control" exercised by local councils (Soviets) in the administration of their functions. He said there were lot of complaints from the public about the low standards of medical care, transport, housing, consumer services and protection of the environment. He said that "excessive centralisation" was the cause of the soviets' limited ability in tackling local problems.

The main social problems facing Soviet Society are: drunkenness and alcoholism among people of both sexes and all ages; inadequate housing, which exacerbates most problems, and domestic tension often stemming from poor living conditions and the "double burden" carried by working women.

The Soviet Minister of Internal Affairs gave the following statistics on 18 May, 1985:—

"Two-thirds of those guilty of murder and offences of grievous bodily harm—between 70 and 80 per cent—were in a state of intoxication. Nor is it any secret that drunkenness often leads to abuse of office, to bribery, theft and robbery and that it is closely linked with parasitism."

The Soviet Encyclopaedia once described alcoholism as a vicious weapon used by exploiting capitalist class to divert the working classes from its revolutionary path.

How does one explain its existence on such an extensive scale in the Soviet Union today?

Similarly, the early communists claimed that crime would disappear as the "bourgeois mentality" causing it, was abolished. Though the Soviet authorities publish few statistics on crime, it is so widespread that very extensive and energetic steps are being taken against it. Even party leaders and Ministers are being sentenced to death for their crimes.

The Soviet Procurator-General in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 3 July, 1985 summed up the present official attitude:

"Crime in the USSR is a complicated social phenomenon, the causes of which lie equally in the legacy of the past, certain problems and difficulties in our development, short-comings in educational work and lapses on the part of law-enforcement and other State bodies."

The divorce rate in the Soviet Union is one of the highest in the world, with one in three marriages ending within the first year. The figure for failed marriages in the cities of European Russia has risen to 50 per cent. ('Background Brief' of Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, March-June 1986.)

V-New Civilization : Still A Dream ?

To draw attention to the widespread prevalence of alcoholism, crime, anti-social behaviour, divorce or suicide in the Soviet Union does not imply that these problems do not exist in other countries or social systems. These facts underline two main points:

- (a) The Soviet Union is far from being the ideal society it is often made out to be by communist propaganda;
- (b) The Soviet Union has serious structural problems in tackling its political, economic and social ills. Gorbachev has an unenviable task in his efforts to reform Soviet society.

One of his major obstacles will be that the communist ruling elite has monopolised not only all knowledge but all power. And all this knowledge and power is utilised primarily to maintain its own special position and privileges, as Milovan Djilas has quite rightly observed:

"History will pardon the communists for much, establishing that they were forced into many brutal acts because of circumstances, and the need to defend their existence; but the stifling of every divergent thought, the exclusive monopoly over thinking, for the purpose of defending their personal interest, will nail the communists to a cross of shame in history."

Gorbachev has recognised this aspect of Soviet Life and has started to criticise such an attitude openly. To free the Soviet mind from the stereotyped dogmatism of over six decades, to adopt policies which may in the long run undermine the existing position of privileged people in society and, above all, to decentralise economic and political power, risking

the dislocation of the whole system, are some of the major problems which face the new leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev.

The work for a new civilization has yet to be undertaken in the Soviet Union because as John Strachey, one-time Marxist ideologue-turned-Democratic Socialist theoretician, in his classic summing up of the Soviet experiment had said:

"The means has been terrible, but the result commonplace."

To counter this kind of evaluation it is sometimes argued that one of the great accomplishments of the Soviet Union is that it has developed as a military super-power. But in our time Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan also became great military powers, with or without any pretensions of ushering in a new civilization.

It is also affirmed that under the aegis of the communists the Soviet Union has become a highly industrialised country. W.W. Rostow's thesis that it takes a country approximately sixty years to reach the stage of "maturity" once it "takes off" industrially, is also applicable to the Soviet Union. Nobody denies the fact the Czarist Russia "took off" industrially in 1890s and it would, therefore, in normal circumstances, have emerged as a major industrial power by 1950s, even had the communists not seized power in 1917. In any case, industrialization in itself does not produce a new civilization in the sense we have been discussing.

With economic life in a mess, political life still heavily weighed down by bureaucratic dictatorship, socio-psychological problems having assumed worrying proportions and intellectual and cultural life still trying desperately to break out of the strait-jacket of political regimentation, "a new civilization" in the Soviet Union, as conceived by the Webbs, still remains a distant dream.

Gorbachev is, however, trying to make a small beginning. It is too early to say whether he will succeed, or will be overthrown by the deeply-entrenched, hard-headed conservatives in his party. □

If the Communists worked just as hard as they talked, they'd have the most prosperous style of government in the world.

—Will Rogers, 1926.

October Revolution's Lost Horizon

Roles of Marx's Ambiguities, Lenin's Errors, and Stalin's Distortions

—S.N. Ghosh

THE IMPACT of October Revolution has to be viewed as a continuing process, in which its background, actions and interactions in this drama and their sequel are important.

October Revolution smashed autocracy of the Russian nobility and caused a large crack in the world capitalist system. It created a society which had no impulsive requirement to launch on manufacture of arms to save its economic system from collapse, a society which does not admit of land alienation or industry operation for private profit. It built up a society in which there is much greater personal security (from robbery, murder, rape etc.) for all except the dissenters and the political suspects, and in which social security is greater than in the West. The State, which the October Revolution gave rise to, showed, in its earlier stages, an unprecedented capacity to quicken industrial growth. Above all, it instilled great self-confidence in the working people of the world as a whole.

The Soviet Union is now a formidable industrial and military power. But whether the new order has made the Soviet people happy, and enlarged their freedom, is another question.

Recently, the *Moscow News* published a sampling of Soviet people's opinions. Since people are willing to talk freely on long, cross-country trips, the Moscow-Vladivostok train was chosen for an opinion poll involving six days' trip. On *perestroika* (restructuring), 71 per cent of the travellers said they were keeping a watchful stance, 13 per cent had 'negative' attitude and 16 per cent were enthusiastic. Asked if they saw any tangible results of *perestroika* in everyday life, 64 per cent said they had not, while some 36 per cent said that the move to revamp the economy had produced some results already.

Asked to predict the outcome of the move to put Soviet industry on self-financing basis, 33% forecast a negative outcome; 26% anticipated a positive result; and 41% did not know what would happen.

Asked if they did not feel themselves to be the masters of their locality or workplace and if they could influence the course of events in their region, town or enterprise—this is the crucial question regarding the condition of socialist democracy—61% answered 'no' and the other 39% replied that they could be influential.

Mr. Viktor Turshatov, author of the *Moscow News* article, reported that during the survey, one elderly man invited him to a compartment and then locked the door before recounting a complaint about corruption in a dairy because he has "not forgotten the times when, after a heart-to-heart talk, two out of three persons could be forced to change addresses for long years". (Source : The *Hindustan Times* of January 1, 1988 quoting Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News service.) The replies to the third and the fourth queries showed the horror and absence of freedom.

Take the question of people's food. *Pravda*, in the second week of December 1987, reported that although Russian bread has been traditionally tasty and nourishing, the quality of bread "has sharply deteriorated and continues to do so". In Moscow, bread is made in central bakeries and delivered by trucks around the capital where it is usually sold stale. The stores want to sell their unsold stocks first. So the fresh bread is stacked in the back room where it, too, soon gets stale. This is a vicious circle.

About a year ago, Moscow authorities had announced, with some fanfare, that bread was going to be enriched with nutrients that would make it healthier and more satisfying. At the same time, a price increase was announced. The new "miracle" bread would cost 22 Kopecks which was not high by Moscow standards. The truth is that whatever new additives were put, yielded wrong results. The new bread gets stale twice as fast, and it doesn't smell or taste like bread. It tastes like chemicals. If you eat more than two slices, you get heartburn. More over, the new bread is often hard even when it comes fresh from the bakery" (Source : The *Hindustan Times* of December 18, 1987 quoting Los Angeles Times-Washington Post Service).

Soviet citizens' craze for foreign consumer durables and the fact of widespread blackmarketing in these goods have been known for decades. Since blackmarketing for bread and food items like potato and tomato have now joined the list, as is testified by some Indian visitors to the USSR, the common people's distress can easily be imagined.

Moreover, Soviet sources have been reporting pervasive alcoholism of males who pass on the burdens to females; alcoholism of mothers beating the babies; youthful grandchildren 'enjoying life' while the old grandmothers clean the floors. These are no specimens of a superior life-pattern which the October Revolution had promised.

Thus, neither the Soviet Union nor the countries that adopted their model are socialist societies. These are authoritarian societies where the political and technological bureaucracy are in seats of power. These are a

new kind of class-divided societies where state-power-clothed people constitute a separate class, carrying out repressive measures against their people. The arrogance of this class which assumes that the Soviet model would be the universal model for socialist transformation "at least in the 'basic core' content", keeps rousing national resentment in the countries of East Europe and China against what the latter call "Red Tsardom". Even though the Hungarian uprisings of 1956, Czechoslovak uprising of 1968, and Polish unrest of 1956, 1958, 1970, 1976, and 1980 were put down with a heavy hand, there are strong anti-soviet simmerings in all these countries. The continuing Sino-Soviet conflict originated from the new autocracy of the Soviet leaders. It seems the Soviet leaders internalised the absolutism of power of the Tsar against whom they had fought. This has been the situation during the successive regimes following Lenin's death—a situation which now Gorbachov is trying to correct against very heavy odds.

Despite all these shortcomings, it must be said that the Soviet State has not enthroned cannibalism, as some States in the West have done compulsively to save their exploitation-based economy. Nor does it have any need for starting war on other countries. It is also in basic sympathy with the poorer people of the world. Its saving grace is the Marxian humanism, which as its frame of reference, asserts itself periodically, giving rise to leaders like Khrushchev and Gorbachov with their mission of de-bureaucratisation.

This, however, falls far short of the ideal of October Revolution. One thing is unmistakably clear. The Soviet society parades its economic achievements merely in terms of industrial outputs and its support to the freedom movements of colonial and semi-colonial countries in foreign policy terms, and its heroic defence of the motherland. (Defence of the motherland was in the tradition of the pre-Revolution Russia, too. Russian patriotic sentiment has always been strong.) What the Soviet society seems unable to claim is the creation of a new type of people whose selfless love and sacrifice for the neighbour would be living signposts of "socialist consciousness".

Yet, Marx's basic concern was humanism. He wanted to see self-creative, self-directing man, who "makes his life activity an object of his will and consciousness". He called man a "species-being"—a being who is aware of himself as a being of a certain kind; conscious of his humanity, and aware that he makes the community. Man is also a "species-being" in the sense that he treats himself as the present living species, as a universal and consequently free being". Marx's ideal was not merely a universal man but a total man. Humanism, for him, was the "unifying truth" of idealism and materialism. He was originally not interested in economics: he took up economic analysis of the capitalist system

because this was necessary as an aid to man's salvation and because man is to create his own meaning and freedom through work. He even declared that "communism as such is not the goal of human development". To him, communism is meaningful as "transcendence of human self-alienation", "appropriation of human nature, through man and for man", "return of man himself as a social being and hence really, a human being". Man's "leap into freedom", "man's self-actualisation" was his goal. But the Soviet Union has pursued economic development as the objective in itself and in a manner which stifled the humanist objective which, in fact, should have been the overriding objective.

Relevant in this context is Andre Sakharov's statement that both the Soviet Union and the USA share the same deficiencies and achievements of qualitatively similar social structures. There is "no qualitative difference in the structure of society of the two countries in terms of distribution of consumption". "The development of modern society in both the Soviet Union and the United States is now following the same course of increasing complexity of structure and of industrial management, giving rise, in both countries, to managerial groups that are similar in social character".

In the same vein, the Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung stated that "the contradiction between the Soviet people and this privileged stratum is now the *principal contradiction* inside the Soviet Union and it is an *irreconcilable and irreversible class contradiction*".

In a debate between Soviet intellectuals, some have suggested that "conflicting interests under (this kind of) socialism may continue to exist and even intensify to the point of becoming non-resolvable antagonistic contradictions of the type that are supposed to characterize only class societies".

It is, therefore, necessary to see how the Soviet Union was deflected from the vision of free human beings, how it came to believe that man was more concerned with *having* than with *being*; how in building up the material base—which was no doubt necessary to uplift the poor, not merely to boost national GNP—it relegated to the background the freedom of man. It is also necessary to examine the possibilities or otherwise of correcting the deformations.

Many have felt that the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks "in a country with a predominantly peasant population and still largely pre-capitalist economy" and their intent to build socialism therein over a long period, was wrong. The present writer does not agree with this view. Lenin's view that there was no need for the proletariat to "wait until capitalism has succeeded in ruining the millions of small and medium

individual producers" was correct. Marx, too, in a letter to the editorial board of the *Otechestvennyye Zapiski* in November 1877, had supported this course. The sources of the deformations lay elsewhere.

First: there was nothing in Marx's voluminous writings to indicate what constituted the *essence* of socialism. Without a definition of its essential values, an ideology is like a ship without a compass.

Secondly, even though Marxism gave a sound analysis of the functioning of the capitalist society, it provided no clear theoretical concept of the future ordering of the socialist society. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was correct when he said that Marxism is merely a reactive ideology, not an active ideology. It reacted every well against capitalism; its direction for action towards socialism was next to nothing.

Thirdly, Marx's doctrine suffered from many inadequacies, ambiguities and omissions which gave rise to serious errors of direction. When these resulted in fiascos or serious troubles, the alleged Marxists perpetrated inhuman cruelties on the ostensible plea that these were necessary to salvage the basic humanism of their goal. These inadequacies and ambiguities lay in his:

- (i) theory of base and the superstructure;
- (ii) concept of alienation, particularly the kind of alienation which arises from factory production based on division of labour;
- (iii) infection of dialectical and historical materialism with "positivism" and consequential divorce from ethics;
- (iv) acceptance of 'modern' reductionist science and technology as value-neutral pursuit of knowledge and activity;
- (v) assumption that large-scale industrialisation and large growth of industrial working class is an essential precondition for the building of socialism;
- (vi) assumption that peasantry is an essentially reactionary force and a veritable stumbling block to the building of socialism;
- (vii) theory of dictatorship of the proletariat—its lopsidedness;
- (viii) concept of religion—its lopsidedness.

Fourthly, Lenin added to the problem by his:

- (i) expedient formulation of injecting consciousness from outside, which does not exactly square up with Marx's concept of consciousness arising from the material basis of existence.

- (ii) defining of socialism as "Soviets plus electricity", merely in terms of administrative structure and economics, shorn of an emphasis on remoulding the culture of the classes, including the working class.
- (iii) call to catch up with the advanced capitalist economies in their kind of technology, as if these technologies are value-neutral and are not weighted in favour of the rich.
- (iv) enunciation of principles of party organisation on the pattern of military formations, thus disabling different levels of party committees from becoming the fora of vigorous intellectual debates, dialogues and organs for generation of a new culture.

Fifthly, Stalin plunged the Soviet society into orgies of violence against peasants and also his former comrades in the revolution. He totally disregarded the goal of humanism and the concept of superstructure interacting with the base, and distorted the theory of production forces as also violated his own earlier thesis on the nationalities question. In his zeal for galloping industrialisation and in his distrust of the peasants, he simply looted the farmers in the interest of "primary accumulation" (of capital). But in fairness to him, the *scope for misinterpretations and distortions* often lay in the opacities and omissions in the Marxian theories and Leninist expositions themselves. To be sure, Stalin became a power-thirsty dictator who, on account of his own fear complex, liquidated whoever attracted his suspicion. To try to explain this in terms of personal paranoia or "personality cult" is to evade the issue. Why did a society, which was committed to building a communist system and collective leadership, become subject to this monstrosity? What provided the scope for concentration of such enormous power in one person? Did the principle of coercion and smashing the class enemies without matching efforts to emancipate them from their degrading tendencies, breed coercion and dictatorship within? These questions need reflection, particularly when we evaluate the achievements and debacles of a system which originated from the October Revolution.

Detailed answers to these questions are not possible in a seminar paper. Short pointers as conclusions of the present writer's reflection and searching analysis over the last thirty two years are presented here with the intent of inducing deeper reflections and soul-searching.

II-Gaps in Marx's Theory

Socialism—in which individual consciousness merges into social consciousness; the individual seeks salvation in the society's salvation; and the society finds its fulfilment in the self-actualisation of each individual—

does not depend on any particular institutional form which is valid for all surroundings and all time. *Abolition* of the kind of private property which could be used to exploit others is no doubt an important step towards socialism. It is aid to the common people's economic liberation and also the class-individual's spiritual liberation in the sense of non-possession (*aparigraha* in Indian concept). But it is not necessary that the ownership should vest in the State at its apex level. Even if it vests at this level, the right of "permanent" possession and use, without the right of alienation, can be conferred on individuals. This was an ancient Indian system, which was beneficial to the community, as Marx had found. If, on the other hand, after the abolition of private property, the controllers of State apparatus themselves come to control the use of the property without any dispersal of power, a privileged class re-appears. This new class can be even more monstrous, since it alone wields massive power which is a combination of political and economic power. This institutional form defeats the very objective of abolition of private property.

A notion, which has acquired the force of biblical truth, is that socialism must be preceded by large scale industrialisation of heavy and large-size consumer industries and the growth of industrial proletariat as the majority or near-half of the population. The Chinese leaders challenged the concept. But even they have accepted large-scale development of heavy and large industries as a prior condition without raising questions as to (i) which kinds of industries are unnecessary or even undesirable; (ii) what are the limits of scale of even the desirable industries and the principles governing these. In the context of the fast-developing ecological crisis, all these questions are assuming prime importance and many among the intelligentsia have started talking about "post-industrial age". In an age when large polluting industries become anachronistic or greatly reduced in number and where the working force becomes a blend of intellectual and manual labour, will the ideal of socialism then have to fade? The logic of those who cling to the above "biblical notion" would lead to this tragic conclusion.

Marx's warning, in the above-mentioned letter to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, against Russia trying to become a capitalist nation on the model of the West European countries is taken by the Marxists as a warning merely against becoming a capitalist-led nation, not against industrialising on their pattern. It is true that this construction can be put on his statement. But one needs to ask, what, then, is the meaning of his observation that "*she (i.e. Russia) will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians*" (which he clearly considered undesirable)? Was not Marx referring to the inevitably adverse effect of industrialism of West-European model? Could the Bolshevik leadership

ever do the West European type of industrialisation without forced proletarianisation of the peasants? If this was the necessary cost, was it at all desirable? Answering his critic, Marx made the significant statement:

"He (i.e. Marx's critic) insists on transforming my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historic-philosophic theory of the general path of development prescribed by fate to all nations, whatever the historical circumstances in which they find themselves, in order that they may ultimately arrive at the economic system which ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labour, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon".

The question of prior western-type industrialism as the necessary precondition for socialism was, therefore, irrelevant.

Marx refused to draw any universally valid model, or chart out a universally valid path of development, because he knew that "events strikingly analogous, but taking place in different historical surroundings, led to totally different results."

A major complaint of Marx and Engels had been that the "bourgeoisie subjected the countryside to the rule of the town". Marx had shown that the West-European capitalism was based on the "predatory kind of European colonialism". Marx, referring to ancient Indian communities, had said: "Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down to this day, are based on possession in common of the land on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts..... The chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself and does not take the form of a commodity". If India now takes this pattern as the basis to build upon, and seeks to meet its present-day requirements by skipping both capitalism and industrialism (whose other name is industry for industry for yet other industries), will it be impossible to build a civilised, highly satisfying, durable communitarian system? This would, of course, depend on a clearer concept of a satisfying life style and also of an ecological union of agriculture and manufacture.

Stalin possibly inherited Marx's prejudice against peasants. (Marx had made an exception in case of Indian ancient peasant community, as the above quotation would show.) Marx used to regard peasants as contemptibly backward, individualistic, self-centred and ignorant because of their isolation. (We should soon see Marx's own finding that the manufacturing industries' division of labour produces fragmented men. Did he, therefore, have any rational basis for prejudice against the peasant and not against industrial worker?) Dr.B.N. Ganguli correctly stated that the dichotomy between "civilised nations" and the "barbarian nations" in the

Communist Manifesto reflected the Westerner's pride and prejudice against non-Western civilizations. Even, then, Marx and Engels, in the last part of the *Communist Manifesto*, had to come to the conclusion that "agriculture and urban industry (would have) to work hand in hand, in such a way as, by degrees, to obliterate the distinction between town and countryside."

It is possible to improve upon this concept by treating industries not as preserves of urban areas but as the common property of both. But for that to happen, most industries would have to be small and all industries ecologically sound. The industries for military hardware supply would, however, be generally large.

If Stalin's extortion of tribute from the peasants for industry-building and his "forced collectivisation" programme were murderous, he could always utilise Marx' observations against peasantry to justify his actions. In the European context, Marx had found that modern industry "annihilates the peasant, the bulwark of old society and replaces him by the wage-labourer. The irrational, old-fashioned methods of agriculture are replaced by scientific ones. Capitalist production completely tears asunder the old bond of union which held together agriculture and manufacture in their infancy. But at the same time it creates the material conditions for a *higher synthesis* in the future, viz, the union of agriculture and industry on the basis of more perfected forms they have each other acquired during their temporary separation". Stalin could console himself that the annihilation of peasants by him was also a step towards a *higher synthesis*. It was only Mao, who was against blind acceptance of Marx or of anybody, though he himself promoted "Mao cult" In one context, he said: "Some say Marx said it. If he did, let us not make propaganda out of it." Any stream of thinking, which refuses to go beyond the formulations of its founder, becomes faithless to the founder's spirit.

Marx's Many Ambiguities

In course of contrasting the division of labour under simple cooperation with the division of labour in a factory, Marx said: "While simple cooperation leaves the mode of working by the individual for the most part unchanged, manufacture thoroughly revolutionizes it, and seizes labour power by its very roots. It converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity by forcing his detailed dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts.....The individual is made the automatic motor of a fractional operation" (*Vide Capital Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, Page 360*).

Further quoting A Ferguson, he said: "Manufacturers prosper most where the mind is the least consulted, and where the workshop may..... be considered as an engine, the parts of which are men". (*Ibid page 361*).

Quoting Adam Smith he said: "The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations...has no occasion to exert his understanding...He generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become" (Ibid, page 362). He added to it his own comment: "Some crippling of body and mind is inseparable even for division of labour in society as a whole...manufacture carries this social separation of branches of labour much further, and also, by its peculiar division, attacks the individual at the very roots of his life" (Ibid page 363).

He quoted D. Urquhart approvingly: "To subdivide a man is to execute him, if he deserves the sentence, to assassinate him if he does not. The subdivision of labour is the assassination of a people".

These are acute observations with deep philosophical import. This was not different from the stance of Mahatma Gandhi who appeared on the world scene a generation later. If any communist-led country remembered this analysis of Marx, it would have found it impossible to adopt the West European type of nature-conquering mega-technology.

But Marx contradicts himself in another portion of Vol. I of Capital where he says that "large-scale industry offers the worker a wider variety of work, or rather it would do so, if the economy were not capitalist". If large-scale industry, by its very nature, tends to offer the worker a wider variety of work, how its being capitalist would inhibit this tendency passes one's comprehension. On the other hand, if the sub-division of labour in manufacturing process is inherently the "fragmentation" and "assassination of man", how mere change in ownership structure (which does not change the industry's internal production organisation) would change its assassinative character is unintelligible. This ambiguity in Marx—in fact, it is contrariety—has made the Marxists, too, partners in the debasement of man.

As stated earlier, Marx and Engels had formulated that a society's mode of production and relations of production constitute the society's material base; and ideas, social institutions, socio-psychological attitudes, culture and ethos constitute the super-structure. The very notions of "base" and "superstructure" imply the base is primary, the superstructure is auxiliary. Further, the social system consisting of the base and the superstructure achieves internal balance and harmony; and yet, there is continual imbalance and conflict because while the economic base changes fast enough, the superstructure lags behind. The conflict is resolved by an appropriate change in the superstructure. Thus, Marxian concept placed overdue emphasis on the economic aspect of the society.

Later, after Marx's death, Engels wrote a clarificatory letter to Joseph Bloch in September, 1890: "According to the materialist conception

of history, the *ultimately* determining factor in history is the production and reproduction in real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that economic factor is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract absurd phrase".

But few accused them of positing economic factor as the *only* determining factor. They did definitely place it as the primary factor. To this Engels said in the said letter: "Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-a-vis adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always had the time, the place or the opportunity to give the other factors involved in this interaction their due".

But even this did not clarify the Marxist position on the weightage it gives to ideas, man's consciousness and cultural creativity for changing the material basis of the society. Engels had, again, to explain in a letter to W. Borgius on January 25, 1891 that in their concept the economic relations comprise the geographical basis on which they operate and the external environment which surrounds the society, even "the race is itself an economic factor". But here, again, he got afraid that some might tend to dilute the importance of the economic factor proper. Therefore, he reiterated: "Politics, legal, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic and the like development is based on economic development. But all these react, upon one another and also upon the economic basis. One must think that the economic situation is the *cause* and *solely active* whereas everything else is only passive effect. On the contrary, interaction takes place on the basis of economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself." But, again, Engels feared that this might influence some to underestimate the role of non-economic factors. Therefore, he hastened to illustrate that institutions and emotions etc. are "not without economic effect" and finally concluded that "men make their history themselves" since man is a blend of emotions, ideas and economics eluding constant primacy to any aspect. Engels's final statement may be taken as a toning down of the "primacy" of the economic factor: it would not be prime in all circumstances.

In our discussion of the after-effects of the October Revolution, a scanning of the concept of "base and superstructure" in such detail is necessary because humanist objective has been defeated (i) by the *devaluation* of importance of the superstructure—that is, of remoulding the Soviet people's mental make-up, their emotions, cultural traits and socialist consciousness, their taste for freedom—and (ii) by the near-exclusive emphasis of economic output and military might. Mao Tse Tung's writings in criticism of the Soviet line return, time and again, to this neglect of the superstructure, i.e. neglect of the humanist culture aspect,

"The arrogance, the lordly pose of the party leaders and State officials, the airs of their children, the pretensions of cadres nurture a new class of exploiters" and defeat the objective of workers' control over enterprises and kill the very spirit of socialism.

Mao Tse-tung sought to correct this situation by emphasising the importance of superstructure. He wrote "... from the stand-point of world history, the bourgeois revolutions and the establishment of the bourgeois nations came *before*, not *after* the Industrial Revolution. *The bourgeois first changed the superstructure and took possession of the State apparatus before carrying on propaganda to gather real strength.* Only then did they push forward great changes in production relations. When the production relations had been taken care of and they were on the right track, they then opened the way for the development of productive forces. To be sure, the revolution in the production relations is brought on by a certain degree of development of the productive forces, but the major development of the productive forces always comes *after* changes in the production relations".

Although this exposition is relatively better in the sense that it explains better the dynamic relationship between the base and the superstructure, it also introduces certain confusions and raises questions. In the present writer's opinion, three categories instead of two should be recognised—infrastructure, structure, and superstructure. The orientation of the genre of technologies (infrastructure) decides the incline of the foundation; the economic structure is the base, and the politico-juridical-religio-ethical spectrum the superstructure, and there is continual interaction between all the three.

If many Marxists have come to view that only the workers are the productive forces and remain indifferent to the genre of technology, the root of the confusion lies in the not-too-consistent expressions of Karl Marx. In *Poverty of Philosophy* he says:

"In acquiring *new forces of production*, men change their mode of production, their ways of earning their living; they change all their social relations. *The handmill will give you a society with the feudal lord, the steam-mill a society with the individual capitalist*" (Emphasis added). Here he includes technology within the productive forces, and gives the genre of technology the central importance—in deciding the mode of production and influencing the relations of production.

In '*German Ideology*' he makes it clear that a new productive force has a qualitative aspect: this results in a new development in the organisation of labour.

In '*Poverty of Philosophy*', again, at another place he makes it clear that what is important is not the machinery but the kind of social relation that gets established on the basis of it.

In '*Grundrisse*', he says that "machines are the materialised power of knowledge".

There is compatibility between all the above statements.

Yet, at many other places he has described productive forces in such a manner that his lay readers have been left with the impression that only the working people constituted the productive force. The harm that this has caused will be clear from the following example.

Marx had formulated his views in these words: "At a certain stage in this development, the material means of production of society come into contradiction with the prevailing production relations, or—what is merely a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had previously functioned. From forms of development of the means of production, these relations now become fetters on the means of production. A period of social revolution begins. With the transformation of the economic basis, the entire enormous superstructure is slowly or quickly overturned". But when does this overturning begin to occur? Among the two conditions expounded by Marx, one was as follows. "New production relations never arise before the material conditions of existence for them (i.e. production relations) have matured within the womb of the old society". Since the material conditions of existence of new production relations is often determined by a new genre of technology, the social revolutionary potential of completely new kinds of people-oriented techniques of production is immense*. The Marxist theoreticians of the Soviet Union have not grasped this idea. The Marxists outside the Soviet Union have satisfied themselves with the idea that the existing pattern of technology would be innocuous and would serve the people when they come to seize state power. They have remained blind to the need for a liberating kind of technology.

III. Blind Spots and Distortions Defeat Revolution

Marx could not be immune from the general enthusiasm for a supposedly value-free science which reached its high point in the late Victorian society. Discoveries of Galileo and Darwin in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively, had played great roles in liberating men from the tyranny of theology. Possibly, this failed Marx in perceiving the elitist content and destructive potential of science and technology based on the philosophy of conquering Nature and the Cartesian reductionist method. Marx, who threw a challenge to the concepts of philosophy, economics and history, failed to throw any basic challenge to the ruling concepts of natural science and technology, both of which are loaded with values of elitism and destructionism of life-processes. The deadly

In today's condition, renewable-energy-based and biological resource-based production techniques have this revolutionary potential.

potential, which was not too obvious in the nineteenth century, has come to be increasingly obvious in the twentieth century. Even then, the Marxist State has been participating in this kind of science and technology; and Marxists all over the world believe that these will be benign when they come to power. Modern science, which is reductionist science, and the manipulative nature-conquering technology have today become the world's greatest threat to survival of all life forms. *It is the one overriding religion and super-ideology which has now overridden all other religions and ideologies.*

Yet, it must be said that Marx was great enough to remember that natural science would have to lose its 'one-sidedly materialist orientation' in order to be integrated in a total interpretation of man and society. David McLellan says, Marx was clear about this throughout his life. Even Engels, who is more responsible for introducing the positivist element* in Marxism, was aware that "the analysis of nature into its individual parts", "the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in their isolation, detached from the whole" causes failures to "see the wood for the trees" (Anti-Duhring).

It would be wrong not to point out that the root of failure of Marx and Engels to see through the nature of modern science lay in their belief that the relation between men and Nature was basically antagonistic. Marx talked about "antagonism between men and nature, and men and men". He also talked about "wrestling with Nature". Darwin's system of struggle in nature had blinded them and also a few generations of people from seeing that the system of cooperation in Nature is even more pervasive. Prince Kropotkin was among the very few who has realised this in pre-October revolution days.**

Marx's concept of dictatorship of proletariat came to be misinterpreted by his followers. Although Marx and Engels used the word "dictatorship", Engels pointed out later that it was nearest to democracy in a republic in a class-divided society. Lenin, too, pointed out that the soul of this "dictatorship" was socialist democracy. Interestingly, David McLellan informs us that "the word 'dictatorship' did not have the same connotation for Marx, as it has now-a-days. He associated it principally with the Roman office of *dictatura* where all power was legally concentrated in the hand of a single man during a limited period in a time of crisis."

Yet, it must be admitted that Marx's concept, derived possibly from the failure of Paris Commune, tended to emphasise lopsidedly the aspect of "smashing" the basis of bourgeois opposition. But it was the same

*Positivism of Science means the concept of value-freeness of Science.

**Blindness to the system of co-operation in nature keeps people tied to resource use systems which perpetuate people's dependence, as in capitalist systems

Marx who had produced the seminal idea that the proletariat could emancipate itself only by emancipating all classes (including the bourgeoisie) and all humanity. Was this idea realizable merely by smashing? Compassion and persuasion had to be the major element after the capture of power i.e. after the swift, initial dismantling of the previous exploitative state apparatus.

This aspect was blanked out in Marx's writings. This was because the concept of power and the masculine concept of conquest were dominant in Marxist thought process. In fact it was, and is, dominant in Western culture. That coercion of others would breed coercion within the party, within the new agency of the state, was not understood. The Eastern concept of conquest by compassion, persuasion and concern for even the opponent's sublimation (freeing the adversary from his degrading acquisitive values and circumstances) was a necessary complement to translate the ideal into a reality. Shri S.N. Nagarajan points out that in the West, Oliver Goldsmith was among the very few who could conceive of 'stooping' to conquer.

Marx had found that religions promoted a feeling of pre-determination of man's fate by an external power (God). Feuerbach, who exercised appreciable influence on Marx, wrote logically: "If men appropriate for themselves the attributes which they project to God, they would be in a position to restore to themselves their alienated species-being". Marx, rising to heights of passion, wrote poetically: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. Religion is the opium of the people." No doubt, this is true of dogmatic, institutionalized religions.

Marx did not realize that religion cannot be eliminated and that without a concept of transcendence and immanence, the materialist man would quarrel even more. People, who are obedient to the transcendent or the divinity within, would not at any rate be servile to their fellowmen.* The flattery and servility which is now pervasive in the Soviet Union, is the result of the abolition of a transcendental frame of reference. Naked power has now taken God's place.

In "Critique of Political Economy", Marx said: "in the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of produc-

* Man is different from other animals in that he seeks to achieve the impossible. Therein lies his humanity. A feeling of the Infinite within oneself is essential for maximisation of the potential. Call it religion or not, whatever charges the soul with higher potential is a force of religion. Feeling of oneness with the Infinite and the Cosmos causes a surge of creative energy for a higher calling, defying all fears.

tion constitutes the economic structure of the society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. *It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness*" (Emphasis added).

If Marx's above statement is taken as the only basis, it would seem that consciousness is a mere determinate and the material condition of existence the determinant, and that there is no two-way flow between them. Marx, at places, cogently argued that "idea becomes a force when it grips the masses". In his Theses on Feuerbach, Marx clearly said that man was not simply a product of material conditions and that such a view would leave out the subjective, creative side of man's interaction with nature. Criticising the French materialists of the eighteenth century, Marx wrote: "the materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are made by men and the educator must himself be educated". About class, to which he attached so much importance, he said that a class only existed when it was *conscious* of itself as such.

Consciousness is the dynamic element. Ideas interact with the material world and affect it powerfully. The only limitation, Marx thought, was that ideas rooted in the socio-economic-political-cultural soil of their time were unable to foresee accurately the future and make detailed predictions about it.

Marx's influential followers devalued the role of ideas. Hence, Marxists in general have been reluctant to explore ideas beyond the written text of Marxism. They have no use for new ideas which could aid the fulfilment of Marx's humanistic objectives. They have not made any diligent efforts to reconcile the conflicting views of Marx pronounced on different occasions. This has impeded the building of bridges between the materialists and the idealists in changing the world.

Marx's interpreters often read a kind of economic determinism into his statement, supposing him to have said that other elements in the historical process were determined uniquely by the economic one. The source of the confusion has been explained above (in "Base and Superstructure"). Even then, it was wrong to have thought that Marx ever formulated his theory in the strict causal sense (economics being the determinant of history). Marx was aware that his theory did not yield any ready answer to historical problems. Ridiculing Mikhailovsky he said that there was no theory of "the general path every people is fated to tread". In his letter to Vera Zasulich in March 1881, he said: "the 'historic inevitability' of this process is expressly limited to the countries of Western Europe" (Emphasis Marx's own). His use of the words 'historic

inevitability' within quotes was significant. Possibly, the only source of Marxist followers' belief in 'historical inevitability' was Marx's observation about history being subject to observable laws and Engels' concept of negation of negation as much in social affairs as in the physical world.

Since socialism was "scientifically proved" to be inevitable, the Marxists could afford to be both dogmatic and arrogant and to lower the need for introspection.

IV. Lenin's Errors Facilitated Stalinist Dictatorship

Lenin added to the confusion by his formulation that the workers, left to themselves, achieve only trade union consciousness and that socialist purpose and goal are instilled into the worker from the outside. This was a kind of contradiction of Marx's "social determinism" i.e. one's consciousness and knowledge are shaped by one's existence and class position. Was it also not a contradiction to the Marxist position that the proletariat's sufferings are universal, that standing at the lowest rung of social existence, they hold in their bosom the sufferings of all humanity and that by their own efforts they redeem not only themselves but the whole of humanity? Lenin's statement, by placing the cadre above the generality of workers, unwittingly paved the condition for Stalin's imposition of his cadre's rule over the working people and ultimately the dictatorship of the party in the name of dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin also, by defining socialism as "soviets plus electricity" placed the whole perspective of development in merely administrative-structural and economic terms, omitting the need for conscious cultural transformation. Again, by his call to outstrip the Western capitalist societies in their kind of technology, he unwittingly diverted the people's attention from the need to generate a new genre of technology which could open up common people's access to Nature's resources, reduce people's dependence on any external agency (industry, party, state) and make their emancipation real. Launching the Soviet Union on the path of the Western pattern of technology which is loaded with elitist, eco-destructive and socially disintegrative values, he sealed its fate and ensured the triumph of authoritarianism.

Lenin's error in enunciating the principles of party organisation lay in his concept of the party as a battle formation for waging merely physical battles. If in his thinking, the need for battle on consciousness plane had been equally important, he would have given less emphasis on disciplining and more on dialogues, debates and discussions—in a word, intellectual freedom. Rosa Luxemburg had, early in her life, realised the perils of a rigidly centrally controlled party: she had seen how with the leader's somersault, the entire party switched to the support of imperialist war. She, therefore, criticized Lenin for his advocacy of overweighted centralism. She pointed out that it would make 'the central committee the real active nucleus of the party and all other organizations

merely its executive tools'. Lenin's defence that it was 'democratic centralism' must have sounded hollow, even to himself. It was the party built on such rigid centralist lines that became very serviceable to Stalin's dictatorial rule in later days. Lenin, from his sick bed, was a pathetic observer of dictatorial emergence. After having laid the theoretical bases for authoritarianism he would have in any case failed to stem it.

There is no need to discuss here the various aspects of Stalin's policies. His violence against farmers, and his countless executions after summary trials made socialism look like a dirty word in the eyes of even the workers of Europe and have provided a weapon in the hands of the capitalist states for carrying on war preparations continually on the plea of saving democracy. It needs, however, to be said that he was partly driven by his lust for power and fear complex; partly he was a prisoner of the erroneous notions derived from Marx, Engels and Lenin. If Lenin had been alive, he would have, in all probability, corrected some of the errors in the light of realities. Stalin compounded the errors and introduced new distortions. He blatantly disregarded Lenin's dictum that socialist democracy was the soul of dictatorship of the proletariat.

For all ardent lovers of socialism, an analysis of why the dictatorship could develop in a country which began its journey for socialism, and why the party and state bureaucratic power could become deadly and pervasive is essential. The reasons are as follows :

- (i) In a state where the political and the economic power get concentrated in the same hands, it gives rise to monstrous bureaucracy;
- (ii) Nature-conquering capital-intensive, highly complex technology promotes centralism. In the capitalist countries, it promotes corporate centralism and the power of the military complex. In the Soviet Union, it brought further power to the controllers of state capitalist structures.
- (iii) Russian tradition of autocracy continued to influence the new rulers.
- (iv) Forcing the pace of any kind of development has an in-built drive for promotion of bureaucratic power. In the case of the Soviet Union, the theoretical necessity of forcing the pace of collectivisation and industrialisation—and the real need for developing military industry quickly as a response to the seige by imperialist powers—promoted excessive bureaucratisation at the cost of the people.

E.H. Carr has given an insightful description of *bureaucratic* growth in the Soviet Union as a result of "the hot-house development of Russian industry, in its haste to catch up the time-lag": it imitated Western technological and industrial models but its requirement of speed "created

a social structure sharply different from that of the older industrial communities of western Europe": it did not have the institutional democratic values. "The rapidity and belatedness of Russian industrial development shaped the human factor on both sides of industry on distinctive lines of its own. In the west, something of the spirit of the earlier entrepreneur, attentive to the changing conditions of the market and in close personal contact with his workers, survived even in the manager of modern industry; in Russia, the industrial manager was, from the first, the administrator, the organiser, the bureaucrat".

V. Gorbachov's Initiative

Against this background, Gorbachov's recent initiative towards nuclear disarmament internationally and democracy and workers' effective participation in industry management at home can be viewed as efforts towards restoration of the Soviet Union to democracy and socialism. Even though he has not talked about the managers' and political functionaries' direct participation in manual labour and although there is no lessening of the State power, there is tremendous resistance, within the Soviet system, to these reforms which, despite their limitations, have great ameliorative potential provided these do not take a turn towards consumerism.

The campaign now in progress for democracy in the work place, worker participation in the management of production, punishment to non-cooperating managers, provision for election of managerial personnel by the labour collective is a far more serious business than in Khrushchev's time. The reasons for these measures also are compelling. Without disciplining labour, there is no possibility of checking the deterioration of product quality. Without greater delegation of authority at the enterprise level and transfer of initiative from the central ministries, there was no escape from chaos. Without worker democracy, the authority lost by the central ministries could have been gained only by the managers to no other stratum's advantage.

Undoubtedly, there is ambivalence in almost all strata of the society except the intelligentsia which welcomes it wholeheartedly. The American journal "Problems of Communism" seems right in gauging the attitudes:

"The balance of social and political forces in the Soviet Union is a very controversial subject. Some see a virtually united phalanx of forces opposed to Gorbachev: the bureaucrats, the party apparatus, the military, the workers, the Russians (who fear decentralisation), and the non-Russians (who hate continued central control)—everyone but the intelligentsia. If the picture is accurate, then Gorbachev has a monumental and probably insuperable problem".

"Yet this undimensional listing surely overdraws the picture. Policies that produce unhappiness in one group produce some countervailing

positive attitudes in other groups. If the workers are unhappy about being disciplined, the bureaucrats should be delighted to have increased power to discipline them. If the industrial ministries do not like losing the power to appoint plant managers, the local party organs should be pleased at the prospect of controlling such appointment as they do the 'election' of collective farm chairmen. And so it goes from group to group. It is, indeed, wrong, to see the Soviet Union divided between supporters and opponents of reform. *Instead, virtually everyone in the Soviet Union has both excellent reasons to favour reform and excellent reasons to fear reform*".

In this tangled situation, the actualisation of reform is even more complex than making a revolution. This cannot be completed by partial or piecemeal reforms, without the vision of holistic reordering of the society and its cultural transformation. This, in turn, requires a matching theoretical maturity based on a philosophy of life-style. Oscillations in excess in one direction produce excessive reactions and oscillations in another direction. This is how Mao's "cultural revolution" failed in China, which seems now to be taking the capitalist road under the garb of socialism.

Without the concept of an ecologically and ethically sound life-style, openness may degenerate into hedonistic consumerism as in the West, to the ruin of socialism.

The forces which have a vested interest in exercising dictatorship over the people are too deeply entrenched in the Soviet party and bureaucracy. The forces which are prone to succumb to consumerism are also endemic. Nothing short of a revolution can dislodge/reform these forces. A revolution, however, needs ideological clarity and suitable organisational principles. Ideological clarity, in turn, demands clarity of perspective of socio-politico-economico-technologico-cultural nexus. There is no sign of these as yet. Hence there is a great risk of the systemic force sabotaging and silently killing the Gorbachovian initiative.

Only the Soviet and East European people's struggles in defence of democracy, freedom and socialist humanism and world people's mobilisation of support therefor can help regain the lost horizon.

□

The Russian Revolution : An Indian Over-view

By : K.R. Malkani

RUSSIA, said Winston Churchill, is a mystery wrapped in a riddle inside an enigma. It is a memorable statement in an interesting alliteration; but, for the rest, to the well-informed, Russia is not any more of a mystery than any other country.

Nor was the Russian Revolution any more revolting than any other violent revolution. Indeed it was very much of a follow-up to the French Revolution. The French Revolution abolished the monarchy and took away the properties and special rights of the Church hierarchy and the landed aristocracy; and it put the city rich in centre-stage of the political scene. The Russian Revolution went a step farther : it not only abolished the monarchy, the church and the aristocracy but also traders and industrialists. It improved the lot of the toiling masses and, in the name of workers and peasants, it installed the "party" as the custodian of their rights. The Communist Party became kind of a new collective Czar, (Incidentally, 'Czar' is Russification of the title Caesar—even as 'Kaiser' is its Germanization.) This new Czar is more efficient than the old Czar, in whatever it does. And, for that reason, it industrialises better than the old Czar—but it also suppresses liberties more effectively than the Czar. In its essence, the Soviet Communist Party is a re-incarnation of the dethroned and de-capitated Czar. As the good old proverb goes, the more things change, the more they remain the same. (Even the communist practice of sending dissenters to Siberia or lunatic asylum, has been inherited from Czarist days.) Politics is, basically, a continuum of history. Russia today is very much a logical corollary of the Russia of yesterday. We cannot understand the Russian revolution unless we see it in the context of Russian history.

Russia is neither European nor Asian; it is Eurasian. The Roman Empire never touched Russia—except for forays to capture 'slaves', whence the name 'Slav' for these people. It is interesting to note that the east European frontier of the Roman Empire roughly coincided with what is called the Iron Curtain today. Even when Russia went Christian, it got its Christ from Byzantium, via Constantinople, and not from Rome. This Greek Orthodox Church is as different from Roman Catholic Church as Catholics are different from Protestants, if not more so. Their whole orientation is different.

Even so, after the fall of the Roman empire, Russia and Western Europe got along well enough. English king Harold's daughter even

married a Russian prince. But the Tartar (Mongol) invasion of Russia changed the scene radically. When at last the nomadic Tartars left, Russia was in a shambles. Since the Dutchy of Muscovy had succeeded in defeating the Tartars, Moscow became the natural centre of the Russian state. The Western neighbours took advantage of Russia's weakness and started nibbling away at its territories. In 1610, Poland invaded Russia and occupied Moscow. In 1709, Sweden swept through Russia and occupied its coastal Baltic areas. (It is interesting to note that it was only after World War II that Russia got back the territories it had lost to the West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.)

When the Industrial Revolution came to Western Europe, Russia found itself lagging behind. The history of Russia during the last three centuries is the story of its efforts to catch up with the West. The benevolent dictatorship of Peter the Great and Empress Catherine, and the malevolent dictatorship of Stalin, were all Russian double-marches to come up on par with the West. The Russian Revolution was basically a Russian effort at modernisation; its significance for other countries, and for the working class in other countries, was quite incidental.

Indeed the Russian Revolution was a negation of the entire communist thought as enunciated by Marx and Engels. The communist prophets had said that politics is only a political expression of economic processes; that capitalism in the West will make the rich, richer, and the poor, poorer; that the poor, therefore, will rise in revolt and establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat". This, they said, will be followed by the "withering away of the state" and establishment of an idyllic society, in which everybody will "work according to capacity, and receive according to need". Since capitalism was more developed in UK and France, Marx and Engels had prophesied a communist revolution in those countries. Indeed they had a withering contempt for the Slav race. Wrote Engels in 1849: "The universal war which is coming, will crush the Slav alliance and will wipe out completely those obstinate peoples so that their very name will be forgotten...and that will be a real step forward."

Exactly the opposite happened. Communist Revolution came to Russia—and not to be the West; it was not ushered in by industrial workers—certainly not by peasants—but by defeated soldiers returning from the Front in World War I; (the Russian revolution was triggered by the German General Staff sending Lenin in a sealed car, with tons of gold, into Russia, to end the war on the Eastern Front); the communist state is stronger and more centralised than any "bourgeois" state; and the boss here is the "Party", and not workers or peasants. Russia has inverted Marxism—and stood it on its head.

Now the question is: what has been the impact of the Russian Revolution on civilization; what have been its consequences for the Soviet Republics, for World Economy, for World Politics, for World Culture.

Russian Revolution and the Russian People

When communists took over Russia, they snuffed out what little democracy there was; and in its place they set up a one-party dictatorship.

Since Russia is composed of a number of nationalities, many of which have a rich history of their own, the new communist constitution gave these "Republics" an "autonomous status" with a technical "right to secede". In point of fact, none of them would dare to move in that direction: their aspiring leaders would be promptly dubbed anti-people and "put in their place"—somewhere in Siberia.

Russia has had a long tradition of feudalism and autocracy. The fact that Russia's population is, racially and linguistically, more than fifty per cent non-Russian, also confronts Russia with a basic dilemma: if it introduces honest democracy and real federalism, it may find many minority-nationalities wanting to secede. The dominant Russian response to this situation is: 'no democracy' and 'greater centralisation'. In addition, the communists have also long ridiculed freedom and democracy as "bourgeois shams". But it is possible that, had the Western armies not invaded Russia in a bid to kill the Russian Revolution in its infancy, communist Russia would have been more relaxed and less autocratic.

I-A : Russian Industry

Russia had a growing economy even under the Czar. It had a huge railway network, a modern textile industry and a good steel industry. But defeat in war retarded industry; Revolution dislocated everything; and on top of that, the new regime emphasised heavy industry—particularly arms industry. And that led to the neglect of consumer industry. This obsession with heavy and arms industry was partly due to threat of foreign intervention and partly due to Russia's own autocratic tradition. It can be argued that, but for Stalin's emphasis on heavy industry and arms factories, Russia would have collapsed under the impact of German invasion in World War II; but it can also be argued that Lenin's New Economic Policy, if allowed to continue, would have given Russia all the heavy industry it needed, without causing too much suffering to the people.

Today Russian industry is not as strong and as sophisticated as industry in the West or in Japan, but it is big enough and good enough to command American respect. In the words of George F. Kennan, the most distinguished American to have been his country's envoy in Russia:

"Today I am free to confess that Soviet economic progress in the intervening years, in the face of these handicaps, has surpassed anything I then thought possible." While USA was the first to put a man on the moon, USSR was the first to orbit a sputnik in space.

I-B : Russian Agriculture

Russia is weak on the agricultural front. Russia today is not better fed than under the Czar, though food distribution is certainly more equitable than before.

Russia is handicapped by the fact that though it has vast stretches of land, not much of it is cultivable. It has vast deserts of snow. In many areas, Russian winter makes only one crop possible. Khrushchov's ploughing up the Russian Steppes has only led to erosion of those virgin soils.

However, Russian agriculture was hurt most by Stalin's forced collectivisation, which robbed the peasant of his motivation for increased production. Interestingly enough, this collectivisation was inspired *not* by communist theory—which does not say much about the agricultural sector anyway—but by the romantic Russian writers of the nineteenth century, who had idealised community farming and community living, as some kind of a utopia. Mercifully, Russia has permitted small private plots, and production on these is excellent. Even so, Russia confessed its failure on the agricultural front when it decided to import quantities of wheat from the USA.

A part-explanation for those imports could also be the Russian cultivation of the Farm Lobby in USA. It is interesting to note that while President Carter banned wheat exports to Russia—for the latter's entry into Afghanistan—as soon as Reagan was elected President, he promptly lifted the ban—in the interest of the Farm Lobby!

I-C : Education

Russian schools teach communist dogma as if it were a moral/religious course. But, for the rest, Russian education system is rated very high. To quote George Kannan once again : "By its admirable programme of popular education, which in many ways deserves our respect, it has created a new educated class which is simply not prepared to accept the old devices of communist thought control, and is determined to do its thinking for itself." A bright Russian student can look forward to the best education to develop his talents. Voroshilov, born shepherd, became President of Russia.

I-D : Russian Society

Russia has a couple of lac people who have the manner and bearing of aristocrats. They are like the Dukes of England. They are obviously the progeny of old aristocrats (the Boyars etc.), reinforced by recruitment from Burgher ranks, and even promising commoners, now active in the party. They have special facilities like scarce choice foods, country houses (Dachas) and other goodies of life. The Russian citizen does not particularly resent them. (While we all talk of equality of man, we all quietly concede inequality where, we think, it is, more or less well-merited.) Apart from this "New Class", made famous by Djalas, Russians have little socio-economic inequality; except in the realms of Arts and Sciences, the top executive may get only twice as much bonus as the shop-floor assistant; that's all. Nor does the common man need much more : his food and shelter are subsidised; Health and Education are free; nobody can buy a house; Russians visiting abroad pick up gadgets like movie cameras and VCRs; not many commoners aspire for fancy furs. There is no income tax. Most of the government revenue comes from sales tax. Hence the high cost of items like shirts and shoes. At the same time nobody is without his shirt or shoes.

I-E : Religion & Culture

Though Religion is officially rejected as the opium of the people, churches are more full of people than in the West. People prefer to solemnise their marriage in church, rather than in the drab court-room. Easter cakes are there; only they have been renamed 'Spring cakes'. Christmas Trees are also there; only they have been renamed as New Year Trees.

I-F : Literature

Russia under communism has produced much literature, but it is lacking in its pre-Revolutionary quality. It has not produced any Tolstoy, Gorky or Dostoyevsky. The Soviet government holds that literary work ought to be harnessed for production of social welfare. The consequence has been a marked decline in both the literary merit and the social influence of Russian literature. Under the Communist regime, Russian writers who have followed the party line, have been sterile, while those like Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, who have written spontaneously, as their creative spirit has moved them to write, have been discouraged and hampered even when they have not been subjected to actual persecution.

I-G : Morals

Crime rate is low in Russia because nobody needs to steal or rob out of need. Russian youth are also spared the crime and violence of American

Press and TV. USSR, therefore, does not have USA's urban decay and urban violence. But alcoholic drinking is a major problem of Russia. Khrushchov, during his first visit to India, was pleasantly surprised to learn of Prohibition in India: he said they would not dare to ban liquor in USSR, it would be too unpopular. But there is no commercial exploitation of sex in advertising etc. Russian women are surprised at Western competitions for Miss America or Miss World titles. "We are not horses to be lined up, paraded and examined for 'beauty,' they say.

I-H : Family and Marriage

The cultural level of a society is judged by the position of women, and it is sad to say that it is *not* as good in the USSR as it is made out to be. Peter the Great had ended the seclusion of women. He was followed by a series of Empresses, who further improved their lot. Women also played a significant role in the communist movement. But the Revolution hurt them, even while ostensibly "liberating" them. The Church was very important in the life of women—and the Revolution dis-established the Church.

The looseness with which marriages were made—"marriage over a glass of wine"—and broken—"post-card divorces"—hurt women like hell. Broken homes even led to fall in industrial efficiency and juvenile delinquency on an alarming scale. It was an impossible situation. And so the gears were reversed. Formerly condemned as a "bourgeois capitalistic slave invention", marriage was now extolled. The new dicta was: "The state cannot exist without the family. Marriage is a positive value for the socialist soviet state only if the partners see in it a life-long union. So-called free-love is a bourgeois invention." Even co-education was stopped in 1943—to let men grow into manliness, and women, into femininity. Bachelors are treated as irresponsible and anti-social elements. Women with a dozen children are nationally honoured as "Mother Heroine".

Although people are free to marry whom they like, accommodation being difficult for new young couples, they have to marry with the consent of parents—if they want to live with them. Women work-force is almost as large as men work-force. But more women are put to heavy physical work, and more men are appointed to oversee them—and drive the machines.

Women predominate in Teaching and Medicine—but these are the two lowest paid professions in Russia. Women do get Day Care Centres for their kids, and full pay for child-bearing period. But, for the rest, they spend half the time shopping, cooking and washing. According to Moscow 'Communist' of November 1963, while Russian women lived 2 years less than Russian males in the year 1900, half a century after the Revolution, they were living 8 years less.

II-Russian Revolution & World Politics

The French Revolution had reverberated all over Europe and beyond. The Russian Revolution has reverberated all over the world. Although Lenin's hope of communism winning London and Paris via Shanghai and Calcutta, has not materialised—"export of revolution", through Russian gold, had to be given up—China and some other countries have gone communist. Also the Russian Revolution has contributed to the ending of imperialism at least in its more blatant form of physical occupation. "Inquilab Zindabad", the popular slogan of our Freedom Movement, was an Indian rendering of the Russian slogan, "Long Live the Revolution".

Lenin's publication of Czar's secret treaties with the West—promising Russia, among other things, the strategic city of Constantinople—had contributed to open diplomacy. Had there been open diplomacy before World War I, Germany would have known of the secret British commitment to France to go to war in its defence, if Germany attacked France—in which case, there, probably, would have been no World War I.

Many have faulted Russia for entering into a Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler's Germany. But there is a Russian point of view. After the Revolution, the West was treating Russia as a 'Pariah'. The West wanted Germany and Russia to fight and destroy each other, leaving the Western powers free to enjoy their empires in peace. Already, Hitler had positioned seventy Army Divisions against Russia—and only 25 against the West. Even in this situation, when Hitler threatened Czechoslovakia, UK, France and Italy gathered to yield to Hitler; they did not so much as consult Russia. (And meanwhile the Federation of British Industries was negotiating trade agreements with Nazi German Industry!) As Walter Lippman, doyen of the American Press, noted at the time: "The sacrifice of Czechoslovakia was really a sacrifice of an alliance with Russia." Lloyd George, World War I Premier of UK, also noted that the Western powers were "insulting Russia". It was at this time that Germany made its overtures to Russia. The New York Times reported on Jan 25, 1948: "Hitler wanted Molotov to sign a Four-Power Treaty—Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan—to divide up the world. Molotov balked. The Conference was a failure. Later the clever von Papen declared that it was at this meeting that Germany lost the war."

Russia was not willing to gang up with Germany. It was willing to sign only a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany—and to share in the occupation of Poland. Russia signed the Pact to get two more years to

prepare for the war, it knew, was coming. And had they not entered Eastern Poland, Hitler would have occupied all Poland—and stationed himself right on the Russian border. Also, but for the Russian resistance to Germany, which cost them a whole ten per cent of their population, the West would have found it difficult to survive Hitler.

As a result of World War II, Russia has brought East European countries under its wings—countries that would like to go their own way. But this is a result of Potsdam and other agreements signed by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt during the war. If USA withdraws its troops from West Germany, Russia would probably follow suit.

Immediately after World War II, the West launched its Cold War against Russia with Churchill's Fulton speech on 'Iron Curtain'. Their argument was that, but for the American presence in Western Europe, and the A-Bomb in the US arsenal, Russia would have over-run the West. Says Kennan: "I do not believe that it was our possession of the atom bomb which prevented the Russians from over-running Europe in 1948 or at any other time. I have never thought that the Soviet Government wanted a general world war at any time since 1945." He added: "The Russians are not always wrong any more than we are always right." Russia was too exhausted and too seasoned to be on any kind of offensive at the end of World War II. It was the American nuclear programme, its provocative actions in Korea and Vietnam, its aiding and abetting of Israel and Pakistan, and its building of bases all round Russia, that has made the latter try respond in kind.

Although Russian autocracy is anathema to democrats the world over, the fact that there is Russia to stand up to USA, has saved the world from monopoly control by America. Today if any country is bothered by one super-power, it can at least turn to the other. When USA started arming Pakistan without regard to Indian interests, it was Russia that gave us the necessary arms. Likewise when US-armed Israel worsted Egypt in 1967, Nasser turned to Russia for arms. As a result, Egypt could avenge itself in 1973. A bi-polar world is better than a uni-polar world; of course, a multi-polar world would be best. While the world welcomes US-USSR detente to ease tensions, one can only hope that the two powers do *not* gang up to divide the world between themselves. Brezhnev proposed as much to Nixon, reports Kissinger!

III : Russian Revolution & World Economy

The Russian Revolution has also made a significant difference to world economy. Communist studies of imperialist exploitation of

under-developed countries have put the latter on guard. The earlier division of world markets by a few dominant countries and their monopolistic corporations, is no longer possible. Russia has grain enough, oil enough and gold enough to checkmate any monopolistic control of world markets in key items. The ideological support to the demands of Labour has strengthened the Labour movement throughout the world, and given the poor a new confidence. Communism is a Western criticism of the West's failure to live up to its own Christian principles in the economic and social life. This "spiritual" weapon in Russia's hands gives the West an uneasy conscience and challenges it to match its deeds with its words.

Russia is probably not half as rich as USA. World War II had left it crippled. The need to arm in competition with USA, also strains its economy. Russian industry has never been very efficient, competitive or sophisticated. But even then, it tries to help friends in need. It lends money at lower rates of interest—even if it charges exorbitantly for spares. And it does things for you that USA would not do. For example, when India wanted to build a steel mill in the public sector, no western power was willing to help. Russia was the first to build one—at Bhilai. Germany and UK followed at Rourkela and Durgapur. USA promised to build Bokaro Steel Mill, but then it backed out—and again Russia had to come in. The delay cost us a few hundred crores extra. Egypt wanted to build Aswan High Dam. USA first agreed—and then changed mind. Here again Russia did the needful.

Patent and copy-right regulation have been long used to perpetuate western domination of world industry. Revolutionary Russia walked out of both those conventions.

IV : Russian Revolution & World Culture

To the extent that communist Russia offers an alternative to the Western way of life, it is a contribution to human culture. In its oversimplification, it offers answers for all questions. It gives you the strength of certitude and the joy of conversion to a Faith. Nehru thought it lighted up certain dark corners in his mind. But the seeing mind soon perceives it as "the God that failed". The fact that it curbs human freedom, makes it an ineligible option. The way Khrushchov tapped the UN podium with his shoe, did not exactly impress the World with Russian communist culture. However, his description of modern painting as the "impression of a horse's coloured tail on a canvas", set the world laughing.

Also the fact that artists and writers in Russia are not as free as those in the West, detracts from the quality of their work. The impact, therefore, of communist Russia on world culture is minimal. And the language factor reduces this impact further. The English language is not only the language of UK, USA, Canada, Australia etc., it was carried far and wide by the British Empire. Europe, which formerly took more to French, is now switching to English. More Russians and Chinese are learning English than any other foreign language. As a result, English language Press, Books, Radio, TV and Cinema are having a field day all over the world. Until and unless world power equation changes and/or Russia produces better literature, better media programmes and still better Science and Technology, it cannot hope to compete with the West on anything like equal terms. Only such a bipolarity in cultural competition can make it possible for other languages and other cultures also to survive and grow in their native genius.

The West offers Freedom; Russia offers Security. Only a system that combines both, can command the lasting allegiance of mankind. The Russian Revolution is to be viewed as a human storm. A storm destroys much; but it also blows new breezes. It, therefore, carries within itself the possibilities of a Brave New World.

Damodaran Questioned Khrushchev

In Moscow there was a special reception for the Indian delegates which was attended by Khrushchev. During this there was a cultural show and to my surprise I discovered that the empty chair next to me had been taken by Khrushchev. So I used this opportunity to discuss with him and attempt to clear my doubts. At that time you may recall the Pasternak case had excited a great deal of attention. So I asked Khrushchev how he justified the treatment of Pasternak. Khrushchev denied all responsibility for the episode and claimed that it was done by the Writers' Union and suggested that I discuss the matter with them. We then discussed the problem of drinking in the Soviet Union and I asked if he had considered prohibition. He replied that they had, but if there was prohibition then immediately illegal distilleries would begin to spring up and it would create graver problems. I responded by suggesting that similarly if they continued to ban books, illegal distilleries of books would spring up and that could also create problems. Extremely irritated by now, he suggested that we concentrate on the ballet. I began to understand the limits of 'de-Stalinisation'.

—K. DAMODARAN

A Pioneer of the Communist Movement in Kerala

(Rebutting Malkani) Supplementary Paper on the October Revolution

By : E.M.S. Namboodiripad

I AM SORRY I am not in a position to present my paper personally, since I have to be out of Delhi from the 11th to the 19th. I, however, want to answer a question whether my original paper falls within the purview of the subject chosen for the seminar. I desire also to offer my comments on the paper by Shri K.R. Malkani, which is going to be presented, and of which I have received a copy.

The subject of the Seminar is the "Russian Revolution : Its Impact on World Civilisation." India is very much a part of the world, being the second largest country in terms of population. It happens to occupy a very important place today in global politics. The non-aligned movement, of which India is an active member, is, in point of global politics, a living force which, by and large, is anti-imperialist and cooperates with the Socialist camp.

Furthermore, among the non-Socialist countries, India has the strongest Communist Party, next only to the Italian, the French and the Japanese. Having come to the position of the strongest political force in three states (which continues even after what happened in Tripura recently), it is exerting its political influence in national politics. The position, in other words, is that, while the ruling party is cooperating with the Socialist world on the major issues of global politics, the Communist Party, which agrees with the ruling party on a number of foreign policy issues, is trying to unite all other secular opposition parties with a view to replace the Central ruling party with a combination of left and secular democratic opposition parties.

The emergence of such an internal situation in our country is intimately connected with the development of Marxism-Leninism as a theory and the revolutionary working class movement as it has been developing since Marx and Engels. This, precisely, is what I have tried to trace in my paper.

In this context, I want to take up the point made by Shri Malkani that the Russian Revolution "was very much of a follow-up to the French Revolution". This statement is a half-truth and, as all half-truths are, tends to be an untruth.

The fact is that the French Revolution, unlike the earlier and subsequent revolutions in Europe, was the process through which humanity's transition from the feudal to the capitalist order began. The Russian

Revolution on the other hand was the beginning of the process through which humanity has been going forward from the capitalist to the socialist order. Shri Malkani's assertion is to be faulted in that it does not take this key fact into account.

My paper traces the development of Marxism as the theory propounded by Marx and Engels, further developed in the light of subsequent developments by Lenin who, furthermore, started the process of applying that theory into practice. The result of the further development and application of the Marxist theory by Lenin is seen in the fact that over a third of humanity has already passed into the Socialist system, while a still larger part of the world is covered by the non-aligned movement which is an ally of the Socialist camp. Furthermore, militant Communist Parties have come into existence in several non-Communist countries, including India. This is the proof of the correctness of Marxism as developed by Lenin.

Shri Malkani talks of "Communist Philosophy as enunciated by Marx and Engels." But, like most of the anti-Communist theoreticians, he misses the essence of that philosophy. Let me reiterate what I had said in my paper:

"Beginning with the joint work produced by the two path-breakers of the international working class, *The Communist Manifesto*, through the monumental work *Capital*, all the smaller and bigger works produced by the two revolutionary thinkers gave the perspective of the inevitable transition of humanity from capitalism to socialism. The 1917 October Revolution in Russia was the beginning of the process, envisaged in the crude works of the two revolutionaries."

The October Revolution in Russia, the 70-year-long development of the USSR, the transformation of a dozen more countries which joined the USSR in this period, the formation of the non-aligned movement, the growth of Communist Parties in all continents—all these, together, with the powerful peace movement, have fully confirmed the validity of Marxism-Leninism. As opposed to this reality is Shri Malkani, who talks of the "withering away of the State" and "work according to capacity and receive according to need" as the essence of "Communist philosophy". These have allegedly failed.

This, to put it mildly, is a gross misunderstanding (if not deliberate misrepresentation). For, anybody who has even a nodding acquaintance with the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin should know that the great teachers of the world working class had made a clear distinction between the first and second stages of communism.

In the first stage, the state as an organ of the armed power of the working people (the dictatorship of the proletariat) exists and continues; the dethroned classes (the former exploiters) do not get equal rights and privileges with the rest of society. As for the toiling people who form the majority, they have become the new ruling class, they have to be educated morally, culturally and politically, so that they can discharge their responsibilities as the builders of the new society. In other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat at this stage has to discharge a dual responsibility—firstly, using the coercive instruments of state power against the remnants of the dethroned exploiting classes and secondly, using the methods of education in relation to the former exploited classes who have now become the ruling classes. In this first stage of Communism (socialism), therefore, neither does the state "wither away", nor does the economic law operate. The law of economic distribution at this stage is "work according to capacity, payment according to work".

This is the stage in which every socialist country today finds itself, the Soviet Union being no exception. The Soviet party at one stage, (when Khrushchev was the Party General Secretary) flirted with the idea that, since the first stage (Socialist construction) had been completed in their country, the task came to the forefront of building the second stage (full-scale Communism). This was the central idea underlying the CPSU programme adopted in 1961. That has since then been abandoned. As the political report of the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted at the 27th Congress, says:

"The idea of translating the task of full-scale building of Communism into the direct practical action has proved to be premature. Certain miscalculations were made, too, in fixing deadlines for the solution of a number of concrete problems."

The two ideas of "withering away of the state" and "payment according to need" are the laws of operation of the second stage of Communism (Socialism). This was not seen by the Soviet party when, under Khrushchev's leadership, it adopted the party programme. It was not seen in socialist China, whose leaders at one stage organised the "cultural revolution". These have since then been corrected by those parties. But the mistakes committed and the corrections made by the two great parties were repeated in several other Socialist countries. Hence the movement now in all of them for the strict application of the laws of political and economic development operative for the first stage of Communism (socialism), with its emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat, commodity production, payment according to work, etc. The series of economic reforms in operation in all Socialist countries have their focus on the correction of "leftist" mistakes committed earlier.

The laws of politics in operation at the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat were also violated, the most obvious instances being known as the cult of personality which developed around Stalin in the Soviet Union and Mao in China. This, again, has been subjected to sharp criticism and correction. Internal democracy for party organisations and socialist democracy for the people—these are not violative of, but very much relevant to, the state of the dictatorship of proletariat. For, the class dictatorship of the former toiling people is directed only against the remnants of the former exploiters who organise themselves conspiratorially and try to come back to power; they have to be crushed. As for the common people, they have to enjoy the widest possible democracy. Dictatorship against the remnants of the former exploiting classes, democracy for the overwhelming majority of the people—such is the essence of the dictatorship of proletariat.

The exposure of the distortions that occurred in the USSR under Stalin, and in China under Mao, is necessary not only to restore socialist democracy and inner party democracy but also for strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat.

While thus making no compromises with the "Leftist" mistakes committed in Socialist countries—the cult of personality and the violation of the law of payment according to work turned out—we have to take into consideration the circumstances in which these "Leftist" deviations occurred. The Soviet Union, being the single socialist country surrounded, and liable to be attacked any time till the end of the anti-fascist war, its leaders had to be ever vigilant, requiring a certain amount of restrictions on democratic rights. This was the objective reason for the violation of Socialist and inner-party democracy under Stalin. Added to it, however, was the subjective factor—Stalin's personality, to which, in fact, Lenin had drawn pointed attention. While initiating the process of overcoming the distortions of the Stalin era, his followers fell into other deviations. The Gorbachov report to the celebration meeting of the 70th anniversary attempted to make a more or less balanced assessment of the positive and the negative in the contributions made by Stalin and his two successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

The important point to be made in this connection is that, socialism being a new social order, unknown to history, Lenin and all his followers had to sail the ship of state in uncharted oceans. They had to use the method of trial and error (like War Communism and then the New Economic Policy in Lenin's own life; he had no doubt that the New Economic Policy, that was being worked out, would lay the basis for Socialism). The subjective element, the talents and temperament of Lenin were of crucial importance in that period of Soviet development: he was so firm in principles but flexible in practice, that he could make

rapid changes in policy and tactics without committing serious blunders, and rectifying whatever mistakes did occur in actual working.

His followers being of a different type and, furthermore, actual developments posing more and more new difficult problems, they could not do as Lenin did. Furthermore, the individualist, or personality-centered, style of functioning adopted by Lenin's followers made the process of detecting and rectifying mistakes in time far more difficult. Hence the mistakes that occurred in the development of Soviet society.

This underlines the importance of full inner-party democracy under the guidance of a strong central leadership—also of the broadest possible democracy in the country under the leadership of the Government, the party, social organisations etc.

Although the course of history differed in other Socialist countries, this central lesson applies to them all. That is why, after the 27th Congress of the CPSU, fraternal parties in all Socialist countries are reviewing their own history, not mechanically repeating what is being done in the Soviet Union but making a self-critical review of their development, abandoning the negative and strengthening the positive. This is the significance of the October Revolution for humanity—a significance which is missing in Shri Malkani's paper.

—Thus Spake Lenin—

"SOCIALISM is impossible without democracy in two respects. 1. The proletariat cannot accomplish the socialist revolution if it is not prepared for it through the struggle for democracy; 2. Victorious socialism cannot maintain its victory and bring humanity to the time when the state will die out, without the complete realisation of democracy."

—Lenin in *"A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economics."*
Selected works Vol. V

"Those who want thoroughly to understand Lenin must read this (third) 'Letter from Afar' Ilyich speaks of a new type of militia created by the general arming of citizens, consisting of all adults of both sexes. In addition to its military duties, this militia must secure the proper and speedy distribution of bread and other provisions; must act as sanitary inspectors, see that every family has bread, every child a bottle of good milk and that no adult in a rich family dare to take extra milk until all children are supplied, that the palaces and rich homes do not remain unoccupied, but that they shelter the homeless and the destitute."

"—Memories of Lenin" by N.K. Krupskaya

Perestroika . A Revolution At Crossroads

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WHEN A REVOLUTION occurred in the backward society of Russia in 1917, it was believed that it was the beginning of the emergence of a new civilization on earth. This new civilization would be different from all the earlier civilizations, which had appeared and disappeared in history. It would be a civilization that would neither become old nor face death. In this new society man would be freed from all forms of oppression. All coercive institutions, including the state, will wither away. It would bring into existence a "new man" whose culture, tastes, demands and behaviour would be vastly different from those of the acquisitive man in a capitalist society. This man would work according to the best of his abilities and take just what he needed. Naturally, the society of such men and women would be free from all vices such as alcoholism, crime, corruption, prostitution. For, it would be organized, and would function, on principles unknown to people in other societies. People here would never feel alienated.

The fathers of this revolutionary society could not think that it would be the most secretive, oppressed, centralized, bureaucratized, and largely militarized society in the world. The people never expected that they would have to obtain permits to move from one city to another to take a job in another town; that they would be given volumes of instructions larger than the size of *Das Kapital* to tell them how to produce, what to produce, when to produce, what to consume, what pictures to paint, what poems or prose to write, what films to see, what plays to enact and so on. They never believed that time and again equality would be attacked as "vulgar" by their own leaders.

The originators of October Revolution least expected that the revolution at the age of seventy would become old, exhausted, sick and partially paralyzed and their sons and daughters would have to bring about yet another "revolution" and call it *Perestroika*, to revive the society. No one dreamt of fighting the sickness of a socialist society with medicines imported from capitalist societies—market, price, profit, credit, interest, competition, workers' participation in management, different forms of ownership, industrial bankruptcies, principles of pluralism, democracy, civil rights, elections, freedom of information and so on. After all, this is what Gorbachev's *perestroika* or revolution is supposed to do. Or is it? This is the question we will attempt to answer in this paper.

We can no longer maintain that Mikhail Gorbachev is simply embarking on cosmetic changes in Soviet society. Even critics acknowledge that he is aiming at a fundamental transformation of the economy and society of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev himself describes these changes as a 'revolution', a 'sharp turn' in the course of events, and a fundamental restructuring of all aspects of Soviet society. These changes have enormous consequences for the world. The epicentre of these changes is the reform of the stagnant Soviet economy. But reversal of economic decline and modernization of the economy requires more than the reform of economic organizations and economic policies. It involves radical new thinking in diagnosing the problems and in finding correct remedies for them. Further, a technologically advanced and dynamic economy will require significant changes in almost all fields of endeavour. This is evident from Gorbachev's diagnosis of the problems facing the Soviet Union, the broad search he has encouraged for remedial action, and the measures he has so far adopted.

Gorbachev and his advisers have spent over two years in diagnosing the problems afflicting the Soviet society. The results of this painful analysis were first made known by Gorbachev candidly and forcefully at the Central Committee meeting at the end of January 1987 and since narrated uncompromisingly in his remarkable book *Perestroika*. The picture of the Soviet society that emerges from these public statements and writings of Soviet leaders and their advisers is really a dismal one. Their conclusions are startling even to the bitter critics of the Soviet. The country is in a near-crisis situation. Dogmatism is rampant. Stagnation is all-pervasive. Theoretical concepts and practical methods still in use are outmoded, and remain at the same level since 1930s.

According to Gorbachev, the economy has fallen into serious despair. Growth rates have been falling; the quality of labour and its productivity have declined. Science and technology are too far removed from production process. The Soviet Union has fallen behind its capitalist competitors, in high technology. There has been an abysmal failure to achieve transition from extensive to intensive growth, from quantitative to qualitative growth. Inefficiency, inertia, incompetence, corruption, waste, lack of initiative and resistance to innovation have become characteristic of economic processes. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate add unresolved problems multiplied. Elements of stagnation alien to socialism appeared. Gorbachev pointed out: "Analysing the situation, we first discovered a slowing economic growth. In the last fifteen years the national income growth rates had declined by more than half and by the beginning of the 80's had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once closing on the world's advanced nations, began to lose one position after another. Moreover, the gap in the efficiency of production quality of products, scientific and

technological development, the production of advanced technology, and the use of advanced techniques began to widen, and not to our advantage".¹

The Soviet Union, the world's biggest producer of steel, raw materials, fuel and energy began to experience shortages in these products due to their inefficient and wasteful use. One of the largest producers of grain, it nevertheless has to import millions of tons of grain every year. A country with the largest number of doctors and hospital beds per thousand population, suffered from glaring deficiencies in the health services. Soviet rockets could fly to Venus with amazing accuracy, but the Soviet household appliances are of very poor quality. Such paradoxes were abundant in the Soviet Union. By the early 1980s, the country was selling its national wealth such as raw materials, fuel and energy resources, in order just to survive.

Gorbachev has also dealt with grave deficiencies in the social and political order of the Soviet Union. These deficiencies include oppressiveness, excessive centralization, bureaucratic domination, public apathy and social inertia. He has criticized arbitrariness and abuse of power by the Party and State officials. At administrative levels there emerged a disrespect for the law. Servility and glorification were encouraged. Party guidance was relaxed and initiative lost. The reality was presented as "problem-free": this backfired. A breach was created between word and deed which bred public disbelief and passivity. "It was only natural that this situation resulted in a credibility gap: everything that was proclaimed from rostrums and printed in newspapers and textbooks was put in question. Decay began in public morals alcoholism, drug addiction and crime were growing: mass culture alien to us, which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness, increased. There was little concern for the people and their aspirations. Instead, there was political flirtation and mass distribution of awards, titles and bonuses, pompous campaigns and celebrations of numerous anniversaries. People were justly indignant at the behaviour of leaders and officials who "abused power, suppressed criticism, made fortunes and in some cases, even became accomplices in, if not organizers of, criminal acts".²

Ideology became megatonnage of dogma. There was greater resistance to new ideas and to the attempts to constructively scrutinize the problems that were emerging. In the cultural affairs, creativity was stifled. Writers, painters, musicians and film-makers were under the tutelage of narrow-minded petty bureaucrats; creative intellectuals were driven underground or abroad. Others became time-servers. Eulogizing was encouraged. In the social sciences, scholastic theorization was given importance and creative thinking was driven out. Scientific discussions were emasculated. Vast areas were closed for research and criticism.

The Soviet society became rotten. Concluding his diagnosis of problems afflicting the Soviet Union, Gorbachev said: "An unbiased and honest approach led us to the only logical conclusion that the country was verging on crisis. The gravity of accumulated problems necessitated acting in a revolutionary way and a revolutionary transformation of society. Any delay in beginning this economic and social transformation could have led to an exacerbated internal situation in the near future which, to put it bluntly, would have been fraught with serious social, economic and political crises".³ There was no time to lose. Therefore, Gorbachev soon after assuming power, proclaimed a revolutionary overhauling of society or radical reform of society. Moreover, a radical reform of the economy and society is also necessary if the Soviet Union is to retain its status as a world power. As Gorbachev has pointed out: "Only an intensive, highly developed economy can safeguard the position of our country in the international arena and will allow it to enter the next millennium as a great and prospering state."⁴

Gorbachev's still incoherent vision of his "revolution" can be captured in a few words which have become popular all over the world. These are *noyoye myshlenye* (New way of thinking), *glasnost* (Openness), democratization, and *perestroika* (restructuring). The word *perestroika* in popular notion refers to economic reform. But in Gorbachev's view it embraces revolutionary changes in all spheres of Soviet life—ideological, social, cultural, political, economic and foreign policy of the country. Central to the strategy of *perestroika* is the reinvigoration of Soviet economy through radical reforms of economic policies and institutions. But, the past experiences of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe showed that an isolated effort to reform the economy is not likely to succeed. Indeed, as Leonid Abalkin, Director of the Institute of Economics, argued, the 1965 economic reform failed precisely because it was a strictly economic reform which did not provide for all-round changes in the political system, social relations and the spiritual and ideological spheres.⁵ Success of economic reform requires activation of human factor and mobilization of energy and initiative at the site of labour. This calls for infusion of democracy into every niche of society. Radical economic changes also require sustained fight against dogma, routine, gloss, apathy, and corruption. Such a fight necessarily involves changes in the accountability of officials in the Party and Government and into the dissemination of information which makes new thinking inevitable and *glasnost* an essential part of reforms.

Perhaps, the most interesting development under Gorbachev is the rejection of many received dogmas and new thinking on a number of socialist theories and practices.⁶ For instance, the Soviet Union used to regard state ownership as the only form of ownership compatible with

socialism. All other forms of ownership including individual labour, cooperative ownership and private plots were regarded as incompatible with socialism and which, therefore, must be eliminated or restricted. But now it has come to realize that various forms of ownership are permissible and desirable under socialism. An excessive emphasis on state ownership in the past was harmful to the society. Similarly, in the past, the Soviet Union firmly believed that the main contradiction under socialism was between the 'budding communism' and the 'remnants of capitalism'. Now it is said that the contradiction between productive forces and production relations is still the main contradiction; and production relations do not adapt themselves automatically to changes in productive forces. It was the growing contradiction between productive forces and production relations that hindered the development of productive forces resulting in stagnation in the last one or two decades. In the past, the Soviet leaders believed that the more developed the socialist society, the simpler and more uniform the social relations would become. All differences in social life would converge and disappear. This would result in one form of ownership (state ownership), one method of economic management, and one unchangeable political structure. Now, it is pointed out that the concept of uniformity does not correspond to socialist reality. Social relations in a socialist society are as complex as in a capitalist society. In the past, bureaucracy was treated as remnants of the old society. But, today it is argued that excessive centralization and state ownership give rise to bureaucracy and dogmatism perpetuate each other. Similarly, the Soviet world outlook based on class-oriented approach is giving way to the view that the world is an "interdependent" and "integral" one. These changes in the realm of ideas have stupendous consequences for the Soviet Union and for the development of socialist theory and practice elsewhere. Therefore, they deserve to be recognized in our understanding of Gorbachev's revolution. In this essay, we shall first examine Gorbachev's economic reform. It will be followed by a discussion on his policies of *glasnost* and democratization.

Gorbachov Plumps for Mixed Economy

Since October 1917, every new Soviet leader has tried his own specific type of economic reform to improve efficiency in resource use and quality of products. In the event, the reform process in the Soviet Union has become routinized. Even Stalin used to order periodic reshuffling of planning and production ministries, stressing decentralization for a time and then recentralizing. Khrushchev did most to change Stalinist model. His successors, Brezhnev and Kosygin, undertook a series of unprecedented measures to improve the efficiency of the Soviet economy. These efforts, however, hardly made any impact on the performance of the Soviet economy.

Now, Gorbachev has called for radical changes in the economic system. Indeed, the economic reform is the core of his strategy of revolutionary transformation of Soviet society. Yet, it is the weakest component of his policies. Measures adopted by him so far clearly suggest that Gorbachev's economic reform is a throwback into the past in that most of these measures have been readapted from the earlier reforms of 1965 and 1979 or from other socialist countries. Various elements of the reform introduced under Gorbachev had been under discussion in the country for years before. In 1984, in particular, the discussion focussed on potential approaches such as limits to central planning, enhancing the autonomy of enterprises, converting them to self-financing, reforms of commodity distribution, pricing, credit and budget systems and so on.

The reform is aimed at creating an integral, effective and flexible system of economic management in the Soviet Union with a view to put an end to the perennial shortages, to give the consumer most-favoured treatment, to improve efficiency in resource use, and to promote technological progress so as to reach the world standards. It is also aimed at reversing the declining growth rates and accelerating the growth process. To achieve these goals, the reform tries to remove clogs in the information channel through organizational streamlining, standardization, and simplification, and strengthening of motivation and sanctions.

The economic reform measures so far initiated include: (a) a new law of enterprise, incorporating changes in planning, a hard budget constraint, greater financial autonomy and responsibility, increased role of profit, replacement of centralized material allocations by means of "trade in the means of production" and contract; (b) a new wage policy with increased differentials based on skills, performance and enterprise profitability; (c) a decree on light industry linking production plans with trade network; (d) a limited legalization of individual private enterprise; (e) extension of small group, family and individual contracts in agriculture; and long-term delivery obligation; (f) new rules permitting a number of Soviet enterprises to make trade deals with foreign countries and provision of equity participation by foreign firms upto 49 per cent. These measures do not constitute a reform package. These are, as *Pravda* calls them, a series of "isolated measures". Interestingly, the economic reform of Gorbachev represents a series of "compromise" steps agreed upon by the conservatives and the reformers, according to Aganbegyan, the architect of the reform.

It is not possible to analyse here all the economic measures undertaken by Gorbachev due to short space. Therefore, we shall focus on a few important ones to understand the nature of the economic reforms, whether it is radical or not; what impact it will make on the economy,

its growth and its efficiency; and what are the problems it is likely to give rise to. The Law of the Enterprise which came into force on January 1, 1988 is the basic document of the reform. The act abolishes the traditional "directive planning".⁷ Enterprises are given the power to draft their annual and five-year plans independently. This is a step in the direction of putting an end to "tutelage". But the plan autonomy of enterprises is restricted by other provisions of the Act. For instance, enterprises are to draw their plans on the basis of control figures, state orders, quotas, norms, and contracts. The control figures are not mandatory, but the state orders are. Experiences of the 1920s suggest that control figures tend to assume mandatory character over a period of time. Further, the mandatory nature of state orders will dictate production and the supply relationship between enterprises. Therefore, plan autonomy may turn out to be of a mere formal nature. This, however, is not the only threat to the enterprise autonomy.

With the increase in the role of enterprises in plan drafting, the functions of centralized authorities are to undergo changes. For instance, the State Planning Committee will now concentrate its efforts on formulating the strategic directions of the economy, perfection of structural and investment policy, and plan technological advances, economic proportions and balances. It will also be concerned with constant adjustment of economic machinery and co-ordination of activities of central economic agencies.

The act prohibits ministries from interfering in enterprise activities. They are not allowed to change enterprise plans, control figures etc., once approved by the Council of Ministers. However, they are expected to monitor the activities of enterprises and also give instructions to them. They are entrusted with the task of preventing monopolistic tendencies, inflation of costs and prices, and stagnation in technical development at enterprise level. Thus, not only the central organizations remain intact but also enjoy enormous power over lower units. Moreover, a number of "super ministries", bureaus, commissions have also been newly created. In a similar situation in Hungary, much of the autonomy given to enterprises remained inoperative. Higher authorities continued their interference merrily. The same can be expected to happen in the Soviet Union and make the autonomy meaningless.

The Law of Enterprise provides for self-financing or "full economic accountability" that the Soviet economists have been advocating for long. There will be hard budget constraints. Enterprises are no longer to be financed from budget or interest free loans. All their expenditure and investment for expansion must be met out of their profit. Now the enterprises have the right to retain profit after meeting their tax and

other obligations. Profit will be the main indicator of enterprise activity. Profit residuals can be used by the enterprises to purchase equipment, award bonus and invest in housing and cultural activities. Wages and salaries are linked to profits. These provisions are expected to put pressure on enterprises to economize and cut costs. Inefficient enterprises will no longer get state subsidies. Loss-making enterprises will be allowed to go bankrupt.

Self-financing was a major goal of economic reforms in 1965 and 1979. There was little success in achieving this goal. When the decentralized investment began to increase, the ministries, fearing the loss of their privileges, sabotaged it. There is no guarantee that the ministries will not behave in a similar way again. Moreover, profit becomes meaningful only when prices are rational. The enterprise law envisages a radical reform of the price mechanism in the next 3-5 years. The plan is to review prices in such a way as to bring profitability levels of various branches of economy and various groups of commodities more into line with each other, as has already been attempted numerous times before with little success. Further negotiated contract prices are to replace fixed prices.

A radical reform of Soviet price system is not an easy task, because of existing chaos in the price system, and because of its serious social and political implications. Reformers do not have adequate information on the nature of present prices. There is no agreement on the reform required, or on the role of prices in the economy.⁸ While some economists argue that if irrationality in the price system is to be removed, and if there is to be an end to wasteful and huge subsidies, the prices must be revised upward; others vehemently oppose it. They advocate a downward revision. Some argue for phased revision, beginning with wholesale prices. Most of them resort to populist argument and say price changes should not result in fall of living standards. There is also no clear idea on the nature and extent of state control over price fixation under the proposed reform. The Chairman of the Soviet price commission gives the impression that strict state regulation of prices will remain over vast areas even after the reforms.⁹ Enterprises will be given the freedom to fix prices only within narrow limits. Meanwhile masses are frightened of price reform. Fearing that price revision will hurt them, they oppose such a reform. Given these disagreements, confusion and controversies, the process of price reform is bound to be painful and will be a prolonged affair. Required price changes will not take place within the expected time limits. Until price changes take place, various provisions of Gorbachev's reform will have little impact on the efficiency and performance of the economy. Some other provisions of the enterprise law are also likely to have limited impact on the economic performance. The fact provides for self-management. The managers of enterprises will be

elected on competitive basis. They will be given more powers to hire and fire labour. There would be a Workers' Council to supervise the appointment of elected managers. Once appointed, the managers will "represent state interests." The Workers' Council will be guided by the Party. In any case, self-management in Yugoslavia, where it is in existence for a long time, has not produced any miracle. This means, not much can be expected from it in the Soviet Union. Similarly, the provision of bankruptcy will have little meaning so long as there is political commitment to employment.

Apart from the important Law of Enterprise, the other components of Gorbachev's economic reform include provision for individual private enterprise, encouragement to cooperatives, changes in rural institutions and reform of the foreign trade sector. In November 1986, the Supreme Soviet passed a law permitting private economic activity, both individual and cooperative. According to this law, individual and families can undertake specified economic activity for profit in their spare time. The law specified twenty-two types of private economic activity, mostly in service sector. But it also provides for production of such products as handicrafts, clothing and shoemaking by individuals and cooperatives. The law is an attempt to legalize what was in existence illegally. According to a study carried out by Soviet sociologists recently, almost 18 million people were engaged in unlawful public services in the early 1980s. These legalized individual and cooperative enterprises are expected to help satisfy the increased and differentiated needs of the people. However, these enterprises are facing innumerable difficulties such as inadequate space, high cost and shortage of inputs, proper outlets for selling, huge amount of paper work, absence of infrastructure facilities, absence of freedom to fix prices, etc. They are not allowed to sell to and buy from, state enterprises. The cooperative activities have been restricted due to fear of manpower shortage in state enterprises. These problems may be transitory. If they are removed, individual enterprises and cooperatives can play a significant role in increasing supply of consumer goods and considerably improve their quality.

Private contracting (not to be confused with private plots) has become important to stimulate agricultural production in the Soviet Union. The idea is to break up large farms into small autonomous groups. These groups are given land and other inputs and are paid according to their output and are responsible for the entire sequence of agricultural production. The system of contracting is being expanded to include family contract. Family contract now includes leasing of land by individual families for a period of 12-15 years with permission to own tools. In essence, it amounts to

small-scale private agriculture and it operates outside collective farm contract structure. But family units are prohibited from employing labour from outside. Besides, the state now encourages auxiliary private farms and stimulates gardening and fruit growing even among town dwellers. But the contract system is working inadequately. Expansion of contracting system is taking place slowly due to opposition. Observance of contracts is a problem due to difficulties in supply of inputs. Local officials and even collective farm workers have not looked upon contract system kindly. There have been reports of confiscation of vegetable produce or reduction of their plots. In some cases peasant houses have been destroyed¹¹. Local officials are known to increase arbitrarily delivery quotas, denying opportunity for farmers to sell their produce freely in the market, after meeting their production obligations. Moreover, not all agricultural operations can be conducted efficiently by family units under conditions of labour shortage.

In the foreign trade sector, some radical measures have been adopted to improve its performance. About twenty individual and seventy industrial enterprises have been permitted to have direct links with foreign buyers and sellers. Enterprises which export have a right to retain 40 per cent of the convertible currency they earn, and spend as they please. A new law permits Soviet enterprises to establish joint ventures with 46 per cent equity participation from capitalist countries. But, Rules governing the Board of Management in joint ventures, and those affecting supply of labour and other inputs are restrictive in nature. Direct links and joint ventures have been in existence in other socialist countries of Eastern Europe. They have not produced successful results. Therefore, not much can be expected from Soviet foreign trade reforms.

Gorbachev's model of economic reform is based on compromises and therefore it could be transitory in nature. As a compromise model, it accommodates both the old and the new systems within it and assume the characters of dual economy. This dual economy includes "the commanding heights" comprising an overwhelming portion of the economy where centralized control (planning, investment, supplies, price fixation) will continue to operate, perhaps with some modifications.¹² The rate and structure of growth will also be centrally determined. Outside the boundaries of "the commanding heights", enterprises would be allowed to respond to market forces. Thus, market mechanism will only supplement, but not supplant, 'the administrative leadership'. A dualistic system of this type will not be effective in rejuvenating the Soviet economy. It failed in Hungary.

The effectiveness of the reform is also somewhat minimized by other inconsistencies inherent in it. A number of goals and methods of the

reform conflict with each other. For instance, the reform aims at achieving high growth rates, a significant improvement in quality of products, and rapid technological progress. But expansion of output, improvement in quality and technological progress cannot be achieved easily in a period of transition. The reform emphasizes substantial increase in productivity. This requires removal of redundant labour and closure of inefficient industrial units. But the leadership commitment to provide employment to everyone will not easily allow removal of redundant labour and bankruptcy and thus affect productivity growth. Similarly, rapid technological progress requires flexible organizational structure, threat of exit and free entry, and competition. Reform tries to tackle these problems. But the commitment to prevent large-scale displacement of labour for fear of creating unemployment will considerably reduce the effectiveness of these efforts and bring back control over exit and entry of enterprises. The reform will also create a dilemma. Increased investment is necessary for the success of the reform. The success also depends on activation of the human factor, which in turn depends on increase in consumption. Given the relatively lower standard of consumption in the Soviet Union it calls for a decisive shift in economic policy favouring the consumer. Such a shift will reduce investment.

Economic reform of Gorbachev not only suffers from these inconsistencies and dilemmas; it also faces stiff resistance. There are several sources of resistance to the reform. They include what is called the "home-grown conservative socialists", party and government bureaucracy at all levels, inefficient workers, a section of intellectuals, and possibly large sections of police and the army. The passive and active resistance of these people will not suddenly cease. For, it involves very high stakes—power, privileges and security. On the other hand it may also receive strength from poor results of the reform and the problems it may give rise to. The reform aims at 5 per cent annual average rate of growth in Soviet GNP. Even if the target is achieved, it will add only 18 roubles to the average wage-earner's income. But the chance of the Soviet Union achieving this target is not bright, if we go by the economy's performance in 1986 and 1987. On the contrary, we should expect a decline in the growth rate. Therefore, Soviet leaders will have to struggle hard to maintain the present low rate of growth. If the growth declines, consumption will also decline. Further, the reform may result in inflation and unemployment, or large scale labour displacement. These developments will add to the strength of those who oppose reform. The negative effects of the reform may result in social unrest, tensions, demonstrations and intense power struggle. All this will slow down the process of reform, but it will not reverse it.

This does not mean that there will be only negative effects of economic reform. The Hungarian experience suggests that reform will undoubtedly augment supply of consumer goods and substantially improve their quality. There will be some technological progress. The efficient and hard working will reap large benefits. Similar developments can be expected in the Soviet Union as well. But, the reinvigoration of the economy desired by Gorbachev will require removal of inconsistencies and far more radical reform. Such a radical reform in the Soviet Union will be introduced by mid-1990s, hopefully by Gorbachev himself. The present reform is meant to clear the decks for such a reform. Return to the old system is not on the cards.

Russia Searches Its Soul

The most fascinating and imaginative change initiated by Gorbachev is the *glasnost*, or openness. From a pragmatic point of view, it is a bold attempt to radically alter the superstructure in the Soviet society. It is an effort to expand the area of freedom of expression and action, in the official media, in social sciences, in arts and literature, and in the deliberations of the Party and government institutions. It is important to understand the international dynamics of *glasnost*, is timing, its role in the reform process, and its limitations.¹³

Glasnost is a familiar and widely discussed subject. Therefore, we need not go into its details. In one of the world's most secretive societies, the official Soviet media are more open and more diverse now than at any time in its history. They are critically covering what would have been considered 'anti-soviet slander' a few years ago. Criticism of institutions and features once regarded as sacred, is ruthless now. Even that great repository of all wisdom, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) is being challenged on its pretensions of infallibility. Social malpractices and vices such as abuse of power, corruption, drug addiction, homosexuality and alcoholism receive special attention in the media. Even the misdeeds of KGB are not spared from public gaze.

Literature, art and architecture are also undergoing stupendous changes. Works of writers which were proscribed on unjust suspicions, are coming out. Socially sensitive films which were gathering dust on the shelves, are now being shown all over the country. Politically controversial plays are being staged to packed houses. We may mention two most recent developments in art and literature. The famous poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko published a poem 'Monuments Not Yet Erected' in November 1987 pleading for a public memorial to the millions of innocent victims of Stalin. This produced a strong protest from pro-Stalin veterans. In January 1988, a new play "Onward, Ever Onward" by Mikhail Shatrov, a close friend of Gorbachev, appeared in a literary journal *Znanya*,

creating a stir.¹³ Shatrov challenges the accepted official party view of the Soviet system under Stalin, by showing that Lenin rejected his successor's claim to be motivated by communist beliefs. In this play, Stalin is accused of ordering the murder not only of Trotsky and Kirov, but also of Bukharin, Kamenev and Zinoviev.

Glasnost is also to be seen in the vigorous debates among historians, economists and other social scientists in the Soviet Union. Debate on the present economic reform is open and slowly acquiring the same character as the famous industrialization debates of the 1920s. Even the most conservative party journals like the *Kommunist* is publishing scathing attacks on such phenomena as the large and wasteful subsidies, the prevalence of inflation, and chaotic pricing and financial systems in the Soviet Union. A Soviet scholar and son-in-law of Khrushchev, Nikolay Shmelyov is allowed to proclaim that the Soviet economy is not only "unplanned" but also "unplannable" and therefore, planning must be abandoned. It is not that only the past policies are criticized. Even the present reform measures are under attack. Boris N. Yeltsin's criticism of *Perestroika*, for which he was removed from the Secretaryship of Moscow Party organization, is well-known. However, more recently, a reputed Soviet economist, Vasily Selyutin has questioned the major premises of *Perestroika* in an article in *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*. In this article, Selyutin has expressed doubts about the official data on the distribution of national income between consumption and investment and argued that *Perestroika*, even if it succeeds, will bring only marginal benefits to workers, unless there is a major shift in policy in favour of consumption.

These developments, interesting as they are, by no means suggest that the Soviet leaders have suddenly become Jeffersonians, or embraced "bourgeois liberalism". *Glasnost* is not meant to usher such a liberalism in the Soviet Union. It is not even meant to be on the side of the people and against the Party and the Government, as Gorbachev warned the leading representatives of the media, culture and art in July 1987. "We must, therefore, be realists to avoid a situation in which all of you who talk and write would be with the people, while the government.... would be against the people. Keep this in mind."¹⁴ *Glasnost* is to "strengthen socialism" and not undermine its value. If this were so, then what made the Soviet leaders break with their seventy year old tradition and relax control? What is the role assigned to *glasnost*? At the beginning we pointed out that economic reform in the Soviet situation is not a simple task and that even to place economic reform on the agenda, it must be linked to changes in all other spheres of society. For, "Every readjustment of the economic mechanism begins with a readjustment of thinking with a rejection of old stereotypes of thought and action, with a clear

understanding of new ideas", in the words of Gorbachev. In the process of radical economic reform, the point of departure must necessarily be a realization of the current state of society and the public awareness of the urgent necessity of reforms. It necessitates a candid acceptance of past mistakes. In other words, it requires a proper understanding of the nature of existing crisis in the society and its underlying causes at all levels. Such an understanding would be impossible so long as centralized rigid controls remain and vast areas of social problems are closed to investigation and criticism. Secondly, successful economic reforms of a radical nature necessarily involve creative thinking, new ideas and new solutions to the existing problems. Creative thinking cannot take place under conditions of light controls. It also involves rejection of all outmoded methods. Above all, it requires freeing of institutions from the iron grip of dogmatists, hacks, and the incompetents. Once the process of reform is initiated, the important task is "to look for alternatives, criticize blunders and shortcomings and at the same time back up what is new and constructive to rejuvenate the economy".¹⁵ Thirdly, it is clear from past experience that successful economic reforms would be impossible without massive mobilization of people.

Again, in the past when Soviet leaders painted life in rosy colours, people saw through the widening gap between words and deeds. The more untruths there were in the press and public life, the more apathetic and cynical the people became. Therefore, telling truth is the only way left to activate "the human factor" for transformation of the economy and society. Finally, change anywhere would face resistance. Gorbachev's reforms are no exception. *Glasnost* would help in "creating some kind of reform ideology" and in waging a battle against resistance. It is also expected to protect reform against misunderstanding and curtailment, and make it irreversible. Many in the West as well as in the Soviet Union believe that *glasnost* is too good a thing that happened in the Soviet Union to continue for long. They believe that it will be reversed sooner than later. However, past experience suggests that this may not happen. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization no doubt received a major set-back after his removal, but it did not die or disappear. It remained dormant for long, but reasserted itself under Gorbachev. Today, de-Stalinization is being intensified and deepened. This makes us optimistic about the future of *Glasnost* in the Soviet Union.

Another very significant aspect of Gorbachev's revolution is the democratization of Soviet political system. The Soviet leaders today preach democratization and grass-root participation in a society that has not known a single day of democratic order throughout its history. There is yet no coherent and integrated view of the democracy sought to be established. However, the emerging Soviet concept of democracy appears to be the reverse of democratic patterns in the West. According to

Seweryn Bialer, the most perceptive American observer of Soviet development, Gorbachev's democratic vision appears to envisage "elements of grass-roots democracy enterprise, real elections of members of local Soviets by citizens, and, maybe, even genuine elections of local trade union leaders. It would include making micro-industrial management accountable to the workers, making local officials accountable to their constituencies, and probably genuine election of leaders in the primary party organizations."¹⁶ Besides an electoral law establishing competitive elections, significant legal and political reforms now being discussed, include a law on the mass media; a 'freedom of information act' with a clear definition of state secrets and provision for the rights of citizens to obtain information from the state; a law on referenda. It is also rumoured that the All Union 19th Party Conference scheduled to be held in June 1988 may adopt compulsory retirement age of 65 for high-level officials or limitation on tenure of office for party officials.

Another important direction in which Gorbachev is moving is towards breaking "the corporatist orientation of the Soviet bureaucracies in order to make some of them client-oriented and all of them leader-oriented". For this purpose he intends to alter the centralized bureaucratic structure in three ways, first, drastically reduce the intermediate bureaucracy, restrict the controlling prerogatives of the bureaucracy, and expand the operational rights and independence of the lower units. However, large segments of bureaucratic hierarchies will remain unaltered. These include the police, the armed forces and military, industrial complexes, and the party apparatus.

These changes will bring about profound changes in the Soviet political system and make the Soviet Union a unique international model of democracy, deserving of emulation, according to Gorbachev. But the Western sceptics like Bialer argue that these changes can scarcely be defined as "macrodemocracy". Further, it is argued, the experience of Yugoslavia to instal similar microsocietal democracy suggest that Soviet attempts have little chance of success. Sceptics even think that Gorbachev's efforts to democratize at microsocietal level are utopian—and that for two reasons. First, historically micro-institutional democracy is not associated with modernization. Second, Western sociology suggests that microinstitutions soon tend to become "authoritarian and oligarchic". These arguments appear to be powerful and cannot be ignored in our understanding of Soviet developments. However, it is also difficult to accept easily this mirror image of American experience. Historical experience can be as misleading as it can be illuminating. Dissimilarities are as significant as the similarities in history, as the Soviet experience shows. Modernization in the Soviet Union has occurred under entirely different institutional framework as compared to other historical cases. Therefore, it is possible

that democratization in the Soviet Union may take place through a different path. In applying historical experience to the Soviet Union it is worth remembering that the sceptics were disproved on the viability of state ownership and central planning in 1920s. Moreover, microsocietal democracy may itself generate demand for macrodemocracy sooner than later. Already, Nikolai Shishlin, the deputy head of the Propaganda department of the Central Committee, CPSU, has demanded competitive elections to senior party positions. He has also said that no party official should be kept in office for life. Therefore, it is difficult to say at this stage whether Gorbachev's democratization will succeed or not. But the bureaucratic threat to democratization efforts is a real one. It could delay the process, but it cannot kill it, as the history of reforms in the Soviet Union shows.

On the Horns of A Dilemma

It should not be surprising to any one that the 70-year record of the Great October Revolution is most undistinguished when compared to the achievements of other societies. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the revolution, the achievements claimed for it are industrialization, collectivization and building up of military power to defend and to enable the Soviet Union to play a significant role in the international community. But, in terms of growth rate, efficiency and quality, the Soviet industrialization is hardly comparable to the magnificent performance of Japanese industry. Both in human and material terms, the cost of Soviet industrialization is staggering, even according to official estimates. Collectivized agriculture has been subject of ridicule, both inside the Soviet Union and outside. Today, family contract (peasant farming) and private plots are to make up for the losses of collective farms. As far as the military power is concerned, it could hardly be considered as an achievement of a revolution. Nazism and Fascism produced mightier armed forces that threatened the world. The proud achievements of the revolution—equality and guaranteed employment—are now under attack in the Soviet Union as too costly and a luxury that the country cannot afford any longer. These are on the way out. The much adumbrated socialist public health system is officially considered to be of very poor quality and it has shortened life expectancy by at least two years in the last couple of decades. The system cannot even ensure adequate supply of life saving drugs.

As far as the human behaviour is concerned, the 'socialist man' is as greedy as anybody else. His acquisitiveness, his tastes, his values, his attitude towards family, work and leisure, his attitude towards power, prestige, status and his feeling of alienation, have not been found to be different in any way from others.

The greatest irony is that the revolution today depends on the very elements that it promised to abolish. And they are money, value, price, profit, market or commodity relations and even some form of private ownership. The survival of socialism appears to be dependent on how quickly these and other elements of capitalism are adapted in the Soviet Union. There are going to be the rich contents of the next phase of economic reform or revolution which will be brought about by Gorbachev or someone else in the 1990s. An analysis of the debates on economic reforms going on in the Soviet Union and East-European countries shows that the next "wave" of economic reforms should be in the direction of co-existence of the state and non-state sectors, determination of prices by the market, breaking up of state monopolies and encouragement to small and medium size economic units, removal of all barriers to competition, free labour market, decentralized investment, commercial banking, competition in foreign trade sector, laws to protect private business. In short, a mixed economy that is prevailing in modern capitalist societies.

In this emulation of the mixed economic system, the Hungarians and the Poles will be the leaders, the Soviets, the Bulgarians, and the Czechs, the followers. The East Germans and the Romanians will probably join in the early part of the next century. If these developments were to take place in the coming decade, what will be left of the Great October Revolution's contribution to modern civilization?

NOTES :

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3. Ibid., p. 17.
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5. Leonid Abalkin, "Economic Reforms: Facts and Principles," *New Times* (Moscow), No. 28, July 20, 1987.
6. Xu Kui, "The Soviet Union Amidst Waves of Reforms," *The Journal* (Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Affairs, Beijing), No. 5, September 1987, pp. 117-118.
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8. *New Times*, No. 1, January 1988.
9. V. Pavlov, "Radical Reform of Pricing System", *Pravda*, August 26, 1987.

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12. Jayashekar, "Reforming a Militarised Economy: The Soviet Case," Paper presented at an international seminar on "Reforms in Centrally Planned Economies," Lonaral, December 1-5, 1987.
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14. Mikhail Gorbachev, "To Deepen Restructuring by Practical Deeds" (Novosti Press, Moscow), July 14, 1987.
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Why Marx does not move India

MARXISM awakens no true echo in the soul of India; but some form of Nietzschean philosophy does. Looking beyond the world of day-to-day politics to the more or less distant age when mankind will truly become one, one can see clearly that India's contribution to world culture will lie in the development and concrete application of some such philosophy. While Red China seeks the reduction of the human individual to the level of a mechanized ant, India will possibly seek or at least contribute to create the "superman". Such a pursuit was already brilliantly anticipated by the great mystic-philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghose in several of his works, 'The Human Cycle' and 'The Ideal of Human Unity' especially. In this idealistic Nietzscheism, Aurobindo applies the Hindu genius for the elaboration of essentially subjective philosophies of transformation to the problem facing a modern man who is technically master of his natural environment: not so much the alteration of his political, social and economic structures, as the metamorphosis of his human personality, which alone can afford a lasting solution of mankind's problems. He conjured out of the depths of his mystical awareness a strange vision of the superman of the future, evolving out of the imperfect human being of today as man, hundreds of thousands of years ago, evolved out of the animal kingdom. Blazing new yogic trails, he prophesied that "the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in her past, the real originative and dominating strain."

—Amaun de-Riencourt :
'The Soul of India'

The Scope & Significance of De-Brezhnevisation

By : A.G. Modak

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV will very soon complete three years of his captaincy of the CPSU. He has undoubtedly done quite a lot during this period for improving the image of his country. And it seems that he has succeeded in his venture. Thus President Reagan, who stated a few years back that the USSR is an evil empire, came ahead very recently to negotiate a deal with the leader of that very country. He has welcomed the changes introduced by Gorbachev in Soviet Union in pursuance of the policy of openness. The following paragraph from one of his speeches is reflective of the welcome extended by Reagan to the Gorbachevian policy of openness.

"In English, openness is a broad term. It means the free unfettered flow of information, ideas and people. It means political and intellectual liberty in all its dimensions. We hope, for the sake of the peoples of the USSR that such changes will come."¹

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher has also showered praise on the new Soviet leader. Abraham Brumberg, a former editor of the journal, "Problems of Communism", has not only shown optimism about the positive accomplishments of "openness", but has in fact called upon western analysts to "discard conventional assumptions that could distort their view of the Soviet Union."²

It is the frankness of Gorbachev which seems to have elicited the favourable reactions mentioned above. The Soviet leader has referred to certain shortcomings of Soviet life such as the stagnation of Soviet economy since mid-fifties, the inadequate attention paid to the shaping of appropriate production-relations the alienation felt by Soviet labourers, certain practices on the part of bureaucrats like undue reliance on superiors and excessive coercion against inferiors, and so on. Taking cue from the leader, one Soviet journal has accepted that for all these years, Soviet masses were asked to serve socialism, whereas, it is socialism which is supposed to serve the masses.³ The uniqueness of it all lies not in that what has been stated by Gorbachev is totally unknown to the world; it lies in the confirmation offered by the Soviet leader of what has been pointed out earlier by different personalities. Thus Henry Kissinger pointed out that the Soviet Union, "which has acquired the status of a super-power, cannot produce a single industrial commodity competitive with the products of even newly developed market economies like South Korea and Singapore, not to speak of the mature industrial democracies of Western Europe, Japan, Canada and the U.S."⁴ If Girilal Jain described the Soviet system

"as stable but non-innovative".⁵ William G. Hyland stated that during the Brezhnev era, "stability became stagnation, the economy ran down and the leadership began to atrophy".⁶ Fitzroy Maclean attacked the genesis and growth of bureaucratic centralism in the USSR⁷ and Jan S. Prybyla reached the following conclusion regarding countries ruled by state socialism :

"(In these countries) production for society comes first, production for individual needs comes last. People serve the system instead of the other way around."⁸

Gap between Word and Deed under Brezhnev

That Mikhail Gorbachev has categorically blamed "the latter years of the life and activities of Leonid Brezhnev"⁹ for the shortcomings of the Soviet Union, is also notable in the sense that he has thus lent credence to the similar allegations made by some scholars in the past. The Soviet leader has thus stated that the further advancement of Soviet Union had been hampered by the Brezhnevian addiction to habitual formulas and schemes which did not reflect the new schemes.¹⁰ He has pointed out in the same context that this sort of Brezhnevian trait resulted in the widening of the gap between word and deed and also in the creation of a pre-crisis situation.¹¹ He has accordingly substantiated the following viewpoint of William Hyland :—"By the early 1980s the necessary flexibility and dexterity required to deal with growing problems were beyond the capacity of the ailing and aging Brezhnev."¹² Gorbachev has, in short, found it necessary and convenient to find a scapegoat in Brezhnev for the present catastrophic situation in the USSR. He has, in other words, undertaken a sort of campaign of de-Brezhnevisation in the Soviet Union.

It was in the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of CPSU in April 1985 that Gorbachev first advanced the overall critique of Brezhnevism which, ten months later, became the theme of his famous speech to the twenty-seventh Party Congress.¹³ During the course of that period several Soviet officials and establishment intellectuals foresaw that the forthcoming months would witness the campaign of de-Brezhnevisation, reminding the masses of the de-Stalinising reforms of the Khrushchev years.¹⁴ The speech given by Gorbachev at the jubilee meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU to mark the 70th anniversary of the Great October Revolution carried this campaign to its logical end. It contained an explicit and forceful attack on "the later years of the life and activities of Leonid Brezhnev." The campaign of de-Brezhnevisation is, of course, hedged with two qualifications. First, Gorbachev does not blame the entire period of eighteen years from 1964 to 1982, when Brezhnev worked as the General Secretary of CPSU for the present problems of

USSR. He, for example, mentioned in his report to the 27th Party Congress that it was in the 1970s that the Soviet economy began to face a declining growth. The new edition of Party Programme adopted in this Congress contained the following line: "Soviet Union faced difficulties in the seventies and the early eighties as the leadership failed to assess in due time and proper manner, alterations in the economic situation and the need for profound changes in all spheres of life and also to properly persist in making such changes."¹⁵

The CPSU Plenum held in June 1987 heard from Gorbachev that as the Soviet Union entered the decade of 1980s, the rate of economic growth had dropped to the level which virtually signified the onset of economic stagnation. "We began to concede one position after, and the gap we knew in production efficiency, output quality and in technology as compared with the most developed countries, began to widen."¹⁶ Secondly, in the opinion of Gorbachev, Brezhnev alone must not be held responsible for all such failures. For instance, in the statement just quoted, the present Soviet leader offered the word "we," thus conveying to the people that the collective leadership of those years must be blamed for Soviet failures. The speech delivered by Gorbachev on 27 January 1987 for elaborating the details of reorganization policy stressed the same refrain: "The CPSU Central Committee and the leadership of the country failed, primarily for subjective reasons, to see in time and in full, the need for change and the dangerous growth in crisis phenomena in society, and to formulate a clearcut policy for overcoming them and making better use of the possibilities intrinsic to the socialist system."¹⁷ We must, in short, keep in mind these qualifications while studying the campaign of de-Brezhnevisation.

As for the factors which must have shaped the genesis of this campaign, one can refer to certain contributory causes like the typical Soviet pattern, the age group of Gorbachev and the situational compulsions. We are already familiar with the de-Stalinisation campaign at the hands of Khrushchev. Later, after the dismissal of Khrushchev, Brezhnev conducted the campaign of de-Khrushchevisation, of course, in a very skilled and sophisticated manner.¹⁸ At present, it is Gorbachev who seems to have engaged himself in the campaign of denunciation of Brezhnev. Ayn Rand, who has written a novel "We, The Living" on a theme pertaining to the Soviet political system, makes an interesting commentary in the foreword her book:

"The pattern is quite typical. There are glowing reports conveying to readers that common masses in the USSR are leading very happy lives, that the USSR is marching ahead towards communism, and so on. The newspapers also convey that those who express doubts about such reports

are traitors and counter-revolutionaries. After five years, one reads admissions by party leaders that Mr. X or Mr. Y made blunders and that the resultant shortfalls caused certain discrepancies in the Soviet economy. Of course, the General Secretary is shown as a benevolent leader deeply interested in enhancing the welfare of masses. Still later, that is, after the dismissal or the death of the boss, whoever comes to assume the supreme position, starts condemning his predecessor. Then the former Chief is depicted as a monster interested in crushing the progress of Soviet Union. Of course, the present era of USSR is painted in glowing words."¹⁹ (emphasis added.)

Gorbachev's Emphasis on Truth

Gorbachevian attacks on the activities of Brezhnev are indeed befitting the Soviet pattern. The age-factor has also played its role in the present scene. The present Soviet captain was born in 1931. He thus became an active party worker in the decade of 1950s. No wonder, he has acquired very deep impressions of the Khrushchevian liberalism during the formative years of his life. Two extracts given below from the biography of Gorbachev written by Thos G. Butson very vividly mirror the impact of the age-factor on the style of functioning adopted by Gorbachev.

"Gorbachev and his colleagues have no memory of the revolution or the civil war. They take as normal such creature comforts as a reasonable sized apartment, a television set, or even a car—things that were novelties to the Brezhnev generation. Ideology means less to them as well. During his stay in London, Gorbachev omitted a scheduled visit to Karl Marx's grave to lay a wreath, and sent his assistant instead."²⁰

"Those who belonged to the generation of Khrushchev and Brezhnev happened to be close witnesses of Stalinist purges. They were therefore quite sensitive on the issues pertaining to the Stalinist times. A Brezhnevian attempt to build up a heroic image is thus explicable on the basis of considerations of a particular generation. While Brezhnev and his colleagues were prone to look back on past glories, real or imagined, Gorbachev and his age group are much more forward-looking, taking pride in their country's very real achievements but also understanding its shortcomings and confident that they can provide the remedies."²¹

We can explain the origin of de-Brezhnevisation by referring to the Gorbachevian pursuit of truth as well. It was in his report to the 27th CPSU Congress that Mikhail Gorbachev emphasised the significance of the lesson of truth. There he stated that whereas honest analysis of the past

clears the way to the future, a half-truth which shamefully evades the sharp corners, holds down the elaboration of realistic policy and "impedes our advance". And then in the same paragraph the pointed out how the Soviet leaders felt it indispensable to refer in the new edition of the Party Programme to the negative processes that had surfaced in the 1970s and the early 1980s. It is hardly necessary to mention that the activities of Brezhnev pertaining to the same years have been criticised by Gorbachev. The present Soviet leader is moreover aware that the Brezhnevian inadequacies are fairly known to masses. He therefore feels that by exposing such inadequacies, he can have a beautiful rapport with the people. Has he not stated in one of his speeches that changes in life and the moods of people should not be allowed to outpace the understanding of these processes in the party, particularly in its guiding bodies?²² Mikhail Gorbachev has again lent authenticity to the following review of the Brezhnev era:

"If the first decade of the Brezhnev period delivered notable and worthy results, the next decade witnessed petrification in domestic policies, costly delays in response to burning problems, and immobilism".²³

The campaign of de-Brezhnevisation comprises three aspects: (a) exposure of errors committed by Brezhnev and his colleagues; (b) reversing of Brezhnevian policies; and (c) strong measures for overcoming the legacies of the past.

The attack made by Gorbachev on the failure of Brezhnev to produce a timely political assessment of the changed economic situation must be considered as a leading criticism against the previous Party Chief. Such an exposure further pointed out that Brezhnev "failed to apprehend the urgency of converting Soviet economy to intensive methods of development". "There were many appeals and a lot of talk on this score, but practically no headway was made."

Four Groups of Brezhnevian Errors

According to the present CPSU Chief, the errors committed by Brezhnev and his companions can be classified into four groups. The first group is related to the field of economy. Thus Brezhnev did not bother to improve the rate of capital construction. As a result, huge sums were frozen and the scientific and technological progress in the Soviet economy was retarded. The habit of relying on palliatives in those years led certain ministries and departments to chalk out costly projects in the name of modernisation. The leadership of that period is also alleged to have failed in the field of practical application of new scientific discoveries.

Gorbachev has explained this failure by referring specifically to the laziness on the part of some ministries to apply in the respective fields the new lubricants discovered by Soviet scientists. According to Gorbachev, the lack of coordination in the works of government departments dealing with foreign economic relations and the mismanagement and sponging in collective farms are also the reflections of inertia perpetuated in the latter half of the career of Brezhnev. What disturbs Gorbachev most is the constant negligence of socio-economic development in a number of areas such as the non-black-soil zone of the RSFSR, the Far East of USSR, and so on. The fact that very inadequate attention was paid to the improvement of production relations also irritates Gorbachev. A sort of perverted thinking prevalent then that equated socialism with outdated management methods must be held responsible for this phenomenon. As a result of these methods, workers and managers did not feel like engaging themselves whole-heartedly in production processes. There actually emerged bribe takers and grabbers who used their positions for selfish purposes. The outdated methods moreover caused large material and moral losses because of flaws in design, deviations from production methods, use of low-grade materials and poor finishing.

The second group of errors committed by Brezhnev and his companions is related to the field of social policy. Gorbachev feels that these leaders did not show sufficient concern for the slackening of control over the measure of labour and consumption, for irregularities as regards social justice, and for the need to step up the struggle against incomes. "There was a certain over-emphasis on technocratic approaches which blunted the social aspect of production." This led workers to be least interested in the results of their work. Such an over-emphasis on technocracy also resulted in the scarcity of diverse consumer goods and services. That the government of USSR has not yet provided each family with a separate flat or house is indeed a topic of deep concern for Gorbachev. According to the present party captain, the roots of mass-level hard drinking and alcoholism lie in the casual approach adopted by Soviet leaders of the 1970s towards issues related to housing, health and education of Soviet masses.

The third group of errors committed by leaders of the Brezhneva is linked with the arena of Soviet polity. Here it is pointed out that excessive centralisation caused a great damage to the working of local soviets and to the solution of local problems as well. As per the present thinking, the attitude adopted by previous leaders towards various contradictions in the development process needs to be criticised. Previous leaders failed to locate such contradictions. However, when they noted such contradictions, the device applied was to gloss them over and thus to

accumulate them. Moreover, people's self-government could not develop to the expected extent. This phenomenon affected the authority of the people's representatives and also the support and participation by workers at large. The short-comings observable in Soviets such as departmentalism, localism, irresponsibility, red tape and formal indifference to people are all reflections of the insufficient development of the people's self-government. Gorbachev feels sorry over the consistent narrowing of the role of trade unions, youth leagues and women's organisations. He conveyed to the delegates of the 18th Congress of the Trade Unions of USSR on 25 February 1987 that during his visit to the Kuban area, some trade union officials were found "dancing cheek to cheek with economic managers", thus ignoring the interests of the working people. Excessive centralisation and confusion of the functions of Party Committees with those of governmental and public bodies gave a boost to various types of bureaucratic distortions. As is known to all, during the Brezhnev era, an end was put to the unjustified reshuffling and frequent replacements of cadres. This type of antidote to the Khrushchevian cadre policy however "carried personnel stability to the point of absurdity". The bureaucrats, thus assured of jobs and all sorts of fringe benefits, took pleasure in appeasing superiors and in suppressing subordinates. They in fact tried to cover up their own blunders and failures by ostentatious severity towards personnel. Gorbachev has presented a brief and precise description of the recent trends developed in Soviet polity. That description is worth quoting:

"From the recent past we know that where criticism and self-criticism is choked, where talk about success is substituted for a Party analysis of the actual situation, all Party activity is deformed and a situation of complacency, permissiveness, and impunity arises that leads to the most serious consequences."²⁴

As for the fourth group of errors of previous leadership, Mikhail Gorbachev wants us to note that theoretical concepts of socialism had remained largely unchanged since the 1930s and 1940s, when the tasks being tackled by society were entirely different.²⁵

The criticism made by the present Party Chief in this context is quite direct. It puts the blame explicitly on the activities of Brezhnev. Gorbachev has, for instance, observed in his report to the 27th CPSU Congress that the thesis on developed socialism was a reaction to the simplistic ideas about the ways and terms of carrying out the task of Communist construction. Subsequent interpretation of developed socialism was of course full of faults. Thus only successes were registered in Party documents; as a result, problems pertaining to the conversion of economy to intensification, to raising labour productivity, improving supplies to the population and

overcoming negative things did not receive sufficient attention from Party leaders.²⁶

Countering Excessive Centralism

We have already noted that reversing certain Brezhnevian policies is the second aspect of the present campaign of de-Brezhnevisation. We can accordingly first refer to the steps related to economy taken by Gorbachev. These steps are meant to break the Brezhnevian legacy of excessive centralisation. Mikhail Gorbachev has reminded us of the fact that the Kosygin reforms of 1965 remained on paper only, as during the Brezhneva era, there was a shortage of cardinal changes in society and of the corresponding political will as well.²⁷ Thus the enterprises continued their dependence on central directives. The steps undertaken at present would strengthen local initiative. Thus the measure of repayment asks a Soviet enterprise to earn sufficient profit for overcoming expenses incurred on production and marketing. The step of self-financing dissuades enterprises from relying on respective ministries in difficult times. This measure thus aims at making every enterprise self-reliant. Then there is a measure of economic accountability which goads an enterprise to render financial support to the state. The assurance given in the 27th CPSU Congress that "in the coming fifteen years, the volume of resources allocated for the improvement of the conditions of life is to be doubled", can be treated as evidence of the reversal of Brezhnevian policies related to the social sphere. Present leaders are emphasising that the fulfilment of *immediate* interests of people is basic in the reorganisation process. It is through the conscious development of the people's self-government that Gorbachev wishes to reverse the previous policies linked with Soviet polity. Two simple recommendations approved unanimously by the CPSU Plenum in January 1987 are indeed very important in this regard. Thus, if one recommendation subjected the election of senior officials to secret ballots, the other advocated the case of multi-candidate constituencies. Gorbachev wants that the solution of local problems must be entrusted rather exclusively to the local Soviets. He thus wishes to reverse undue centralisation of the Brezhnev period. His policy encouraging openness and a spirit of criticism and self-criticism is also substantiating the process of reversing old policies. Certain policies like dilution of censorship on newspapers, rehabilitation of some writers and poets, removal of a ban on Sakharov, re-examination of history, permission to people to undertake open debates on the future of USSR etc. are additional evidences of the same process. Recently two very important decisions taken during Brezhnev years were reversed. Thus the last leg of 1987 witnessed the cancellation of the gigantic scheme, whereby previous leaders wanted to divert flows of Siberian rivers into the grand hydro-elec-

tric project. And only a few days back, the Kremlin announced the cancellation of the decision to construct the Krasnodar nuclear power plant near Minsk. Both projects faced strong public hostility. Previous leaders, however, used to stick to their decisions. By reversing these decisions, Gorbachev has not only put a comma, if not a full stop, to the previous hunger for grand, ambitious projects, but also discontinued the practice of showing callous attitude towards public hostility to the governmental decision.

The new edition of the Party Programme also mirrors the reversal of old policies related to the field of ideology. Incidentally, it was Khrushchev, who assured people through the publication of the Third Party Programme that the Soviet Union would enter the stage of communism by 1981. His successor, Leonid Brezhnev, came across obvious difficulties in fulfilling this assurance. Therefore it was pointed out that the stage of communism was still far away and that the stage of developed socialism was visible. Of course, indications were given of the Soviet potentialities to achieve the ultimate stage. Now Mikhail Gorbachev is arguing that at present even the stage of developed socialism is beyond reach and that the Soviet Union is busy in the process of upgrading of socialism.

The present leadership believes in the pursuit of truth. That is why it frankly admitted that even the lower targets of the 9th and 10th Five Year Plans were not attained; and that the Soviet society still faces certain contradictions. The resultant reassessment of the Soviet Union is clearly reflected in the speeches and writings of the new leadership. Recent publication of realistic documents, concerned with the theory of socialism, informs us that for the new Soviet leader, a combination of inner unbelief and outer conformism is no longer tolerable.

The views expressed by present leaders regarding the rise and growth of Stalinism in Soviet Union are highly significant, as they show the firm determination of Gorbachev and his colleagues to break the old practice in this regard. The speech delivered by Gorbachev on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution is quite memorable, as it denounced the various aberrations of Stalin and moreover spotlighted certain shortcomings of the Soviet system. It is indeed a reflection of the new trend against the background of the past three decades. Thus whereas Khrushchev's attributed the excesses of Stalinist period to the peculiar angularities of the dictator, Brezhnev tried to whitewash such excesses. During Brezhnev's time, it was once claimed that millions of people "consciously accepted privations and hardships".²⁶ The book on developed socialism published in Brezhnev years tried to plead for "revolutionary coercion" against the bourgeoisie and its political allies.²⁸ One of the recent issues of *Kommunist*, the official theoretical journal of the

CPSU, has, on the other hand offered the following observations on Stalin years:

"The mightier the Soviet state became, the more cowardly, mistrustful and suspicious were official organs in charge of culture in their treatment of the creative intelligentsia and their creative works."²⁹

The Party organ thus refers to the systemic shortcomings and further assures that in future the CPSU would bid good-bye to administrative methods and to the habits of giving orders or boot licking and falsehoods.³¹ That there is additional reversal related to Stalinism can be explained by referring to the treatment given to anti-Stalinists. Brezhnev tried to revive Stalinism and treated leaders like Trotsky, Bukharin and Khrushchev as "non-persons". Gorbachev on the other hand has found it essential to recognise the roles played by such anti-Stalinists. Trotsky is, of course, still criticised. But Bukharin is glorified and Khrushchev is also honoured for his attack on the cult of personality and for his efforts to re-establish socialist legality.

New Trends in Foreign Policy

The path adopted by Gorbachev in the field of foreign policy is also remarkably different from that followed by Brezhnev. According to Max Jakobson, Brezhnev consistently listened to His Marshal's Voice.³² The resultant pursuit of militarisation for around eighteen years blessed the decision to send tanks in 1968 to face the challenge of the Prague Spring. It favoured the threatening of China with a pre-emptive nuclear strike. In fact, a number of actions like the achievements of military parity with the U.S., the deployment of SS-20 missiles on the borders of Western Europe, the military intervention in Afghanistan, and so on, were favoured by the policy of relentless militarisation in the Brezhnev years. Gorbachev has conveyed to us that he wants to reverse almost each and every action mentioned above. Thus unlike the previous leadership, he does not believe in the balance of nuclear terror principle. He has moreover criticised the notion that Moscow enjoys a 'natural' pre-eminent status among the world's Communist parties and governments. He has in fact particularly complied with Chinese proposals regarding withdrawal of Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan and Mongolia, and also regarding the removal of nuclear missiles from inner Asia. If these moves have created a sort of "thaw" in the arena of Sino-Soviet relations, his rejection of the Brezhnevian concept of "limited sovereignty" for other socialist countries has improved the image of USSR in East European countries. His proposal to eliminate medium-range missiles from Europe as well as his idea of reducing Soviet troops in Eastern Europe have brightened the chances for Moscow to

cement its relations with all European countries. All these evidence of de-Brezhnevisation are undoubtedly impressive.

A third aspect of the move of de-Brezhnevisation is entitled as the adoption of strong measures for breaking the legacy of Brezhnev. It seems that Gorbachev has so far dismissed 200,000 or more party and state officials.³³ The list of dismissed officials includes names of stalwarts like Nikolai Baibakov, the Chief of the Gosplan, Tikhonov, the octogenarian Prime Minister, Victor Grishin, the Chief of the Moscow unit of CPSU, Din Muhammed Kunayev of Kazakhstan, Dzhusupbek Akhmatov of Soviet Kirgizia, Leonid Khitrin, minister of machine building for animal husbandry and fodder production, Sergei Afanassiev, minister of heavy and transport machine building, etc. Soviet government has recently sent several corrupt administrators in the Rostov region to forced labour camps and awarded death sentence to V. Usmanov, one of the former ministers of Uzbekistan, for embezzlement and other crimes. Stern disciplinary measures have moreover been taken against intermediate layers of bureaucracy for ending moonlighting (black market) activities on a large scale. The present leadership has demonstrated through such strong measures that it is determined to end the inadequacies of Brezhnev era. The following extract from one of the recent speeches of Gorbachev very succinctly presents the crux of de-Brezhnevisation-campaign.

"Perestroika implies not only eliminating the stagnation and conservatism of the preceding period and correcting the mistakes committed, but also overcoming historically limited, outdated features of social organisation and work methods."³⁴

The campaign of de-Brezhnevisation, of course, faces certain constraints. Present Soviet leadership cannot, for instance, afford to bid good-bye to each and every act of the Brezhnev era. In fact, it seems that the acts performed by Brezhnev in the early years of his rule are acceptable to Gorbachev, as through such acts Khrushchevian distortions were overcome. Brezhnev thus offered consensual leadership for order and stability in place of the strong personal leadership offered by his predecessor.³⁵ Brezhnev indeed strengthened a trend towards a pluralistic political system in the USSR. He avoided to be a ruthless dictator and adopted a fundamentally different attitude towards institutions, officials and experts within the Soviet establishments. (Brezhnev was, of course, pro-establishment; he therefore applied harsh measures against dissenters in the USSR.) Thus Soviet Union witnessed in the early years of the Brezhnev era a transition (to a limited extent) from state to society and from power to authority. It also observed then the replacement of voluntarism and ad-hocism by new traits like collectivism and detailed pre-planning. A full-stop was moreover put in those years to the hare-brained schemes of Khrushchev.

New Soviet leaders appreciate such tasks of Brezhnev and to that extent the campaign of de-Brezhnevisation imposes on itself a limit.

Systemic Limitations on Reforms

Then, there are some systemic limitations. Thus if enterprises are allowed to frame their production plans in response to the demands of the market, there would arise clashes between such plans on the one hand, and the large macro-level plan on the other hand. That the Soviet leaders would give priority to the expectations of the large macro-level plan will put an obstacle to decentralisation. Secondly, introduction of new technology and implementation of new efficiency norms is likely to retrench some labourers. If these labourers cannot be absorbed elsewhere due to certain difficulties, leaders will not dare to introduce new techniques and norms. Thirdly, implementation of novel measures like self-financing, self-reliance etc. will make some firms run into losses and some others earn profits. If the government decides to give subsidies to the former firms, the concept of an autonomous firm will face dilution. The concept will face the same tragedy if profitable firms are asked to help the losing counterparts. The fear of a cut-throat competition will probably lead authorities to apply brakes to the move for de-Brezhnevisation. Lastly, multi-candidate constituencies will not be allowed to enter the phase of multi-party constituencies. Such difficulties which are inherent in the socialist system will pose challenges and, to that extent, the campaign of de-Brezhnevisation will be affected.

Mikhail Gorbachev has so far sufficiently denounced his predecessor. Only the future will disclose whether the move of this type will ultimately be fruitful.

End-Notes

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