

All civilizations of the world, ancient or modern, had and have their own kinds of crises. So, what the 'philosophers of despair' now bewail is nothing new. They try to convince the people that the crises of modern civilization is something unprecedented and project the prospect of nuclear holocaust, massive environmental pollution, etc. as sure signs of the imminent destruction of modern civilization. Apart from the postmodern prophets there are our own pessimists who lament that the Kali era can never produce anything but decay and degeneration.

As against all this, the essay proposes to explore the grounds for hope which are not always visible on the surface. The essay also suggests strategies for overcoming the perils of globalization, liberalization and privatization which merely appear to be overwhelming. Struggles for linguistic self-identity, long-term battle against neo-obscurantism, militarism and other reactionary trends need to be waged by intellectuals all over the world. The world today needs committed social scientists, who can speak and write in an intelligible manner and keep the light of hope for a socialist future shining.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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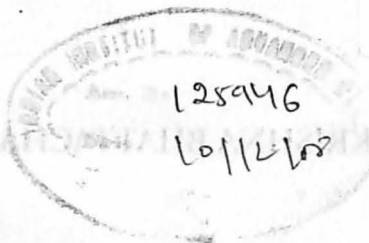
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in memoriam

Asok Kumar Maiti

a social scientist who never ceased to dream of a
classless world

UNIT 10: THE FUTURE

What are the chances of
the following events
happening?

1. I will be a millionaire by the age of 30.

2. I will be married by the age of 30.

3. I will be a doctor by the age of 30.

4. I will be a famous person by the age of 30.

5. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

6. I will be a successful business person by the age of 30.

7. I will be a famous actor or actress by the age of 30.

8. I will be a professional musician by the age of 30.

9. I will be a professional dancer by the age of 30.

10. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

11. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

12. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

13. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

14. I will be a professional athlete by the age of 30.

P R E F A C E

When Dr N.P.Chaubey, the indefatigable General Secretary of the Indian Academy of Social Sciences, invited me to write a monograph on the focal theme of the XXVII Indian Social Science Congress 2004, I was more amused than surprised. What have I, an humble teacher, got to contribute to such a vast theme as “The Crisis of Modern Civilization”? I told him that I was not equal to the task; at best I could deal with a small part of it. He brushed my hesitation aside and left me with no choice.

This small monograph may very well be viewed as a loose sally of the mind, part-philosophical, part-political, part-literary. Being an inveterate optimist, I feel that hope should not be taken as a mark of naïveté, a sign of immaturity or a product of inexperience and lack of exposure to the larger issues of life. I have no appetite for jeremiads. I believe that hope has its roots deep down in the human psyche, in the very bases of the condition of the homo sapiens in history.

My intention is to provide, to the best of my ability, some solid grounds for hope in a seemingly desperate situation and urge all social scientists to take a long view of human civilizations, as Irfan Habib has recently done in a lecture.¹ Being an old member of the Old Left, and an unrepentant “old-fashioned Marxist”² to boot, I cannot help remaining true to the cause of scientific socialism, upholding reason over its enemies (particularly the neo-obscurantists parading as postmodernists) and all kinds of ahistorical views. What follows is basically a personal testament. But, I hope, it will

strike a sympathetic chord in the hearts of at least some of the readers.

Whoever writes about hope can hardly ignore the *magnum opus* of Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (The Principle of Hope), so much admired by E.H.Carr and many others.³ The three mighty volumes were written in exile in the USA, 1938-47 and revised in the then German Democratic Republic, from 1953 to 1959, the year in which they were first published. The book still merits reading and re-reading. I am not a polymath like Bloch and the present monograph is accordingly rather slim, although there was no constraint of space to complain about. Dr Chaubey assured me that I could write as much I please. However, my resources are meagre, so I could not make use of his generous offer. But, what is more pertinent, I abide by Voltaire's remark on Diderot's *Encyclopédie*: "Twenty folio volumes will never make a revolution. It is the little portable volumes of thirty *sous* that are to be feared. Had the gospel cost twelve hundred sesterces the Christian religion would never have been established." ⁴

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NOTES

1. See Habib 2004.
2. The editors of *Monthly Review*, 47:3, July-August 1995, described themselves as "old-fashioned Marxists".
3. Carr 177.
4. Quoted in the Introduction to Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, 7.

‘UNSATISFACTORY TIMES’

ERIC Hobsbawm, the noted British historian, ends his recently published autobiography with a question and offers his own answer :

What marks have I got in the test? If they are too low, then this book will not give readers much help as they go into the new century, mostly with a longer life ahead of than the author.

Still, let us not disarm even in unsatisfactory times. Social injustice still needs to be denounced and fought. The world will not get better on its own.¹

Is the reference to ‘unsatisfactory times’ typical of a work written in 2002? No, it is not. Laments about ‘unsatisfactory times’ have been recurrent since the age of myths. We heard such laments in the maladies of the Kali era in the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas. Greek and Roman poets bitterly complained against the Iron Age (similar to the Kali era) in their poems. The prophets of the Old Testament denounced their own times and their own people. Such soulful cries uttered by doomsday prophets have been common to all civilizations, dead or existing. At least in this respect the Hebrew prophet was right : “There is nothing new under the sun.”²

Let us come back to more recent past. Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist philosopher, wrote in 1948 :

There is, of course, plenty of darkness around us now, just as there was between the two wars. Those who wish to despair can find cause enough and more in our everyday life. Marxism does not console anyone by playing down difficulties or minimizing the material and moral darkness which surrounds us human beings today.³

Yet Lukács was more hopeful than Hobsbawm. Instead of offering a call to action which sounds rather muted, Lukács spoke with the clarity of conviction :

The difference is only – but in this “only” lies a whole world—that Marxism has a grasp of the main lines of human development and recognises its laws. Those who have arrived at such knowledge know, in spite of all temporary darkness, both whence we have come and where we are going. And those who know this find the world changed in their eyes: they see purposeful development where formally only a blind, senseless confusion surrounded them. Where the philosophy of despair weeps for the collapse of a world and the destruction of culture, there Marxists watch the birth-pangs of a new world and assist in mitigating the pains of labour.⁴

Before going into any assessment of this optimistic view, let me quote a few words from E.H.Carr, another historian noted for plain speaking. In his preface to the second edition of *What is History?* (which was published after his death in 1982), he observed :

My conclusion is that the current wave of scepticism and despair [in the West], which looks ahead to nothing but destruction and decay, and dismisses as absurd any belief in progress of a further advance by the human race, is a form of élitism – the product of élite social groups whose security and whose privileges have been most conspicuously eroded by the crisis, and of élite countries whose once undisputed domination over the rest of the world has been shattered.⁵

Who are these ‘philosophers of despair’? Carr is very much to the point when he says :

Of this movement the standard-bearers are the intellectuals, the purveyors of the ideas of the ruling social group which they serve (‘The ideas of a society are the ideas of its ruling class’). It is irrelevant that some of the intellectuals in question may have belonged by origin to other social groups; for, in becoming intellectuals they are automatically assimilated into the intellectual élite group.⁶

If religion is the opium of the people, so is crisis to the intellectuals.

Unlike Lukács, Carr did not draw his inspiration from Marxism or any philosophical system. His source was the people around him. He observed :

The vast majority of people do not believe in it (sc. 'the end of the world'); and this disbelief is made evident by their behaviour. People make love, conceive, bear and rear children with great devotion. Immense attention, private and public, is given to health and education in order to promote the well-being of the next generation. New sources of energy are constantly explored. New inventions increase the efficiencies of production. Multitudes of 'small savers' invest in national savings bonds, in building societies and in unit trusts. Widespread enthusiasm is shown for the preservation of the national heritage, architectural and artistic, for the benefit of future generations.⁷

This pulsating spectacle of life tempted Carr "to conclude that belief in early annihilation is confined to a group of disgruntled intellectuals who are responsible for the lion's share of current publicity."⁸

Only a charlatan can dismiss the conclusion as facile.

THE PRESENT SCENARIO

What Carr said about the people in 1981-82 still holds good. Even in a poor country like ours, those who can afford even a little, indulge in the same kind of activity : they try hard to give the best possible education to their children (often spending beyond their means), try to make provisions for them so that they can keep their heads above the water, and enjoy one-day cricket matches, films which have a happy ending, pay their mite for the victims of earthquake and flood, and are upset by the recent happenings in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What makes the common people so resilient? How can

they go on living, unaffected by "the crisis of civilization" with which the intellectuals wrack their brains?

I can readily think of two reasons :

- a) Even if people are not endowed with Lukács's philosophical foresight, there is such a thing called the instinct of species preservation, common to all living beings. This instinct prompts man to invent new ways and means of adaptation to changing circumstances. And over and above this inherent instinct, human brain, even though the largest part of it remains unutilized, enables him to explore and find new avenues for survival.
- b) Man has inherited a conviction handed down by his forefathers who had gone through similar crises in their life time and had somehow survived that the crises he now faces are not after all insurmountable. If his forefathers could brave the storm, so can he. This is very much like the burden of an Old English song : "That passed away,so may this." ⁹

DESPAIR'S VOICE

A philosopher of despair may very well say : you have no sense of perspective. The crises of our own times, specially after the large-scale production of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) defy all precedents in the whole history of human civilization, both in extent and gravity. A nuclear holocaust threatens the very existence of all living beings on earth. Think also of "the generation of inventive dwarfs", as Brecht called the scientists of the new age. ¹⁰ They will do anything for money, specially when the demands made by the powers that be fire their imagination . Ah! intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). You just put your finger on a switch : millions are annihilated. Think of the mandarins of life science . They are busy inventing new devices for biological warfare. The word 'morality' is now to be obeyed more in breach than in observance. Listen to what Joseph

Needham, the old embryologist-turned-historian of science and civilization in China, wrote in 1986:

When I was young, in the thirties of the present century, I was one of the "Science and Society" movement among the "younger scientists" of the time. It never occurred to any of us that science is something inimical to mankind, or dangerous; the whole complaint of colleagues like J.D.Bernal was that capitalism prevented the full employment of science for human benefits, and that was quite a reason for opposing it. But the whole situation has utterly changed since the second world war. People in general are now suspicious and fearful of science only too conscious of its dread possibilities – whether in atomic and chemical weapons, nuclear power, acid rain, environmental pollution, genetic engineering, loss of privacy due to information banks, etc. etc. The fact that so many of these things are due to the machinations of evil men engaged in the struggle for wealth and power is forgotten. Capitalism, the very incarnation of this struggle, still stands condemned. But now people are desperately afraid of what modern science and industry are capable of, as in the recent case of Bhopal. This has been one of the greatest changes which I have seen in my not too short life....¹¹

HOPE REPLIES

Let me concede first that we live in 'unsatisfactory times' and the prospect is bleak. All the more so in an overwhelmingly unipolar world in which old imperialism has dropped even the fig-leaf of neo-colonialism and assumed its naked brigand form in Afghanistan and Iraq. Without belittling the magnitude of the crisis I have to remind all philosophers of despair and their pupils only one thing: Every age before ours thought its own crises to be unprecedented and insurmountable. Rapid exhaustion of natural resources, food insecurity, disappearance of rain forest, hole in the ozone layer, etc. no doubt pose new threats. But so did the invention of firearms, massive use of petrol-driven cars, artificial

fertilizer, etc. They could not be eliminated for good. But measures have been taken or are being taken to contain their evil effects. Supersonic jet planes have actually been disbanded, purely for protecting the aerial environment. A number of drugs originally invented during the last world war to facilitate early recovery (mepacrine, for example) has been banned. The new synthetic called plastic is also under similar prohibition. If novel inventions in science and industry have proved to be dangerous to health, concerted action by scientists and social activists is not found wanting. In fact, more than at any time before, the campaign for making people conscious of their health and environment has spread and won significant victories in this new crusade.

Overblowing onesidedly of the role of crisis undermines the inbuilt vision of happy life that has sustained mankind from time immemorial. I can do no better than quote George Steiner:

It is the miraculou – I do not retract the term – capacity of grammars to generate counter-factuals, ‘if’ – propositions and, above all, future tenses, which have empowered our species to hope, to reach far beyond the extinction of the individual. We endure, we endure creatively due to our imperative ability to say ‘No’ to reality, to build fictions of alterity....¹²

Such visions are admittedly utopian. But what is worth noting is that these visions appeared at different times and places unrelated to one another. So long as human language has the future tense and the subjunctive mood, utopias shall re-surface.

UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

Utopia, literally “no-place”, will sound the same as Eutopia, meaning good or happy place. It has now become synonymous with wild phantasy, totally out of touch with reality. Though the word was not coined before the sixteenth

century,¹³ visions of a Utopia can be traced back to the earliest written records of different ancient civilizations. I need not provide here genealogy of such visions: there is a huge literature on utopia and its antecedents.¹⁴ But in the nineteenth century Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill coined two terms, *cacotopia* and *dystopia*, both meaning “an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible”.¹⁵ In the twentieth century, utopias became rarer than dystopias. Think of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). In fact newspapers of every country seem to offer almost invariably a series of dystopias in their daily reports of world events. Thus dystopias now appear to be more fashionable than the utopias of the past.

But are the dystopians with their dark forebodings more practical and realistic than the utopians? I would hesitate to say so. If the utopians were poor dreamers, the dystopians too have jaundiced vision. As Alexander Pope, the eighteenth-century English poet, said:

All seems infected that th’ infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.¹⁶

I refuse to believe the dystopians’ nightmare visions solely because they do not help mankind; on the contrary, they tend to breed in people the feeling of the futility of efforts. Utopias, on the other hand, have rendered a signal service to mankind by encouraging them to long for certain things. As Theodor W. Adorno points out: “[N]umerous so-called utopian dreams — for example, television, the possibility of travelling to other planets, moving faster than sound — have been fulfilled.”¹⁷

The kind of amenities that the poor people now enjoy even in India was not available to the richest people in antiquity. Just think of the means of transport that are at our disposal today. I am not thinking of aeroplanes or hydrofoils

(catamarans), words not to be found in any nineteenth-century dictionary, not even motor cars, but of more homely devices of transport, such as bicycles and auto-rickshaws. Somebody had to dream of these things first.

There are of course utopias and utopias: some are forward-looking, some looking backward. The myth of the Golden Age or the *Satya Yuga* (the era of truth) are basically backward-looking. Uttarakuru, a legendary place somewhere beyond the Himalayas, as is often wistfully mentioned in Brahminical, Buddhist and Jain works (both canonical and non-canonical), was another such backward-looking utopia.¹⁸ It was supposed to be a land of plenty with no sexual taboos and, more significantly, devoid of private property. Such utopias are important, for through them their authors offer a criticism of the state of affairs existing at the time of their composition. They are not merely works of phantasy but are significant social documents expressing obliquely the basic needs that required to be fulfilled.

But forward-looking utopias are more important, if not for any other reasons but that they set new goals to attain, new amenities to be invented. Rahula Sankrityayana's *The Twentysecond Century*, originally written in his pre-Marxist phase, is a good instance of such a futuristic utopia.¹⁹ These forward-looking utopias are to be cherished rather than ridiculed.

The 2000 issue of *Socialist Register* is devoted to "Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias". A number of articles deal with positive forms of utopias seeking to transcend pessimism and rekindling socialist imagination.²⁰ It is no wonder that different people at different times have recalled Oscar Wilde's essay, *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1895). Wilde was neither a social philosopher nor an author of any utopia. His defence of socialism is of a rather bizarre kind. But what he says is memorable both for its clever turn

of phrases and the content: "A map of the world that does not include utopia is not even worth glancing at for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing."²¹ Despite all parodies of utopia and churning out of dark dystopias such an invisible place is ever present in the map retained in people's mind.

FALSE HOPES BELIED

Strange things are happening. The Berlin wall, which had stood as a symbol of division between two opposed systems since 13.08.1961, was ultimately dismantled on 3.10.1989. Some self-professed free-thinkers and "rationalists" lent their voice to the chorus of approval sung by the partisans of cold war. To them it was the final dismantling of all barriers to freedom (read 'free trade') and democracy (read 'manipulation of power'), almost a transition from dystopia to utopia. Even some otherwise sane people were jubilant to see the downfall of the peoples' democracies in Eastern Europe. But Leo Lowenthal, then 89, old guard of the Frankfurt School, was rather dismayed. Helmut Dubiel reports:

I will never forget our argument on the day the wall came down. At the time, I was ecstatic about the events in Berlin, Prague and Budapest. He (sc. Lowenthal) could not understand it and lost his composure in front of his hotel on Bockenheimer Landstrasse. The old ghosts will return, he said, the nationalist and ethnocentric spirit of the inter war period will resurface in Eastern Europe. They will persecute foreigners, desecrate Jewish graves, and under pressure from the Right, politicians will be corrupt enough to take the sections about asylum out of the constitution. I disagreed. Unfortunately, he was right.²²

The dream of the East Germans has not come true. Reunification of Germany has not brought in any real relief to them. There is now a wave of what has been called "Ostalgia", a yearning for the East. Such a feeling is best

expressed in a film, *Goodbye Lenin* released in 2003. The story-line is as follows:

A devoutly socialist mother suffers a heart attack, falls into a coma and is unconscious when East Germany collapses. Some months later she wakes up and is in acute danger of a second heart attack if she is subjected to shock. So the son reconstructs the East German state in and around her convalescent bedroom; faked news footage is piped into her television set, she is sheltered from Coca Cola, visitors dress with studied shabbiness and the boy goes to extravagant lengths to supply her with socialist-era pickled gherkins.²³

Goodbye Lenin has been called “the funniest film to come out of Germany for a century or so”.²⁴ But is it really funny? Roger Boyes admits :

East Germans developed a fetishistic interest in western goods but most understood that consumer choice was nowhere near as important as ethical choice, the daily tests of loyalty and self-respect in a crumbling police state. These were values learnt under communism and in spite of it; it has made thoughtful individuals out of east Germans, sceptical of ideologies, of populism and posturing.²⁵

In his “Letter to a West German Friend” written in 1963, Graham Greene had pointed out that, barring a few, most of the people who left the German Democratic Republic were merely yielding to the temptation of the transistor radio set (a novelty in those days!), American blue jeans and leather jackets. They were motivated by something “less than noble”.²⁶ Standard of living is not the only thing on earth. Erstwhile East Germans have come to understand this. That is why Kati Witt, the famous ice-skater of the former GDR, created a sensation last year when she appeared in a T-shirt on which was written; “I love the German Democratic Republic”.²⁷ Non-celebrities of East Berlin similarly insist on distinguishing themselves from their western rulers by ‘berlinering’, i.e., using the broadest dialect of Berliners which separates the common people from the high-ups.²⁸

A UNIPOLAR WORLD?

Let the philosophers of despair look at the world around. Are we really living in a unipolar world? If it were really so, the imperialists would have nothing to fear. If there were no power or force strong enough to challenge their supremacy, they could have dispensed with, or at least curtailed, the production of their armament. Have they? On the contrary, waging war, unilaterally, without any pretext, seems to be the only way of their survival. Apparently the imperialists are still afraid of their main enemy, the socialist bloc, at present non-existent. The imperialists are still afraid that popular upsurge, spontaneous, disorganised but powerful, is not an unlikely possibility. With the suddenness and ferocity of an earthquake it may and does appear in many parts of the world, not merely in the so-called third world, but in the first world as well. Let not our memory be short. Remember the mammoth rallies and demonstrations at Seattle, New York, Mexico City – wherever the representatives of the World Trade Organization met. Remember the global protest against the US aggression of Afghanistan and Iraq. Even though the left are at present in a shambles, people of all ages and views have taken to the streets to voice their protest against all imperialist manoeuvres. If you look at these outbursts of anger and hatred in isolation, you may dismiss them all as sporadic flashes. But these vocal expressions of disapproval prove one point: society abhors vacuum. Even if there is no credible counter-power to oppose the imperialists, the voice of protest can never be silenced.

CANDIDATES FOR THE VACANT PLACE

In December 2001 the students of the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai met Noam Chomsky. A journalist from Bangalore asked him : “The collapse of communism in 1989 means that a countervailing force is gone. The U.S.

now has complete hegemony since then. Can Islamic fundamentalism be seen as a force that is trying to fill this void?"

Chomsky's reply was as follows:

I agree with the thrust of what you are saying, but would not be happy putting in that way. In my view the fall of the Soviet Union was a small victory for socialism and democracy. The Soviet Union was the most anti-socialist force in the world, next to Nazi Germany and that goes to way back to shortly after the Russian Revolution. It is a long story, but they were a barrier to achievement of any form of socialism anywhere in the world. In that sense, the collapse removes that barrier."²⁹

Then he added: "However I agree with the point that the existence of two great powers left some space for nonalignment."

As to the question of Islamic fundamentalism, Chomsky was rather hesitant. He said :

In a certain sense radical Islam is a response to these changes... In the sense that religious and nationalist fundamentalism often do arise as a response to the lack of opportunity for political participation. If there is no way to become constructively involved in matters that are of concern to them, people find other ways.

I yield to none in my admiration for Chomsky, the tribune of the anti-imperialist intellectuals, who has consistently and persistently fought to expose all capitalist machinations, both in their naked expressions in armed attack and in their hidden manipulation of public opinion ("manufacturing consent" is what he calls it).³⁰ But I would humbly but firmly like to say: he is wrong on both counts. The existence of the socialist bloc, with all its weaknesses and exceptionable practices, was a real deterrent to the globalization of capital. In spite of all fissures and mud-slinging among the two Big Brothers, the USSR and the People's Republic of China had been, till very recently, the bastions of the third- world struggle against

the imperialists and their appointees.³¹ Even that small state in the New World, Cuba, contributed her mite to this cause. Many such attempts to help the underground movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America went astray. Opportunists masquerading as “guerrilla fighters” merely lined their pockets with the money they received. The dream of Che Guevara to liberate one country after another both in Africa and Latin America ended up in smoke. But without the existence and actual help of the socialist bloc, such heroic attempts to overthrow their oppressors would be inconceivable. Hobsbawm, although very critical of China and Cuba as well as disapproving of the successors of Stalin, is forced to admit this one point:

By the 1980s the idea that the socialism of the USSR or its followers was what those of us inspired by October Revolution had in mind was dead. A case could still be made for it as the necessary counterweight to the other super power, and with greater moral conviction as the supporter of the liberation of oppressed peoples, notably in South Africa.... A devotion to colonial liberation was probably the last relic of the spirit of world revolution.³²

As to the main question, whether Islamic fundamentalism is trying to fill the void of communism, I would unhesitatingly declare: No. No fundamentalism, whether Islamic, or Hindu or Christian, can ever hope to fill the void. People's struggles, which include both ideology-oriented groups and individuals as well as men and women desiring peace and security for themselves and their children, have been filling this void since 1989, and more so after 2003. They all know that terrorist attack, however spectacular they may be, as the aerial attacks on WTO and the Pentagon on 11. 9. 2001, are in the ultimate analysis counterproductive. Only a people's war against imperialist war can enable mankind to survive and thrive. However amorphous such a people's war may appear, *it is there*.

I do not want to sound naïvely optimistic. When I look around, I cannot ignore many well-intentioned men and women wallowing in despair. The world, they feel, has gone awry. Robert Cooper, an old British diplomat, is demanding a new kind of imperialism. He wishes to “revert to the rougher methods” of the good old times when every form of oppression and suppression could be practised with impunity. “Pre-modern” states in Africa and “traditional modern states such as India, Pakistan or China,” he demands, have to be brought under the “post-modern” states, meaning presumably the First World. “What is needed is,” he blandly declares, “a new kind of imperialism, one compatible with human rights and cosmopolitan values (!): an imperialism which aims at order and organisation but which rests today on the voluntary principle (!!).”³³

And Cooper’s voice is not a lone one. Richard Haass, an old hand in the US foreign policy circles, invites all nations to take part in such a programme of “preventive or pre-emptory self-defence” by giving up their sovereignty.³⁴

Under such circumstances some of our friends cannot but feel helpless. Neo-colonialism used to speak in a muffled voice, its vocabulary was both cautious and apparently innocuous. Are we to go back to the days of Rudyard Kipling glorifying the “white man’s burden”?³⁵

THE WILL-O’-THE-WISP AND THE LIGHTHOUSE

In spite of all this I contend that we have no cause for despair. But certainly we must not be naïve optimists, which many of us had been in our youth in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. We witnessed the growing tide of mass struggle following the defeat of fascism that brought *de jure* liberation to so many countries in Asia and Africa from foreign yokes, and the advent of peoples’ democracies in Eastern Europe, China

and Cuba, the heroic struggle and the victory of the Vietnamese people against the strongest neo-imperialist power. All this lulled us into believing, not without justification, that the process of emancipation from hunger, homelessness and all such evils are in the offing. Since many of such expectations have been sadly belied, there is a tendency to get bogged, again not without justification, in the Slough of Despond.

We need to be critical optimists. Like the one-eyed deer in Aesop's fables, we should not look at one side only. There are enough causes for despair: this is too apparent. But there are also signs of hope which have to be carefully observed and understood, for such events are not always visible on the surface. Naïve optimism is very much like the will-o'-the-wisp that misleads people in the dark. Critical optimism, on the other hand, is like the lighthouse which illuminates the way all around to the ships on sea. Naïve optimism, to use another simile, rouses false hopes as the mirage in a desert. Critical optimism on the contrary does not deceive anybody. It does not tempt a man to forget the darkness around, but encourages him to find his way in the enveloping gloom.

Forgive me if I seem to wax poetical. Assuredly I am no poet. What I want to impress upon you is that both the will-o'-the-wisp and the lighthouse are real. The only difference is that the will-o'-the-wisp is made by nature but man conceived and erected the lighthouse. Originally it must have sounded utopian, but now it is there for all to see. It was a noble plan, nobly executed.

THE LONG VIEW

What makes a man a critical optimist? The answer can be encapsulated in a single phrase: sense of history. Unless one learns to take a long view, one cannot be a critical optimist.

Take the case of slavery. Think of the slave markets in many parts of the world buying and selling boys and girls, men and women like any other commodity. Slavery was at the very basis of the Egyptian and Greek civilizations. The Romans had slaves to do everything for the free citizens including school teaching. But at long last in the mid-nineteenth century slavery was finally abolished. Yes, in India and elsewhere, there are bonded labourers still. Yet slavery in its vilest form has been dispensed with. A custom that has continued thousands of years in almost all the “civilized” countries of the world ultimately came to an end.³⁶

Or, to take a less long view, think of the fate of the French Republic after the fall of the Bastille in 1789. Let me give the chronology of upheavals:

- 1792 the First Republic established.
- 1804 the republic is replaced by Napoleon, the upstart Emperor of France.
- 1815 The fall of Napoleon, Restoration of the Bourbon dynasty.
- 1830 July Revolution. The Bourbons are replaced by Louis Philippe. Establishment of bourgeois democracy.
- 1844 Another revolution. Restoration of democratic power. Establishment of the Second Republic.
- 1851 The coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte.
- 1871 Rise and fall of the Paris Commune.
- 1871-1940 The Third Republic.
- 1940-1944 France under Nazi occupation.
- 1944-1958 The Fourth Republic.
- 1958 The Fifth Republic.

You see, the Republic proclaimed in 1792 did not enjoy a steady life. It was subverted, replaced and often humiliated by the re-appearance of the *ancien régime* and *nouveaux prétendants* to the throne. All the same the republic could not be killed. Like the proverbial phoenix it came back after sometime, short or not too short, out of its own ashes.

A short-term view of history is always disastrous. How crippling it is can be best shown by the following example. Eric Hobsbawm, whom I have quoted on several occasions before, in a review of Donald Sasson's *One Hundred Years of Socialism* in 1966, wrote that "except for a few paleolithic sectarian survivals, everyone agrees that the future of the European left lies in centre-left governments' finding a viable mix of private and public interest."³⁷ Far be it from my intention to deprecate the worth of Hobsbawm as a historian, but I cannot help choosing this sentence as a typical example of the short view of history. The immediate future is not the same as the foreseeable future. People have a tendency to vote in the most unpredictable way. Sometimes they support a party or a coalition which I, for one, would not care to touch even with a pair of tongs. But again they sometimes vote for the other party and even force a coalition, which I never dreamt they would do. The left-centre coalitions in Europe did not emerge out of thin air: they came at a special juncture. These coalitions may even last for one or two decades more. But such forms of government are not to stay forever. The viable mix of private and public interest shall prove one day or the other no longer viable, for the two interests cannot mix without harming public interest in the long run. Then the public will be forced to choose whose interest their government would protect. Public and private interests *cannot* mix. They are like oil and water. As the editors of *Monthly Review* told their 'old friend', Hobsbawm:

We do not mind being called paleolithics as long as it involves putting us in what we regard as very good company. Outside of Europe there are literally millions of paleolithics by Eric's definition, and even in Europe, there are quite a few of them....³⁸

I would be proud to be counted among the "millions of

paleolithics”.

Such defeatism seems to be rife among the British Marxists. Perry Anderson, editor of the *New Left Review*, sang in the same tune in the first issue of 2000. The “realistic left”, he says, must admit its defeat; it must wait and see if the forces of production under capitalism can release “the human energies for a change of system”. So the New Left must at present merely watch and see “the evolution of this order”.³⁹ This is another form of TINA (there is no alternative), so fashionable among some intellectuals and policy-makers.

All this betrays a deplorable distrust in the people, the working men and women who suffer most under the New Order of victorious capitalism at the late twentieth and the early twenty first centuries. Of course, people are not infallible. They make mistakes in their choice. But self-interest will ultimately make them see that capitalism after the second industrial revolution and all tall talks about profit sharing ultimately leave them in the lurch.

Second, the victory of capitalism is not so complete as it is advertised to be. The lure of consumerism falls flat on half of the world’s population, simply because that half as Mészáros notes, ‘does not reproduce its conditions of existence according to the “sovereign global market”’.⁴⁰ Mészáros refers to ‘the majority of India’s vast population; or of the thousand million plus of China’s 1250 million people.... To this we must add a major part of Africa and South-east Asia (e.g. many millions of people who are subsistence-farming in Indonesia, and therefore all talk in front of them about “the sovereign market” would sound like a joke in bad taste). And we should also remember in this respect a far from negligible part of Latin America.’

(a) *Socialism Lives*

Strange things, as I said before, are happening. Take another example. The BBC News Online ran a cyber poll through September 1999 to ascertain who, according to their voters, was “the thinker of the millennium”. Thousands of people participated. The results were as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Karl Marx | 6. Stephen Hawking |
| 2. Albert Einstein | 7. Immanuel Kant |
| 3. Sir Isaac Newton | 8. Rene Descartes |
| 4. Charles Darwin | 9. James Clarke Maxwell |
| 5. St Thomas Aquinas | 10. Friedrich Nietzsche. ⁴¹ |

The BBC News Online published the result with poor grace. Their spokesman tried to explain that the name of Marx topping the list was merely motivated by nostalgia. Whatever the motive might have been, the fact remains that “the knight of class struggle” (as Paul Lafargue once described his father-in-law)⁴² is not forgotten, in spite of the repeated declaration that he is as dead as a dodo. Even the fall of the Berlin wall could not immure him for good.

In another such opinion poll conducted by the American *Time* magazine Albert Einstein came first as the “Person of the Century”. I need not remind you that Einstein was not only a scientist but an advocate of socialism and a friend of the oppressed all over the world. The FBI had a file on him, nearly 2000 page-long, recording all his utterances, leaving nothing out. Einstein stood for integrity of character, peace and freedom.⁴³

So, you see, opinion polls at the turn of the twentieth century (the second millennium) give a lie to what the philosophers of despair are never tired of repeating, that history has come to a dead end, capitalism is the only

economic system to which everyone has to submit, and parliamentary democracy within such a system is the only viable form of government.

(b) *A Word about Democracy*

Democracy is a very opaque word. Not everybody means the same thing when he or she speaks of democratic rights. But one criterion may safely be applied: Right of women to vote. The city states of Greece excluded all women, free citizens' wives and daughters, from their democratic set-up, as much as they denied the slaves the right to take any interest in the affairs of the *polis*. Till the nineteenth century CE, barring a few states in the USA, women were not allowed to vote in the whole of the western world. The first country to permit this right to women, believe it or not, is not a European state but New Zealand (1893). Finland followed in 1906. In spite of militant movements organized by the suffragettes, women in England were denied the right to vote until 1918, and that too only for women above the age of thirty. Women between twenty one and thirty were allowed to vote only in 1928. France, the land of liberty, equality and fraternity, resisted universal franchise upto 1944. And Switzerland, which boasts of democracy without break for five hundred years, conceded finally in — 1971!⁴⁴

But in India, despite its history of living under one form of tyranny or another for thousands of years, there was no hesitation in according equal rights to men and women in our first written constitution in 1950.

(c) *New Rights for Women*

This brings us to a larger issue, more important than *equali jura*, 'equality in the eyes of law'. With the process of decolonization that came in the wake of the Second World

War, women in many Asian and African countries earned new rights far more important than suffrage. Let us take the case of our own country. Marriage, once solemnized in front of fire and/or the image of a deity, was regarded as sacrosanct: it could not be dissolved under any circumstances. The husband might be a debauch, a wife-beater, habitual drunkard or anything else; the wife could not seek any legal redress. The enactment of a divorce law in 1952 extended the right to seek legal redress.

Cynics and congenital critics may sneer at all this. I can imagine them saying: "You seem to believe that such petty reforms have radically changed the condition of women all over the world, particularly in India. Are you so ignorant that you know nothing of the present-day feminist agenda?"

All that I have to say in reply is simply this: Even the pettiest reform has the greatest value to a sufferer. It is no use thinking merely in terms of manifestoes and charters of demands. It is necessary to look at the actual conditions of those who had to suffer silently, not having any legal way of escape. The very opening of such an opportunity does make a difference in the actual condition. All action programmes cannot be actualized at one stroke. Even a small hesitant step towards the goal should be welcomed. We should not stop there but proceed to achieve more. The sneering attitude towards all reforms found mostly among self-proclaimed radicals is basically impractical and barren.

(d) Rise of Indigenous Languages

Take another, hopefully the last, example. This again pertains not only to India but to many other Asian and African countries. Imperialism brings with it not only the instruments of oppression but certain means of suppression as well. One of such means is the alien language which is imposed upon

the subjugated people. Lord Macaulay's plan to introduce English in all areas during the East India Company's rule is too well-known to be reiterated. That was in 1835, some years before Queen Victoria proclaimed India to be a part of the British Empire. By the time, however, almost all the regional languages of India had found foothold among the people, thanks to the importation of the printing press. The colonialists as well as Christian missionaries found it necessary to have printing presses both for administrative purposes and proselytising. This meant a radically new turn from words of mouth to the printed book. Indian pedagogues utilized this device to further basic education. And this led to the development of all regional languages towards various directions. Not merely primers for children, but books for the entertainment and edification of the people at large began to be produced in increasing numbers. When Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar fought for the abolition of widow burning (euphemistically called Sati) and re-marriage of widows respectively, the battles were fought, not in Sanskrit or English, but in Bangla.

I am not competent to speak of the other regions of India. But it can be confidently asserted that, despite the imposition of English in all spheres of life, a new intelligentsia came into being that refused to be submerged by any foreign language. The regional languages were cultivated with love and care, the new learning brought from Europe was assimilated and disseminated through the mother tongue. In short, Macaulay's superciliousness was effectively rebutted by the very section of the people who were meant to be denationalized in all respects except the pigment of their skin.⁴⁵

The growth of the regional languages was sought to be thwarted at every step. The most important hurdle was that English was the only bread-winner language. One could not

/ get any job without a smattering of English. In spite of this heavy odd, the regional languages continued to thrive. What Spain and Portugal achieved in Latin America, or Britain in the Caribbeans could not be repeated in India. The mother language could not be suppressed by an alien tongue, thanks to the stubborn resistance put up by the Indian people. Although a microscopic minority of Indians was anglicized, they remained a butt of ridicule, as evidenced in the literature of Bengal and elsewhere.

I have spoken at length on this issue, for the mother tongue and the motherland are the only two inalienable elements of a man's identity. One can change one's religion, food and dress habits, move from one domicile to another in faraway places, adopt new occupations and even change names by signing an affidavit, but one cannot deny learning a language in one's mother's lap and being born to a particular village or city. Due to the machinations of the powers that be, one's nationality may undergo several changes. Those born in East Bengal before 14/15 August 1947 were British-Indian subjects by birth. After 14/15 August 1947 they became East Pakistanis, and after 1971, Bangladeshis. Many people of East Bengali or Punjabi origin came to and settled in India after the partition. Thereby they too became Indians, although their native place would still remain Dhaka or Lahore or whatever.

So is the language. There are some highly emotive stories about people who had willingly or unwillingly opted for a language not their own. But at a time of crisis, in a state of coma for example, they are said to have muttered in their long forgotten mother language. Elderly people may well remember the last hours of Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the former national leader. While dictating a letter to his secretary he suddenly lost consciousness not to regain it anymore. The almost inaudible words that come out of his lips were not of

English, not even of Hindi origin. He was speaking in the Garwali dialect which was his true mother tongue.⁴⁶

The upshot of this long excursus is to drive this lesson home: all attempts to colonize the minds of the Indian people could not succeed. Regional languages have successfully replaced English in almost each and every area of public life, from the primary school to parliament. Public meetings and conferences were and are held in Bangla and Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam, not exclusively in English. English remains the link language, it still retains its place in higher education, but not at the cost of the regional languages. Much remains to be done for further improvement in the fields of mass media, radio and TV. Yet even now newspapers and magazines published in India exceed English dailies and periodicals both in number and circulation. With further spread of literacy, their total circulation will certainly leave English publications far behind.

I propose to hold this up as a ground for hope. The Tower of Babel is a reality.⁴⁷ Instead of decrying it, we should foster it further. A people who has no language of its own can be gobbled up more easily and more effectively by the imperialist powers than one which has a sound linguistic identity, and hence, cultural individuality.

These are some of the signs of hope which, with all their limitations and short-comings, constitute the grounds for future development. I do not expect every-body to accord the same kind of importance that I give to them. Some may even reject all of them as positive indications of a better future: some others may propose to replace them with other signs of hope. I have no quarrel with them. Being an inveterate optimist I would welcome further suggestions in so far as they are consonant with the spirit of hope which 'springs eternal in the human breast'. I may as well end this chapter with one of the last poems of Rabindranath Tagore.

Sorrow's dark night has, time and again,
Visited my door;
Armed, I saw, with one single weapon
The distorted simulation of pain,
all the grotesque grimaces of terror –
Performing her role of deception in the dark.
Everytime I have trusted her fearsome mask
I have suffered senseless defeats.
This losing-and-winning game, the false delusion of life,
This nightmare entangling my every step since childhood
Full of the mockery of sorrow.
This kaleidoscope of terror –
Death's deft artistry bespreading the darkness.⁴⁸

WAY OUT OF THE CRISES

Accepting for argument's sake that the role of crisis need not be exaggerated, a question that automatically follows: What is to be done? I am neither a prophet nor a policy-maker. So I do not presume to answer this question. I would rather reframe the question as "What is to be avoided by individuals as individuals?" And the answer that I may venture to suggest is as follows.

The first task is to wage war against all philosophers of despair who project a cyclical view of history and deny any possibility of change to a positive direction ("The more things change the more they remain the same", or "Things are changed so that they will not change").⁴⁹ This requires a mindset that gives proper weightage to man's worldly needs, the six basics: food, clothing, shelter, health, education and jobs. This also implies rejection of the current LPG formula: liberalization, privatization and globalization. All these three are but facades of the iron rule of capital that stands in the

way of establishing an equitable society.

Second, one must reject indigenous counsels of despair who have been and are engaged in singing the chorus with a refrain, "Such is the Kali era!"⁵⁰ They are no less harmful than the epigones of the now-fashionable western gurus who echo the same refrain in a different language.

Third, any social scientist who thinks and speaks in terms of charts and graphs, tables and formulas that provide no room for actual human beings, is suspect. Men and women, real, concrete persons, must be at the centre of all branches of social science, including literary studies and linguistics. Concerned social scientists should be asked to write in a more human and intelligible language. Total pre-occupation with words and ways of narration dehumanizes the whole discipline. Such sinister attempts at dehumanizing social sciences have to be resisted.

Fourth, denigration of reason, however innocuous and sincere on the surface, is not to be trusted. Those who abuse reason do not offer any alternative.⁵¹ But actually, by senselessly rebelling against this prime human faculty, they pave the way for blind faith and unrestrained emotional outbursts. Belief in some doctrine is one thing, blind faith is another. One should have some reasons to believe in something, even if those reasons may not be acceptable to others. But blind faith dispenses with reason altogether and urges men to prostrate themselves before any idol. Similarly, emotion is not a bad thing. But when such emotions seduce a man to retreat from reason, the results are found to be disastrous. Just think of communal frenzy and race riots.

'BARBARISM IF WE ARE LUCKY'

István Mészáros, perhaps the greatest living Marxist philosopher, was asked at the turn of the last century: Do you think that great mass movements have a chance to

blossom again in the age of globalization? His answer was pretty candid:

I am firmly convinced that there is a future for a radical mass movement, not only in England but also in the rest of the world. Or, to put it in another way, if there is no future for such a movement, there can be no future for humanity itself. If I had to modify Rosa Luxemburg's dictum, in relation to the dangers we face, I would add to "socialism or barbarism:" "barbarism if we are lucky" – in the sense that the extermination of human kind is the ultimate concomitant of capital's destructive course of development. And the world of third possibility beyond the alternatives of "socialism or barbarism," would be fit only for cockroaches, which are said to be able to endure lethally high levels of nuclear radiation. This is the only rational meaning of capital's third way.⁵²

So, what is to be done? Should we not take the Minotaur of barbarism by the horns, however daunting the mission may appear or should we give ourselves up to despair and let barbarism prevail unchallenged over the destiny of the human race? Let me end with a poem that Arthur Clough wrote more than a century ago :

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern window only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright !⁵³

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1. Hobsbawm 418.
2. *The Bible*. Ecclesiastes 1:9.
3. Lukács 2.
4. Ibid.
5. Carr 5.
6. Ibid 5-6. The quotation within parentheses is adapted from the *Communist Manifesto*, ch.2, 53: "In every epoch, the ruling ideas have been the ideas of the ruling class", which, in its turn, is a "paraphrase of Goethe's dictum" (Ryazanoff 175).
7. Carr 4.
8. Ibid.
9. "Deor", in Gordon 71.
10. *Life of Galileo*, Scene 14.
11. Needham, Foreword to Chattopadhyaya vii – viii.
12. Steiner xiv.
13. Thomas More coined this word in 1516 as a part of the title of his Latin work that dealt with an imaginary island.
14. For details see Boas, and Lovejoy and Boas. Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* is a veritable encyclopedia of utopian thought from the earliest times to the present day. M.I.Finley's "Utopianism Ancient and Modern" in his *The Use and Abuse of History* offers an excellent critical study.
15. The word, cacotopia, was first employed by Jeremy Bentham in 1818 meaning the supposed seat of worst government. John Stuart Mill spoke of dystopia in the House of Commons in 1868 (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.). Mill said : " It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them utopians. They ought to be called dystopians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable."
16. Pope, "An Essay on Criticism", lines 558-59, in Enright and De Chickera (ed.), 125.
17. This is taken from the record of "A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing" in Bloch (1988)1.
18. See Bhattacharya (2000/2001) and Bhattacharya (forthcoming).
19. Rahulji told the story of an imaginary travel in time to his Arya Samaji friend, Visvavandhu in 1918. He made a short note of it then, but it was mislaid by a friend. He wrote another short note in

the Hazaribag jail on 19.2.1924. The full-fledged work was published as late as 1952, when Rahulji had become a confirmed Marxist.

20. See Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin's article in *Socialist Register 2000*, 1-29. An abridged and modified version of this article was published in *Monthly Review*, 51:10, 2000, 36-51.
21. Wilde 1028. Finley (183), Bloch 1988 (17) and Eagleton in *Socialist Register 2000* (38) have referred to Wilde's essay, quite independent of one another.
22. Dubiel 132.
23. Quoted from Boyes, *The Times*, London.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. This phenomenon is not unique in east Germany. The same kind of reaction is rampant in Poland and Czechoslovakia. See Chomsky (2002), 78-80.
26. Greene 211. Greene did not deny the courage of those who crossed Check-point Charlie but asked: 'Courage they certainly have, but how many are "choosing freedom" for romantic motives, love of a girl, of a family, of a way of life...?'
27. Ibid.
28. Hobsbawm 46.
29. *Frontline*, 7.12.2001, 118. This is not the only time that Chomsky spoke in this vein. Writing on his 'Goals and Visions' in 1996 he concluded: 'The "humainistic conception" that was expressed by Russell and Dewey in a more civilised period, and that is familiar to the libertarian left, is radically at odds with the leading currents of contemporary thought: the guiding ideas of the totalitarian order crafted by Lenin and Trotsky and of the state capitalist industrial societies of the West. One of these systems has fortunately collapsed but the other is on a march backwards of what could be a very ugly future.' Chomsky (2002), 77.
30. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have unmasked 'how an underlying elite consensus largely structures all facets of the news published by mass media'. See also Chomsky's *Necessary Illusions. Thought Control in Democratic Societies*.
31. This is how Mao Tse-Tung (now spelt differently) praised the Soviet Union in 1939:

Apart from a moral support Stalin has given material aid to our anti-Japanese war. Because of the success of his deed, Stalin has been able to give us many aeroplanes, guns, airmen, military advisors to work in various war zones and loans. What other country has given us this kind of help? (Ch'en 17).

32. Hobsbawm 278.
33. Quoted in Tewari 8.
34. Ibid. 9.
35. The phrase, “the white man’s burden”, comes from Rudyard Kipling’s poem bearing the same title, written in support of the US aggression of the Phillipines Islands in 1899 (*Works* , 323-24). In the same year John Edward Bruce, an African –American poet, replied to the nefarious poem in “ The Coloured American” :
What talk of the white man’s burden
What burden hath he borne?
That has not been shared by the black man
From the day creation dawned ?
Why taunt us with our weakness,
Why boast of your brutal strength;
Know ye not that the children of meekness
Shall inherit the earth — at length? (Quoted in Prasad 61)
36. Denmark was the first European country after France to abolish slavery in 1762. Slave trading was banned by law in the UK and the USA in 1807 and 1808 respectively. Thanks to the prolonged agitation led by Bishop Wilberforce, the British Parliament by an act set free all slaves in the colonies. Slavery was finally abolished in the USA in 1864, following a four-year long civil war. (A.W.Palmer, under “Slavery”).The International Working Mens’ Association (aka The First International) congratulated Abraham Lincoln on this issue on 21.1.1865. The address was drafted by Karl Marx. For the text see <www.marxists.org>.
37. Quoted in the *Monthly Review*, 48:4, Sept 1996, Notes from the Editors (inside first cover, 2). Hobsbawm’s review originally appeared in the *Guardian*, London.
38. Ibid.
39. Quoted in the *Monthly Review*, 55:4, Sept 2000, 2.
40. Mészáros to Kanellis, *Monthly Review*, 51:8, January 2000, 26.
41. *Monthly Review*, 51:6, November 1999, 64.
42. Lafargue in Marx-Engels (1976), 440.
43. *Monthly Review*, 52:1, May 2000, 2.
44. See Alan Palmer, under “Suffrage”.
The case of Switzerland reminds me of “a world-renowned *mol*” that Orson Welles “wrote himself into the script” of the film, *The Third Man* (1950) based on a novel by Graham Greene:
In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed – they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo

and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock. (Moss 189)

This of course does not mean that a state of unrest would inevitably produce other Michelangelos and Leonardos. The point is that democracy does not *necessarily* produce such geniuses.

45. Marx noted this feature in "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" (July 22, 1853): " From the Indian natives, reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence, a fresh class is springing up, endowed with the requirement for government and imbued with European science" (Marx-Engels (1988) 27).
46. Gopal Halder (1) refers to this story in an article in defence of the use of mother tongue in higher education.
47. In the preface to the second edition of *After Babel* (1991) George Steiner wrote: "At the time when *After Babel* was in progress the increasing domination of an Anglo-American Esperanto across the planet looked to be obvious and possibly irreversible. To a large extent this is still the case" (xvii).
But in the third edition (1998) Steiner admitted that his conjecture has not proved altogether true: "Reality, however, is always subtler and more ironic than our suppositions. It may well be that the Tower of Babel will continue to cast its creative shadow" (viii).
48. This is perhaps the penultimate poem composed by Tagore. *Sesh Lekha* 14 in *Rabindra-Rachanabali*, Vol.3, 909.
49. These two statements occur in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's novel, *The Leopard* (1958). Quoted by Arun Bose in Whynes (ed.) 90.
50. Mahamohopadhyay P.V.Kane regrets : " The only pity is that all works [dealing with the Yuga-s] that are extant think that they are in the midst of a very sinful age and there is not a single work which thinks that the era of perfection may dawn in the very near future" (Vol.3, 836).
51. Lukács' seminal work on the rise of Nazism and its philosophical roots, *Destruction of Reason*, merits re-reading in today's context.
52. Elias Kanellis (n 40 above), 30. See also Mészáros 2001.
53. *The Golden Treasury*, Book 5, 434. Clough is said to have written the poem when the Italians suffered defeat in Peschiera or one of the other early defeats in the war with Austria.

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