

Revolution Arrested

No spectre is haunting the world or any part of it. The two decades after the last world war have been curiously anti-revolutionary. Some earlier revolutions were indeed brought to fruition in this period. But no new revolution has germinated. Various regimes such as those of Rhee, Balewa and Nkrumah have toppled. But that is no revolution, no reordering of the social structure or inflaming of men's minds and engaging in such activity as would lift a people out of slime.

What took place in the forties was bringing to fruition of an earlier gestation such as in India and China. The revolution in India succeeded in 1947, but was arrested immediately after. Such arrested revolutions have been the mark almost everywhere of new-won freedom. The Chinese revolution of 1949 was not a freedom revolution in that sense, it was a unity revolution that had started in the second decade of the century. That the communists brought it to fruition has indeed given it a special character, well worth examining. It is certainly not an arrested revolution.

Cuba and Vietnam are the only two examples that some may like to cite against the hypothesis of the post-war world being anti-revolutionary. Vietnam's is no revolution. It is to large extent a hot extension of the cold war among nations, pocket-edition one no doubt, and, therefore, a reflection of contending social features. Cuba is not very different, with a strong dose of national pride thrown in. Assuming Cuba for argument's sake to be somewhat different, it has but marginal import for the world.

The period until the outbreak of the last world war was characterised by uncertainty, anxiety, expectancy and the air of something about to happen somewhere every other day. This held good of Europe and its most advanced countries. Mr. Churchill had called out armoured cars on the streets of London in the twenties. For almost four years between 1929 and 1933, Germany lived continuously in expectancy of a revolution, not to talk to the earlier spartacus and other efforts immediately after the war. Spain actually gave a day to celebrate, when its king abdicated after a long series of news alternating between hope and sorrow or anger. Before Italy went fascist, there was the socialist expectancy.

Euro-America of the twenties and the thirties still knew depression. The misery of the people bred an air of expectancy. There was always the breath of revolt in it. European peoples cannot accept misery and premature death beyond a certain point, certainly not when it is not the result of their willed resolve. In dying of famine, and other forms of forced death, the people of India are today the hero of all history; meek, resigned and dying like ants or flies; in dying of revolt and war, decisions that partake of will and resolve, the European peoples have been somewhat ready. They might not have always calculated, but, in actual result, death comes much less frequently to these areas of revolt and war than to those of resignation to fate. As misery has been comparatively absent, the post-war European has shown no revolutionary desires.

Automation, cybernetics and manipulation of investments have given to Euro-America the affluent

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society, an ever-growing economy. Technology seems to make it possible some day to produce as much of essential commodities as anyone might want, thereby destroying the need to buy or sell. One will just pick up as much as one wants of whatever one wishes. But that is to be in the future. In the present, hunger has more or less been banished from Euro-America, therefore also revolution. We do not understand what stupid routines and habit of thought are preventing Americans from declaring bread and milk free in their favoured land, a proceeding which is economically possible for them to carry through whenever they wish. The Russians are yearning to achieve such a state, but they are not yet in a situation to do so.

Affluence due to technology and regulated investment has revolutionised economic thinking in some places. Even conservatives, economists included, of a certain type have started propagating the idea of a guaranteed minimum income. In that favoured land, every son of a mother, and of course every daughter, must have a certain monthly income guaranteed. Whether on works or not, or simply lolls away in bed or on turf, this money is one's rightful due, some kind of a legally provided American edition of an Indian Sadhu. The proposed guarantee to the income of an American Sadhu family of two adult and three children amounts in terms of present rupee-dollar relation to around Rs. 1500/- a month. Spectres do not haunt such a society, where it is possible to day-dream of manna falling from heaven.

But the other two-thirds of the world have been there all the time, the world of filth and forced death. Why have they not been revolutionary? Most of them have moved or are moving into a state of physical and political freedom. Revolution has nonetheless been away from them. The greatest single reason probably lies in their state of mind born of a quiescent culture, which they have not yet thought out to its end, despite outwardly revolutionary changes. Of this, however, on some other occasion, although it is certainly for India the most important single reason.

We shall here talk of the two obviously urgent factors that have made the Afro-Asian peoples and those of Latin America anti-revolutionary. One lies in them and the other outside them. They have adopted

the mode of modernisation of the consumption of their elite, before they have modernised the production modes of their masses. Luxury goes up. For some, it is luxury almost a'la America. For substantially large numbers it is luxury on decreasing scales. Added to this is the colossal waste of overstaffing due to relationship, caste or pressures of group politics. So much less is left for investment. Economy stagnates and with it the society. For a long while, this criminal luxury and waste is concealed under the deceptive slogans of national dignity and needs of representation. In this manner, the elite of a revolution arrests it, after it has succeeded, either because of natural greed and indolence or because of misunderstanding of what is modern. What can be a worse medievalism than to wish to modernise the consumption of an elite, of which the erstwhile revolutionary forms a considerable part, before the people's production has been modernised.

To this has been added the external factor of revolution by order in the fifties and later. Soviet Russia has become a factor in international politics almost as important as the U.S., in some ways more so. Two such giants must evolve viable modes of living together without all the time coming into conflict. Soviet Russia has therefore had to evolve a scheme of revolution that does not all the time bring it into conflict with America. The evolution of such a scheme was possible without too great a strain on revolutionary conscience and in the measure that a successful and affluent government may be expected to possess.

A substantial number of newly independent lands, particularly India, have yielded to a leadership of sterile Marxists, who have known how to profess revolution without practising it. These voluble revolutionaries have adopted the current Euro-American philosophy of technological revolution with regulated investments occasionally in the public sector. Whenever this leadership is under pressure, its profession of revolutionary poise challenged sharply, it raises a shrill outcry in favour of the public sector. If it has to attack the private sector in some of its minor or medium expressions like life insurance, it more than makes up by providing private contracting in the public sector. This suits Soviet Russia perfectly. It

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does not have to initiate or help people's revolutions. All it needs to do is to evolve a theory of institutional changes like the public sector, which will provide the framework and the discipline for any later take over of the economy by the people.

From President Soekarno of Indonesia to ex-president Nkrumah of Ghana over the Nehrus and Indiras of the India, this leadership of sterile Marxists strides the emergent lands. Revolution by order as conferment of a boon from above without permitting too great striving from below is their principle. In the process, they know how to live well, they and their crowd. Some of these have been kicked out of office by their peoples, who alas have not yet anywhere displayed the uncertainty, anxiety and expectancy that precedes a revolution.

At this point, the China-brand revolutionaries might exclaim that they have been left out of this anti-revolutionary world picture. The Chinese and their adherents all the world over are no more revolutionary than are the Russians, West Europeans or the sterile Marxist Afro-Asians. They go through the motions of revolution with somewhat greater sincerity but that is all. From an account of the North-Vietnamese revolution published elsewhere as a document the ferocity and thoroughness of some changes is quite evident. We do not wish to raise here the question of ends and means. Admitting for a moment that ends justify means, the question still remains: what happens after the end has been achieved. A stagnant rural society must become dynamic after such an upheaval. To what end is this dynamism used afterwards? The revolution animalised in its processes may continue to remain so afterwards in its ends. The ends and means equalisers are however under an obligation to prove that all they are capable of is not just an arrested revolution. A revolution monstered is perhaps a wee bit better than an arrested revolution.

The disease of the Chinese revolution and, all others patterned on it, is peculiar and arises out of an event unique in history. These are revolutions of equality and tied one with another in the kinship of a doctrine of equality. Beginning with Russia, the family is at the moment seeking to multiply in Vietnam. However, much the Russians and the Chinese may abuse each

other and Marxists of different hues call this that revolution perverted or distorted, most of them do not deny this kinship. The fact of this kinship places a country so obviously wronged as India in a position of disadvantage to wrong-doer China among all kinsmen, for they deeply believe in their paternity. But the trouble starts when the wronging starts within the family. Inequality with America can only anger China into another ferocious spurt. Inequality with Russia rankles, for it is against the doctrine, against paternity.

The revolution goes wild with grief. The doctrine does not help understanding. As long as the nation is there with its frontiers, communism as a philosophy of government must perforce play itself out within those national frontiers. Russia must necessarily work out its affluence and such equality as it may within its frontiers. But the doctrine had spoken otherwise. China however refuses to believe that its doctrine of Marxism is no answer to the challenge of inequality among nations, however much it might achieve equality within the nation. The revolution goes wild with inability to understand. It begins to prowl and, as is usual with beasts, attacks weaker victims. It does not attack America. It does not attack Russia, the faith's traitors. It does not attack Australia, nor even Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macao. It attacks the Himalayas. It organises revolution in Vietnam. Coloured sentiment in China's favour in an illusion. Because of its faith in force and organisation, China must necessarily choose weaker victims which can only be coloured peoples. If Soviet Russia has become the exponent of revolution by order, China is fast becoming the teacher of revolution by force and organisation. Doctrinal spontaneity is finished. It has been replaced entirely with calculation, force and organisation. If Americans believe in organisation and in the C.I.A. to enforce their will in all the world, the Chinese are equally ferocious with their belief in organisation and in compulsion for such communist and allied elements as have accepted their will. Organisation is after all a mother of calculation. It can be brought to bear only against a weaker combination. True, without force or organisation, nothing probably has ever been done. But we appear now to have entered an era, where organisation and force reign supreme, where the idea is at best secondary and at worst a tool. It is the age of the joyless revolution.

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Some discerning sociologists are looking into a future of joyless plenty, of joyless automation and joyless technology, where everything would be plentiful but repetitious and monotonous. Already, the revolution has become joyless and a matter of mechanical motions. In the shape of the world communist revolution, it decides that Rhodesia is not as important as Vietnam and necessary motions are mechanically executed throughout the world. It makes the decision not on the merits of issues involved, for without a doubt the case of Rhodesia is as clear as daylight and of Vietnam the murk of dusk, but on the possibility of where the weight of force or organisation can be brought to bear with success.

How totally spontaneity and joy have gone out of the world communist revolution is evident from the way Indian communists of both hues are continually organizing demonstrations over Vietnam or the atom and against America. A mighty people's upheaval next door in East Bengal and the repression with which a military dictatorship seeks to smother it do not move them. The possibility that a people and country artificially divided may be reunited does not put joy into them. They are strange beings with shrivelled and organised souls.

Why concentrate on the communists; in its other shapes, the revolution in India has been equally soulless in respect of the East Pakistan and much else. No other political party has chosen to assemble or demonstrate for the people of East Pakistan, for these crows have been busy spying where their votes lie in the general election to come. These craven souls would not get the votes either, for if the vote must go to men of calculation and lacking in vision, the government party qualifies best.

Not to talk of issues across the frontier, those nearer home, such as devaluation, which occasioned spates of written statements from oppositionists decrying it as the most ignoble event of the two decades of freedom, have melted away like a surface ripple. Not one mass meeting has been held against devaluation in the capital, although it is now a month since the government decided to commit the crime. There have been several on Vietnam or cow killing or minor

aspects of property. Revolutionaries are not taking up, not to talk of the question of property as such, just one major aspect of property, that of house-rent. House-rents in India are nine times as high as in Russia and communist Europe, for there they average a rupee to the square metre and here a rupee to the square foot. Average incomes here, particularly low incomes, are one-sixth of those in Russia. One-sixth, the income and nine-fold, the rent, and yet the people do not rise, the youth does not stir, for the arrested revolution has acquired a craven soul.

Gandhism has become worse than sterile; it has acquired a priapist mind. It talks of unilateral disarmament; it kills with proxy power and borrowed weapons. The challenge of poverty at home does not affect its smugness; the challenge of inequality and war among nations is beyond its voluble but mindless comprehension.

If the earlier can be fused with its later development, a movement which could well be lumped together under the label of international Gandhism has come into existence. On the one hand is the non-communist, peace movement with war resisters at one extreme and pledge-signers at the other. On the other hand is the world federalist movement with minimalists who simply want the shell of a world government at one end and maximalists desirous of world conventions and disobedience if necessary at the other.

The non-communist peace movement has a long past, in patches even uplifting. At one time, the Peace Pledge Union in England counted more than ten million signers, but they all melted away at the German assault. The march to Aldermaston, an atomic war establishment, and back to Trafalgar Square showed promise and has become an annual event. But it has begun to dissolve, even before an assault of any kind has been mounted. The people of England are not slow to see that hortatory movements which sign away frontiers in a world which is cut up into nations are unreal. A man lives within his skin, his frontier, and must needs protect it against attack. So long as men live within nations, they must need protect their national skin, the frontier, against attack. The Gandhian peace movement has been too oblivious of existing realities. It has dreamed up a situation of

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prayer, and therefore devoid of revolution. In its shape of civil rights for Negroes in America, international Gandhism may well claim to have registered some success, for it has built its teeth into reality. But one can hardly call it a revolution, at least yet.

If the peace movement has tended to wish away national frontiers, the world federalist movement has been far too much aware of them. Like all moral movements without a sound political, economic and social base, it has been very extravagant in its desires and aims. At one time, it sought to build the Atlantic Union, almighty on our planet. Then, it widened its desires into a world union and spread into many branches and sprouts. One wanted existing governments to accept the plan and constitution of a world government and with that end in view to sponsor campaigns and assemblies. Another strove for acceptance by local legislatures of a constitution for world parliament and a world government with minimum powers to arise out of it. A third started enlisting world citizens and this agitation showed some kick, for the first citizen of the world tore up his national citizenship. A fourth began persuading towns and villages to declare themselves for the world. A fifth set about to campaign and organise the convention of a world parliament, if necessary, at the people's level and without help from national governments. Alone the fifth sprout bore within it the seed of great change, for the world convention might well have sparked off civil disobedience throughout the world against national sovereignty in much the same way as the French convention of the tennis court began the revolt against kingly sovereignty. But the seed is dead.

Today, all the world over is spread the litter of these earlier campaigns. Honest men are busy cyclostyling or printing sheets and mailing them to select addresses. They collect messages from men of renown and print them in a manner befitting the particular celebrity. They probably hold this or that annual convention. How much devoted labour and money goes into these incestuous campaigns for one or another type of world federalism is anybody's guess. But they are all hibernating, because they mistakenly imagine they can form a world government out of national governments, which is a contradiction in terms. If sovereignty resides within national frontiers, how does

it or any portion of it leap outside of them. A worthy and strong nucleus alone can attract such a leap. This cannot be any existing national government. This cannot be any United Nations or League comprising governments with one of them or a group trying to rule. This can only be a parliament elected directly by the peoples of the world with regional weightages, whose government responds to the challenge of inequality within nations and without.

The sole hope for unequal and warring nations lies in the search for peace through equality and equality through peace. Both searches are of decisive significance, and neither is wholly the consequence of the other. The seeker of peace may not be fully aware of the search for equality and may at the outset disdain it. The seeker of equality may be equally blinkered at the outset. Their devotion may be exclusive. The wise will not exclude such blinkered persons from the scope of their movement. They will hope that passage of time and sympathy will bring to both types of seekers greater consciousness. Action which may be somewhat crude and emphatically exclusive in the earlier stages will clarify itself with time and will become wisely revolutionary. Peace institutionalised is world parliament and world government. Equality institutionalised is acceptance of comparatively equal productivity to man's labour anywhere irrespective of national frontiers. When effort is made to wed to peace institutionalised to equality institutionalised, the revolution of our times will have emerged.

The Euro-American peoples have greater understanding for peace and federalism and they possess resources for worldwide campaigns and travels. Afro-Asians, unable to meet effectively the challenge of poverty and inequality, which press on them more than on Euro-Americans, have not much understanding for peace and federalism. And yet to federate these various initiatives, whose framework is littered all over the world, and make them interpenetrate may well lead to creative situations. Mankind will be glad to be of help.

The revolution for equality has met a strange foe in one who was earlier its most virile adherent. Communism proudly proclaims today that it is not for equality. A little shame-faced for having been

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such a votary for equality and having now to explain the growing inequality and affluence in communist lands, communism loudly denies its own womb. One is tempted to ask if communism is inequality, or, is it neither equality nor inequality. The revolution for equality must run its own course, hoping that time would help communism rectify its errors. True enough that equality can never perhaps be wholly or perfectly realised. But equality is more an urge than its total fulfilment. It will always have to overcome blocks. Some of these will occasionally prove difficult or well neigh impossible. But the urge must ever come on anew to take up the battle again.

A ray of hope appeared in India around ten years ago. This was the theory of permanent civil disobedience. The theory was correct. In practice, after the first years, it has proved to be, a damp squib, at least so far. To combine permanent civil disobedience with permanent democracy and elections and debate has proved difficult. More often than not, the practice of either is halting, reserved and crooked. While undergoing a jail term or worse during disobedience to tyranny, the mind turns to elections and their organisation and

the wish to secure release through bail or compromise becomes insistent. While arguing an issue out in its fullness and when at a loss to answer the opponent, the civilly disobeying democrat is inclined to clinch the issue by referring to the extraneous argument of struggle and sacrifice. It is not so easily open to man to follow two paths at the same time, to give total devotion to the path he is treading and to switch to the other when occasion so demands. When men argue not with a view to dazzle or to make talking points, although some spiced styles are necessary to dramatise issues, debate is honestly democratic and enlightens the people. This requires of the democratic debater, study and thinking. Similarly, civil disobedience requires faith and patience, willingness to toil and suffer without tasting the joy of victory and to lay the head down with peace in the soul, should the time for it arrive before the cause has won. The combined theory of civil disobedience and democratic debate looks forward to a future when the reigning tyranny will topple in a climax of mass disobedience or electoral victory. The revolution for equality and peace is alive, although hibernating.

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