

**GORBACHEVISM,
ART SYSTEMS OF RUSSIA AND
INDIA
AND A HUNDRED FLOWERS OF
COMPRADORISM**

With a note on Deng's China

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to

all the old comrades of the Bolshevik
Leninist party of India,
Burma and Ceylon,

particularly my study class tutors Philip Gunawardene, N.M.
Perera, Leslie Gunawardene, Colvin R De Silva, and Hector
Abhayawardhane, who provided me with the first insights into
the working of the Stalinist
leadership of the USSR,

and to,
the innumerable freedom-fighters of 1942-43, who turned
Worli D D Chawls Jail into an Open University, and who
collectively provided me, whether intentionally or otherwise,
with an understanding of the Comprador
Congress Strategy of National Betrayal,

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PREFATORY REMARKS ON GORBACHEVISM

A leading Indian publisher approached me with a suggestion to write a book on Perestroika. For the last few years I had been busy researching and writing about the new vistas opened up by the extension of the principles of historical and dialectical materialism to the area of aesthetics.

Indian publishers being what they are, very soon the offer simply evaporated. Without rhyme or reason, as far as I was concerned.

But the suggestion provoked me into a recapitulation of the literature that I had studied earlier, right from 1942 till the mid-sixties. In fact the life and times of the Old Bolsheviks had been my first love. Other adolescents are brought up on the romances of Robin Hood or of the Arabian Nights or the ~~tales~~ ^{tales} of Medieval Knights. I had been nurtured on the exploits of Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and such other heroes of the Russian and German Revolutions of 1917-19.

I welcomed the break from Marxist sociology of art.

I brought myself up-to-date. And read a few more books (as the three-deck book review included here avers). I then read as much about Perestroika as I could, including, of course, Gorbachev's astounding anti-Marxist work of the same title. I prepared a most voluminous clippings file, one which I have continued to add to till today.

It has been an absorbing and enlightening experience. To a great extent, nay, to the extent of over ninety-nine percent, the old Trotskyite contentions, on which I had been brought up, were resoundingly confirmed. I was elated to find that what I had thought of so long ago and so fervently, was proved to be true after so many years of scoffing, belittling, denial and persecution.

This vindicated my faith in Marxism, in Trotskyism as the proper extension of Marxism from the twenties to the forties, and in historical and dialectical materialism in general, for all times and for all climes.

I do not know quite how to express my sense of elation and theoretical triumph. I know it is impolite to gloat, but I crave the reader's indulgence and would request him to permit me, an old Trotskyite, even if for just a moment or two, the sense of bewildering and stupendous vindication. (If anything, the Trotskyites had underestimated the horrors of Stalinism!) Every word that Gorbachev speaks and writes in the eighties is a word for

word reproduction of Trotsky's writings in the thirties, especially the analyses and predictions made in *The New Course* and in *The Revolution Betrayed*.

But let me immediately introduce a vital qualification. Trotsky wrote as proletarian revolutionary. Gorbachev speaks and writes as a bureaucrat, who after fattening himself with Stalinist spoils for decades, is now at last pompous and confident enough to attempt at least a half counter-revolutionary turn. Gorbachev is Bukharin in his last disoriented days, as vividly portrayed in *The Case of Leon Trotsky*. (see, Select Bibliography at the end of this paper.) To sum up, the dire warnings of Trotsky in the thirties have been turned into welcoming arches by Gorbachev in the eighties.

Gorbachev was inevitable. He is the voice of the degenerate Russian bureaucracy and speaks as a reactionary would and should. Look at how he writes to appease and flatter the Western capitalist democracies.

"I have explained on many occasions that we do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests. We know how important the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and West European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut these links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests!"¹

Mutual interests indeed! What kind of hypocritical diplomatic double-talk is this? Mutual interests of the lion and the lamb? Of the sheep and the wolf? Mutuality of interests of Western conquistadors and genocidal scalpers, and of the Red Indians entombed in the silver mines and fenced in in haciendas, encomiendas, etc.? Mutual interests of India's starving millions and of their British Imperialist masters who were organising gigantic man-made famines and were literally de-industrialising, ruralising and brutalising them? Mutuality of interests between the white racialists of Europe and the enslaved black Africans carried, and killed in their millions both when transported across the Atlantic and when penned in plantations of "Dear Olde South" and elsewhere in the Caribbean and in Latin America?

But this is the style of the New Bureaucracy of Russia! Gorbachev writes:

1. Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, p. 178

"We have no universal solutions." 2

What kind of a Marxist and communist is this Gorbachev? How can he not have universal solutions for countering capitalist exploitation and oppression? If capitalism is universal, then its opposite, proletarian revolution, is equally universal!

"We want a world free of wars, without arms races, nuclear weapons and violence. It is an objective global requirement....." 3

But why should the capitalists not want wars, and arms races, nuclear weapons and violence? They have made immense piles out of two world wars and innumerable small wars after the end of the second. So, if profits are true and legitimate universal aims, what is wrong with wars, arms races, nuclear weapons and violence?

It is not that Gorbachev is a fool. He is not! What he wants is the jettisoning of the established socialist property forms and of the last remnants of the notions of equality, which were based on the new socialist property relations. 4

Gorbachev repeats the bureaucratic Stalinist lie about socialism, page after page:

"From each according to his ability, to each according to his work." 5

This is Stalinist nonsense. We marxists and communists know of only the old dictum: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Stalin perpetrated this lie in the name of Lenin, who never considered the partial restoration of market forces under the NEP to be anything but a temporary compromise with adversity, one which would pass away quickly enough.

2. Ibid, p 13.

3. Ibid, p 11.

4. Ibid, p.30.

5. Ibid, p. 31, 100, etc.

We international marxists, Old Bolsheviks, and Trotskyites, welcome the end to the nightmare of Stalinism.⁶

We proudly pronounce:

STALINISM NO! COMMUNISM YES!
DOWN WITH STALINISM!
UP WITH SOCIALISM!
RETURN TO LENIN!
RETURN TO INTERNATIONAL
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST
SOLIDARITY!

The Indian communists of various brands (whether CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML) of any shade) have reacted to developments in Russia as the most miserable epigones of Stalinism.

Whilst in almost every important town and city of Russia, a monument to the victims of Stalin's atrocities is coming up, the Indian communists are waging a last ditch battle to retain Stalin's glory. Obviously, they will fail and sooner or later the Indian intelligentsia is going to demand from these wretched pseudo-communist leaders an answer to the question: Without the assistance from any secret service and unsupported by the police of concentration camps, how did Stalin manage to fool the so-called militant leftists of India for so many decades?

But let us leave the poor pitiable Indian communists to their unenviable fate in the dustbin of history. Let us return to the mainstream of robust marxism and internationalism.

The workers of the world, especially the Russian segment thereof, have not endured terrible sacrifices in order to allow Gorbachev and his gang of Neo-Bukharinists to undermine socialist property forms and to permit leasing of collectively-owned land.⁷

6. This is where we differ from the CPI, CPM and other brands of communists of India.

7. See, "Gorbachev Land-lease Plan Pushed Through," *Indian Post*, 30.08.88. It is a marginal development today, but it can snowball into a kulak horror in the days to come.

It is time for the international communist movement to cry halt to Gorbachevism. Of course, there can be no socialism without democracy.⁸ Of course, Stalinism inflicted horrible hardships on the Russian people. But we are not willing to throw away the baby with the dirty bath water.

I am old and alone. Very few from my generation of revolutionary nationalists, socialists, communists, and marxists of 1942, have survived. From my isolated, humble and obscure corner, I appeal to Fidel Castro and the brave Cubans who are fighting the battles of Africa; to the valiant Vietnamese; to Roy Medvedev⁹ and other Russian comrades, the first revolutionaries of the twentieth century; to all the internationalist proletarian revolutionaries everywhere, especially those in China; *that the gains of October are in danger!*

FORWARD TO A NEW OCTOBER!
FORWARD WITH DEMOCRATIC RUSSIA!
DOWN WITH RESTORATIONISM!
DOWN WITH LAND-LEASE-ISM AND GET-RICH-ISM!
ONWARD AND FORWARD WITH EQUALITY!
DOWN WITH GORBACHEVISM!
GLASNOST YES! PERESTROIKA NO!
LONG LIVE OCTOBER!
WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
OUR AGE - AGE OF COMMUNISM!

8. Marx was very clear about this. For him, Engels and Lenin communism was not only inconceivable without the withering away of the state, but also communism meant the highest stage of democracy as well. (See, Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, and Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*).

9. Medvedev's *Let History Judge* bitterly attacked Stalinism whilst defending socialism. Roy Medvedev is a member of the newly elected Supreme Soviet Parliament of 1989.

ART SYSTEMS OF RUSSIA AND INDIA OR COMPLEXITIES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO TRANSITIONAL CULTURAL SYSTEMS

(Presented at the Indo-USSR Seminar on Scientific Information & Cultural Development sponsored by the Department of Culture, of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, in conjunction with the Festival of USSR in India, held on 18/19 January, 1988, at New Kensington Hotel, Calcutta)

1. The Central problem is that of communication between two entirely divergent cultural streams. On the one hand, we have in the USSR the regime of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, which is a transitional stage in the growth of the Mode of Production from Capitalism to Socialism, temporary rightwing retreats notwithstanding. On the other hand, we have in India a society in transition from colonial forced underdevelopment to self-propelled autonomous growth and from colonial capitalism to independent socialist existence.
2. The problems of Communication and Transference of Information between two such transitional societies are extremely complex. There are natural and almost insuperable obstacles between a society which is moving towards socialism and another society, which has just escaped from the colonial nightmare and which presents almost a classic case of aborted and thwarted, comprador and neo-colonial conditions.
3. In addition to the immense chasm between Modes of Production and stages of socio-economic and politico-cultural growth, there is the problem of divergences between perceptions of each other by the respective leaderships of the two societies.
4. The USSR leadership perceives India as a friendly non-aligned country, which is moving along a non-capitalist path of development. This is a nonsensical and quite an opportunistic formulation. According to Marxist theory, socialism is an answer to capitalism and a socialist society is necessary and inevitable only to resolve the excruciating problems and social crises created by and endemic to capitalist society. If India is following a non-capitalist path of development, then the end of the road is represented by a non-socialist goal and the inevitability of revolutionary class struggles disappears from view.

5. The ruling party in India perceives the USSR as the bargaining and balancing factor in its world relationships. It is a comprador leadership which is especially subordinate to Western developed free market economies and by using the friendship and alliance with the USSR, it can obtain better terms and more reasonable trade dealings from Euro-American and Japanese-Arab multinationals. The ruling party in India does not accept the goal of communism or the inevitability of the triumph of socialism worldwide. Least of all it wants India to move in a true socialist direction. At the most, it can think of some kind of limited welfare society with indicative planning and mixed economy based on extreme poverty.

6. The history of art and culture in the USSR have undergone several profound transformations.

a. First there was the Heroic or Glorious Period from 1917-1929, especially 1917-24. During this greatest period of revolutionary flowering the USSR made a fundamental impact on world culture. In architecture, we had Tatlin, whose monument to the Third International remained a model, though it was the progenitor of all the revolving restaurants of the world. In Sculpture and Painting, we had Gabo, Pevsner, Malevich, Lissitzky, Kandinsky, Chagall and Bakst. In Dance, we had the great tradition of Ballet carried forward by innumerable ballerinas like Anna Pavlova and impresarios like Diaghilev, also choreographers like Fokine and Nijinsky. In Theatre, we had masters like Stanislavsky and Meyerhold-Piscator of the "epic theatre". In film, we had the great Vertov brothers, Pudovkin and Eisenstein. In Music, we had Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich. In Literature, we had Mayakovsky, the progenitor of Yevtushenko, and Gorky, Blok and Yessenin who were progenitors of Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. The USSR was the World Leader in all the arts without exception and whether acknowledged or not, it was the Supreme leader of World Culture in that Heroic period of 1917-24.

b. But this magnificent flowering of revolutionary art and culture did not flourish for any great length of time. The Stalinist Dictatorship stifled all the arts and the night descended upon Russia from 1928 and lasted with opportunistic zigzags upto 1953 or the middle '50s. This leadership pushed all the arts into a bureaucratic strait-jacket and stifled all freedom of expression and criticism.¹

1. I am reminded of my visit to the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, a gift of Stalin to the people of Warsaw, in mid-sixties. The Palace of Culture is a mammoth multipurpose 50-storey and over building with innumerable exhibition halls, auditoria, cinema theatres, restaurants, canteens, offices, etc. My friend, an architect, took me to the observation gallery on the 50th floor and informed me that this is the most beautiful spot in all Warsaw, as it is the only one from which the Palace of Culture is not visible!

c. Within the overall limits of the Dark Period (from the late '20s to the middle '50s), there was the Popular Front Sub-Period of 1935 to 1939, when some liberalisation took place and anti-fascist movements were promoted in Western Europe and especially in Spain. But there was no relaxation within the USSR and even externally not genuine revolutionary art but liberal bourgeois avantgardism was promoted.

d. From mid-'50s under Khrushchev, some liberalisation was promoted and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich* was officially allowed publication. But this slight liberalising trend was reversed under Brezhnev and again restrictions were clamped down on the arts.

e. At present, some winds of change seem to be blowing through the USSR. Glasnost seems to have opened up some closed doors. We do not know accurately the depth of this new liberalisation policy and we also do not know whether the direction of the movement is to the right or to the left. ² (It is increasingly clear that the movement is to the right and aims to restore capitalism in Russia, a task that Gorbachev will soon realize is one that is beyond his capacity).

7. In India, too, there have been several important transformations of the cultural scene during the 20th century. We may roughly divide the phases as follows: 1905-1923: The Zamindar Bourgeois Phase; 1924-1933: The Commercial Bourgeois Phase. 1934-1956: The Industrial Bourgeois Phase; 1957-1967: The State Capitalist Phase; 1967-1977: The Lumpen Bourgeois Phase; 1977-1988: The NRI Bourgeois Phase.

Actually all these sub-phases can be regrouped under two periods. The first, under the direct tutelage of the Imperialist Bourgeoisie and the second, after 1947 upto the present, under the tutelage of the Comprador Bourgeoisie and the indirect tutelage of World Bourgeoisie.

8. During the British period, whilst the Russian menace was not conceived as the hoodoo of the Tsarist days, Soviet Russia was considered to be a centre of subversion and strict prohibition of Russo-Indian Cultural Relations prevailed. In fact, India was so marginal to Soviet perception that guidance and direction of the CPI was left to the CPGB and to expatriates like R. Palme-Dutt and Krishna Menon. Largely, as a result of this,

² A well-known joke is about the delegation of mathematicians who visited Gorbachev. The leader of the group pleaded with the General Secretary that under Lenin and Trotsky, things were simple and $2 + 2$ was always 4. But Stalin changed everything. He decreed that $2 + 2 = 12$. Under Malenkov, we were slightly better off, as $2 + 2$ became only 8. Khrushchev helped us in a big way. With him we were able to add 2 & 2 and make 6. Brezhnev reversed the trend and once again we were back to $2 + 2 = 8$. May we hope, *Tovarich* Gorbachev, that you will allow us at least the compromise formula. I am suggesting, namely, that henceforth $2 + 2$ is 57

Progressivism in art, literature and theatre in India became an umbrella to cover all sorts of reactionaries, communalists, careerists and opportunists. It is a historic fact that largely due to the influence of the CPGB, who guided the leadership of CPI, nationalism and communism became divided and instead of being joined together, as in China and Vietnam, they confronted each other on Indian soil as rivals and alternatives. Thus, the so-called Progressives supported the demand for Pakistan and joined the imperialists in the war effort.

9. The only important direct contact between the artists of the USSR and India during the British period was the Anna Pavlova-Uday Shankar collaboration. But, Uday Shankar's strictly limited and subordinate role in helping Pavlova with an exotic item or two for her international appearances, was a very indirect and tenuous example of Indo-Soviet cultural relations. It was at a double remove-Pavlova being a non-resident Russian and Uday Shankar as art student and struggling artist in London being a non-resident Indian. (Uday didn't settle down in India till the end of the '30s. 1938: Almora Centre)³

10. This was an unhappy start to Indo-Soviet cultural relations and these relations have been largely unfruitful and productive of ill-effects right up to the present.

11. Under Melenkov and Khrushchev, for the first time direct relationships were established by the Soviet Union with the government of India and with the Indian intellectual community. Since then, there has been an apparent improvement in the width and the depth of these relationships, but the improvement is only apparent for Indo-Soviet relations are in actuality being used to bolster the public image of the quasi-feudal dynasty of Nehru-Gandhi. In reality, Indo-Soviet relations possess much broader foundations. It is not a petty affair on either side. The Soviet Union has made vital contributions to Indian industry and defence capability in oil, coal, steel, power, machine-building, irrigation, and defence production and the Soviet Union has been one of the two biggest trading partners of India. Many Indo-Soviet joint ventures are in the offing and are being vigorously promoted. It is the undermining of the Soviet near-monopoly in supply of defence equipment that has resulted in kickbacks to ruling dynasty from West German submarines, Westland English helicopters and

3. The Svetoslav Roerich-Devika Rani affair of the forties was no collaboration. One was a white Russian reactionary landscape painter, and son of another landscape painter, and the other was a film actress. They never influenced each other in any artistic way.

Bofors Swedish guns. As a matter of fact, so long as the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc were the main or exclusive suppliers of vital defence needs, there were no major scandals involving the ruling party and the ruling coterie. Thus, dialectically and strangely, Indo-Soviet relations have enriched the ruling coterie in India, both positively and negatively. Perhaps every decision in favour of Western arms traders involves a decision against the socialist bloc and these two decisions necessarily involve the highest rulers of the land.

12. Because of India's colonial and Anglo-American comprador background, nothing reaches India, except through the West. Abstract art, which was a gift of Russia to the world [even though it may have been the gift of Russia of the Dark Years (1905-1914) following the failure of the first revolution of the 1905], reached India only after abstract expressionism had triumphed in America in the early post-world War II years. Kandinsky, Gabo, Pevsner, Malevich and Lissitzky are relatively unknown names in India, though they were the masters of Albers, Moore, Pollock, Kline, Motherwell, Nevelson, etc. Similarly, theatremen of India do not know the fundamental contributions of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold-Piscator but have learnt of the goodness of "the Method" from Greenwich village in New York, and from Peter Brook; and, at best, "alienation effect" from the German Berthold Brecht and such other secondary talents. Actually, "The Method" so-called is pure Stanislavsky as appropriated by U.S.A.

13. As far as "alienation" goes, the whole notion of the "distancing effect" and of "epic theatre" is of Indian medieval origin and would have been of immense help to Soviet artists and the theatremen had they been in direct and longer contact with the Indian performing art traditions.

14. Modern music from the Soviet Union has had no impact on Indian music either directly or indirectly, since Indian Classical Music remains entirely feudal and is immune to bourgeois influences not to speak of post-bourgeois developments. In general, interchange of healthy influences is more likely in the medium of dance. But, after the Pavlova-Shankar joint effort, nothing substantial or significant has occurred. European (i.e. Russian) Ballet itself occupies a peculiar position as an aristocratic late feudal projection permeated by mercantile bourgeois notions of courtly costume and etiquette. Perhaps the future will reveal the potential of Indo-Soviet collaboration in dance.

15. At the recent festival of the USSR in India, one Russian singer has been singing pop and disco music to raving Indian audiences, largely elitist. When the singer reacts with such audience, including with the

Indian children that perform with her on the stage, the height of vulgarity is reached, since the Indian child is imitating idiotically the same American ways, which it has learnt in discotheques and which the Russian singer is herself aping! Such an exchange promotes nothing and is similar to the impact of Hindi masala films by Raj Kapoor on Soviet audiences in mid '50s. The classic criticism of *Awara* was made by Solzhenitsyn in his *Cancer Ward*.⁴

16. In architecture, there has been no interchange of vital ideas between India and the Soviet Union. The international style was accepted in India in the mid-'30s when the Soviet Union was experiencing Stalin-Gothic at its bombastic and ornate worst. More recently, the International style seems to have found some degree of acceptance in the USSR.

17. On the whole, Russo-Indian cultural exchanges have been either non-existent or superficial or negative and harmful. Nothing healthy and vital has been accepted by India directly from the Soviet Union and India is incapable of receiving such direct impact from the USSR. Everything must reach India through the English language and through the West, whether it is abstract painting or epic theatre or ballet dancing, or new film montage techniques. Similarly, the Soviet Union finds it difficult to accept the best from India which is probably its classical music and dance. These are basically feudal forms whilst the USSR has moved away not only from feudalism but its successor mode of production, namely, capitalism. It is actually on its way to establish the new mode of socialist production relations. Thus, India is a source of only exotic and folksy decorative motifs. Occasionally such commercial products as the masala film may sell a few day dreams to the oppressed Soviet masses but mainstream Indian cinema does not have the inherent capacity and worth to make a lasting impression on Soviet cinema. Another example is of Soviet Land-Nehru Awards. Instead of promoting genuine rebellious creative talent in India, they have been used to curry favour with the Indian establishment and encourage only established hypocrites, old sycophants and doddering careerists. In short, given the socio-economic and politico-cultural compulsions of the respective systems, communication between the two will remain either superficial or negative for quite some time to come.

4. Solzhenitsyn relates his experiences in a Stalinist Siberian Concentration Camp. Stalin's regime had elevated criminals in prisons into guards and political dissenters suffered horribly at their hands. Their food used to be stolen by the criminals. Therefore Solzhenitsyn violently rejected any romanticisation of criminals, à la Raj Kapoor, and states that in the Camps, he and other Old Bolsheviks joined hands with Koreans and Japs to crush the Russian criminals who were their guards. "Criminals are not Russians", the hero of *Cancer Ward* tells the heroine, "Please do not sing the *Awara* songs, which treat criminals in a romantic way."

A HUNDRED FLOWERS OF COMPRADORISM

A Three-Deck Book Review

- * Under the Banyan Tree: The Communist Movement in India: 1920-64; S.N. Talwar; 1985; 487 pp.
 - * The Yogi and the Bear: Story of Indo-Soviet Relations; S. Nihal Singh; 1986; 324 pp.
 - * Political Dimensions of Indo-USSR Relations; S.P. Singh; 1987; 302 pp.
- All three published by Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., and uniformly priced at Rs. 150/- each.

Having for the last few years lived in the world of arts, Marxist theory and Indian history, it was quite refreshing to plunge into current politics with these three books which seemed to form themselves into a trio. But not a trio of identical value. Rather they meld themselves into a one-two-three sequence of rummy or flush, with one ace and the other two of very low value, a "two spots", and a "three spots".

We will consider them separately and then as a set. But not in the chronological order of publication, but rather in the hierarchiocal order of worth, from low to high.

II

We begin with the "two pips" card, namely, S. Nihal Singh's pedestrian, stodgy, colourless, insightful, chronology-obsessed, formless, minutiae-clogged, journalistic venture *The Yogi and the Bear* (What a title! Truly journalists are the modern masters of jargon and not academicians) Though it does pretend to be naive at places where the author is not at all innocent, yet it may be that the author is often unaware of his own "angling". Perhaps his overall attitude does not allow him to assess the 'bias' inherent in any attempt at "total objectivity".

Nihal Singh himself gives the game away in his short "Introduction" and even shorter "Acknowledgements". In the former, he admits, "I chose the narrative, rather than the purely analytical form to bring out the flavour of these (Indo-Soviet) relations." Why an analytical approach could not have yielded the desired flavour, is not explained. In fact, "narrative" here is merely an euphemism for a recital of descriptive minutiae chronologically arranged in the neurotic-obsessive manner of the "Year's Events"

published by a million periodicals every year around 31st December.

The "Acknowledgements" reveal the vicious sources of stimulation! "This book would not have been written but for the generous (sic) support of the Carnegie (the notorious steel cartel king) Endowment for International Peace." We jolly well know the sort of world peace that steel monopolists desire! But to continue: "I have also benefitted from..... officials and ministers of past and present governments of India (i.e. mostly of congress comprador culture). I found the American academic community particularly rewarding to become acquainted with." That there lives an Indian in the year 1986, who in general finds the ugly American academic community rewarding to share thoughts with, must be a wonder in himself. That this community is made up of narrow-minded, vulgar, power-crazy, cynical, bigoted, sycophantic, heartless, jargon-wielders, has been acknowledged by the exceptional American academicians themselves. (See almost any issue of *Science and Society* or *Monthly Review* or *Partisan Review* or even *The Nation* and *The Village Voice* for indictments of and confessions by WASPS-White anglo-saxon protestants.) Furthermore, not content with flattering the American academic community in general, Nihal Singh proceeds to genuflect to: "Officials of the US State Department shared their perspective on India and Soviet Union with me with candour." What is their candour worth?

Nihal Singh admits, or rather boasts, that the Russians found him to be "worse than the *New York Times* and the *London Times*". This is certainly not a compliment, for we have known the London Imperialist *Times* through 150 years of British colonial rule, and the *New York Times* through 40 years of neo-colonialism. Frankness cannot be permitted to cover such horrid ugliness.

What is Nihal Singh driving at? Here also he is frank. Of course, he first sounds the normal journalistic-alarmist note: "my view (is) that the (Indo-Soviet) relationship has reached a dangerous state and needs a close hard look." And what does this "cold hard second look" reveal? "I blotted my copy book, in Soviet eyes, by advocating the vigorous pursuit of the China option." But the China option today necessarily involves the US-Pakistan option too. If we are to align our policies with Chinese views, proclivities and strategies, how can we be less than friendly with China's closest allies, USA and Pakistan?

We signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 (agreed to in 1969, by Indira, whose minority Government was then totally dependent on CPI-CPM-DMK votes in the Lok Sabha) precisely in order to counter the

combined pressures from China-USA-Pakistan. Without Soviet support, and Chinese back-tracking (after threatening to open a "northern front" in Eastern Himalayas, i.e. in Chamdo, along the Indo-Tibetan border) and ignominious US retreat (the seventh fleet was speeding towards the then East Pakistan when suddenly it sank out of sight), apart from India's forceful intervention in favour of *Mukti Bahini* guerrillas, Bangladesh could have not been gestated in 1971.

So what price Nihal Singh's advice? The basic fact is that building relations with the Soviet Union has been easy and fruitful since there has been a strong economic base. USSR is almost our biggest trading partner, with more or less balanced trade of about Rs. 5,000 crores, it is also our biggest industrial collaborator in the infrastructural sphere, with massive Soviet aid having built up our steel, oil, power and defence industries. On what basis are relations between China and India to be developed? Especially when Nihal Singh is very well aware that "domestic circumstances have played a major role in sustaining what has become the most important aspect (Indo-Soviet friendship) of India's foreign policy." So what domestic and economic circumstances are in favour of exercising "the China option"?

III

Let us now turn to the "three spots" card. S.P. Singh's work is a fellow-traveller's, or friend-of-the-SU's, view of Indo-Soviet relations. He is good as a corrective to Nihal Singh's pro-Americanism. But S.P. Singh's own pro-Russianism is equally transparent. For him there is "the clear identity and the basic convergence of perceptions between the two countries" (Preface). He too employs the ploy of bogus candour. "My greatest debt in undertaking this research project is owed to the Government of India for sponsoring me to take up the USSR Government scholarship under the cultural exchange programme" (Preface). Why does this double mercenary academician suggest that his work possesses objectivity?

As if this double agent's job was not enough, S.P. Singh further enlightens us: "I gratefully acknowledge the kind gesture shown by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who personally accepted a copy of this work as a presentation from me. I thank him with deep regards for his thoughtful appreciation." This is sycophancy carried to nauseating lengths. What is Rajiv's academic standing? How could he have given a "thoughtful" appreciation? Is this near-illiterate ex-pilot capable of "thoughtful" consideration of anything serious or worthwhile? His culture and taste is of "*Tamboo men bamboo*" variety. How come Singh writes in the same preface that he was aiming at "an objective and comprehensive treatment"?

I think that perhaps both Nihal Singh and S.P. Singh should have hidden their sources of inspiration, funds and acclaim. No doubt we would have found these out sooner or later, but they have no business to flaunt their masks, costumes and roles, with smirks of treacherous candour.

Another outstanding drawback of S.P. Singh's study is that too often he personalises the issues. Actually there is no dynastic linkage of Nehru/Gandhi family with Indo-Soviet friendship. We admit that there have been two strange coincidences in Indo-Soviet affairs. Nehru died in 1964, and Khrushchev lost the reins of power about that time. Similarly, Rajiv became Premier in 1984-85 and Gorbachev took over as General Secretary just then.

But let us be quite clear. During the first part of Nehru's rule (1946-53), Soviet Union was following the pseudo-left Zdanov line, and Indo-Soviet relations were non-existent and indifferent or were somewhat hostile. They became cordial only after Russian policy took a left turn under Khrushchev (c.1954-64). So Nehru's personality had nothing to do with Soviet policy perceptions.

Similarly, we had at least four distinct personality changes between 1964 and 1984. First, there was Shastri (1956). Second, we had Indira's first phase (1966-77) including the Emergency phase of 1975-77. Then, third, under Janata, there were Morarjee and Charan Singh. Next, we had Indira's second spell 1980-84. In Soviet Union too there were some changes in leadership, but for most of the time, the rightist Brezhnev line prevailed.

At present, it is Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* or a rightward swing of Soviet policy. But Rajiv is not responsible for the neo-Bukharinist turn in Soviet policy. (Except, of course, for those products of Congress Culture who foolishly believe that Rajiv rules the universe).

Personalities do matter in politics. But only rarely. When revolutions and counter-revolutions and civil wars are unfolding and raging, personal proclivities can loom large on the historic horizon as accelerators, catalysts and retarders. But in staid, humdrum, pedestrian, ordinary times what do they signify? What is the chasm between a Tweedledum and a Tweedledee? Nothing much. For instance, it is generally acknowledged, including by S.P. Singh, that Janata rule during 1977-80, made no fundamental difference to Indo-Soviet relations. These relations remained much the same as they had been during the terribly long Congress years 1946-77 and 1980-89. In fact, the quantum of Soviet economic aid made almost a quantum leap during the Janata regime. But even this rise was

unimportant. Under Rajiv, it surged forward again and stands at record levels today. Similarly, Morarjee continued Indira's policies in relation to the Soviet Union and the trade protocol negotiated during Charan Singh's days was signed later by Indira. Thus Jawahars, Gulzarilals, Lal Bahadurs, Indiras, Morarjees, Charan Singhs and Rajivs on the one hand, and Stalins, Malenkovs, Khrushchevs, Brezhnevs, Andropovs, Chernenkos, Gorbachevs, on the other, may come and go, but national interests prevail and endure.

Actually, S.P. Singh's effort is slightly better researched than Nihal Singh's. He has also distinguished three facets of Indo-Soviet relations, namely, one, the alleged dynastic connection with the Nehru-Gandhi family; two, the party to party links between CPSU and INC; and three, the Government to Government relations, themselves to be further subdivided.

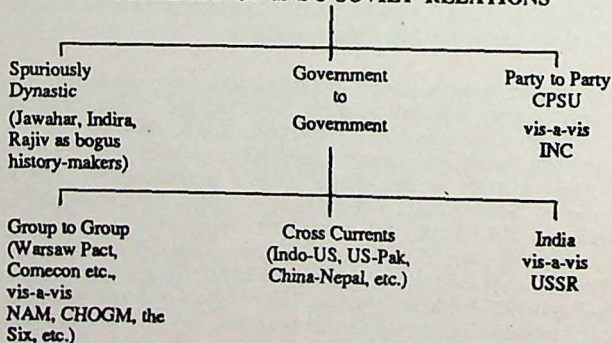
The latter could be viewed in varying contexts; first, in the setting of USSR as a member of a group of states *vis a vis* India as a member of another group of states (e.g. as member of NAM, CHOGM, SAARC, the Six Indian Ocean States, Under-developed Nations, the South, the Asian Powers Group, the Antarctic Treaty Organisation, the Universal Postal Union, the World Telecommunications Body, the International Copyright Authority, and so on and so forth).

Secondly, the Indo-Soviet relations may be examined in the context of cross-currents flowing from Indo-American, Indo-Pak, Indo-Chinese, Indo-British, Indo-Japanese, Indo-Bangladeshi, Indo-Nepalese, Indo-Bhutanese and from similarly other, friendly or hostile, directions.

Thirdly, there will be a few residual matters which overwhelmingly concern only India and Soviet Union.

Schematically, the total picture may be viewed as:

CONTEXTS OF INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS



Obviously, a detailed study within each context, would need several volumes. It is impossible to attempt this in a small review, but one wishes that S.P. Singh had consciously followed such a scheme instead of merely hinting at a jumble of facets and issues.

IV

We now come to the "ace" of the trio. S.P. Talwar's work is far better researched, and in some directions, it is a veritable mine of information.

Unfortunately, the work lacks focus. It seeks an answer to the question:

"Why did the CPI fail to lead a successful Indian revolution?" It is a question of limited interest, limited only to the CPI cadres and generally to the cognoscenti. But in my opinion, it is a legitimate inquiry. I would have liked Talwar to address himself to the wider problem: "Why have socio-economic developments been so slow in unfolding in India, that we as a nation have been deprived of the vital experiences of revolution and civil war, which many smaller (and some larger) nations have had?". Anyway, I indulgently allow Talwar his narrower inquiry, and merely record my finding that Talwar's answers are diffuse, irrelevant, beg the questions asked, and are, on the whole, unsupported by the evidence produced. Talwar has even failed to posit any interesting hypothesis that may advance a future probe. The mystery of India's excruciatingly slow movement through historic time remains unanswered.

When I state that Talwar's book is better researched, I do not mean that it does not have large lacunae. For instance, what he writes about the BLPI, whose full name was Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, Burma, and Ceylon (or BLPIBC) is really superficial. It seems to me that he has not read the *Transitional Programme* of the BLPIBC, a basic and rare text. Similarly, Talwar has not explored fully the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky platform as a historical source of *Perestroika*, explored to the depth and detail, which the subject inherently and the present occasion (Gorbachev being General Secretary) demand.

But let us look at the book more positively. It offers on the whole a not too hostile an approach to leftist politics in India. It is seemingly non-partisan in the *Partynost* sense. It treats socialists of all colours (SP, PSP, SSP, RSP, etc.) and even Royists and Radical Humanists, Forward Blocists, etc., without taking a strongly partisan stance. It is certainly tilted towards a closer examination of the CPI-CPI(M)-CPI(ML)'s postures, but that inevitably flows from the narrow question that Talwar has posed.

Additionally, Talwar has proved that only an interdisciplinary approach will work. We must make everything grist to the mill, using economic data, tables on strikes, lockouts, and elections, philosophical interpretations, politico-diplomatic manouvres, cultural controversies, particulars of technological collaborations, confrontations in the arts and so on, all together, to tackle the momentous issues that face as an intellectual community.

Talwar is quite forthright: "The Communist movement in India..... did not make any significant effort to identify itself with the national movement. It is surprising (sic!) that the CPI should continue to look to the CPSU even in the post-independence era for its strategy and tactics.... In the colonial period, the communist movement usually served the national interests of the Soviet Union..... (contrary to) as was done by its counterparts in China and Vietnam, the CPI erred in that it uncritically accepted the Russian views and slavishly implemented the Moscow line instead of developing indigenous forms of revolutionary struggle." (Conclusion)

The negative nature of domination by CPSU has been correctly pinpointed especially CPI's anti-national stance during World War II, when "Imperialist War" (1939-41) suddenly changed to "People War" (1941-45), and when the wretched, British-created monstrosity, the Muslim League, became a "Progressive Force." But the deeper reasons for CPI's failure have not been explicitly stated:

".....the frustration of the communists owing to their failure to deal with the politically mature bourgeois parties" (p.352). This is really hilarious. Did Talwar expect the Indian bourgeois to be as ineptly led as the Indian proletariat was by the Communists?

"Another important reason for its failure was the inability of its leaders to invent indigenous methods of struggle. The Indian Communists lacked the resourcefulness of a Mao, a Ho Chi Minh or a Tito..... Its anti-religious approach was anathema to the predominantly religious Indian masses as the internal squabbles (within the CPI) disheartened those who could have been its followers.... the framework of the Indian national movement was determined by liberalism and constitutional struggle, which were unknown both in Russia and China.... the two western ideals had occupied a significant place in the Indian political culture." Does Talwar suggest that we leftists should observe constitutional and liberal niceties whilst making the revolution, and should become cultural compradors of the West?

".....Communist dogmas of classless society and economic determinism were incompatible with the casteism, spiritualism and mysticism of the predominantly Hindu Society." What is Talwar driving at? That we

Marxists should abandon scientific socialism and historical and dialectical materialism in order to make adjustments with spiritualism and mysticism, apart from casteism, that is prevalent among the Hindu masses? Surely the Russian and Chinese masses were equally spiritualist and superstition-ridden before their revolutions. That does not mean that the Bolsheviks should have become "tailists" and followed the stupefied and brain-washed masses. In fact, the revolution is the greatest, the grandest, the fastest, the most universal, the most open, and the only school for the masses. They learn to throw off the dross of centuries in a matter of days, when led sensibly, courageously and perceptively by a Nationalist-cum-Marxist leadership.

".....the International communist movement..... exhibited a better understanding of the Indian realities: it realised that the objective situation in India did not permit a proletarian revolution in the near future and adopted a parliamentary path in spite of its professed revolutionary aims." We have come a full circle. Talwar has landed us plumb in a vicious circle. On the one hand, the CPI failed because it followed slavishly foreign dictates. On the other hand, the same international leadership had a better appreciation of Indian realities and should have been slavishly followed!

All the preceding analysis by Talwar himself is made nonsense of. A mountain has laboured to produce not even a mouse. It has laboured to produce a mere mouse-trap. It seems that after all, the CPI did right in slavishly following the perceptive international leadership.

The fault lies in the lack of ideological commitment on the part of Talwar. Reality cannot be apprehended except as revolutionary praxis. Philosophy, real philosophy, is not for the class-rooms and the ivory towers. Philosophical issues are defined, debated and resolved at the barricades. That is what Marxism is about.

V

Looking at all the three books together, we find that in a superficial way they provide a "balanced" picture. Nihal Singh projects the American viewpoint, not necessarily of the CIA, but certainly not unmindful of it. S.P. Singh provides the Soviet angle. It is futile for him to try to convince us that our interests and those of the Russians are identical and will remain so as long as "the sun and the moon illumine the sky." Talwar provides a sort of corrective, but one completely unfocussed, unprincipled and insufficiently researched.

In essence, all the three books are inadequate. They are surely worth glancing through. But they merely whet the appetite.

4. Deng's Stalinist Buonapartism Runs Amuck In China

Shock waves, largely hypocritical, are spreading through elitist circles the world over, expressing horror at the massacre of innocents that was carried out during the night of June 3/4, 1989, in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. At least a few hundred students and their sympathisers were brutally murdered by soldiers of the 27th Army on the orders of Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng, and Yang Shangkun. It appears that this triumvirate of Stalinist hardliners have for the moment triumphed over the more "liberal" elements led by ex-General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili.

Let us first of all note that much bigger and more brutal purges were carried out by Stalin and his henchmen between 1928 and 1953.¹ In fact, the students of Tiananmen Square had successfully won over a section of the People's Liberation Army (the 36th Army) and in parts of Beijing the 27th and the 36th Army had exchanged shots. Thus, casualties were nothing compared to those known to the world's communist movements as a consequence of the rise of Stalinist Buonapartism.

We are not minimising Deng's crime of 3/4 June. Far from it, Deng is an accomplished international rogue. He and his ilk have no place in the world communist movement and they must be hanged after a public trial, just as openly as they are carrying out executions of students leaders all over China today.

Secondly, we must note that in this world historic period of Permanent Revolution, when imperialist world wars, local limited wars, revolutions, counter-revolutions, guerrilla wars, military coups, civil wars, permanent war economies and perpetual economic crises follow each other in rapid succession, a special situation arises. The state acquires a relative independence from its class mores, it is able to balance itself between classes and to fling one class against another in order to continue its own buonapartist rule. Deng is such a buonapartist. His Chinese state is able to manoeuvre between the rural peasant masses and the urban proletariat, as well as between these classes and, the urban intelligentsia, which is partly petty bourgeois and partly affiliated to the proletariat.

Thirdly, Deng is an obvious neo-Bukharinist, a "capitalist-roader" of the

1. The estimate of Stalin's victims runs to several millions. See, Trotsky and Medvedev in select bibliography at the end of this paper. Deng carried out his programme in full view of T.V. cameras, whilst Stalin was more successful with his lying censorship. Of course, Trotskyists knew the truth and publicised it, but, till recently, they were a persecuted and derided minority.

same sort as Gorbachev. In fact, let us give the devil his due. It is now clear that at the December 1978 third plenum of the 11th Central Committee session of the CCP, he inaugurated the era of *kaifang* (= *glasnost*) and *gaige* (= *perestroika*). It was he who systematically undermined the socialist property forms by creating Special Export Zones, by introducing the principles of Leasing of Collective Property, of providing the peasantry with Special Incentives and so on. He also opened up China to heavy private investments, which exceed \$ 50 billion today and to heavy infiltration by tourists, naturally together with the special tourist plagues.

In that sense, Gorbachevism is a later edition of Dengism. But we must not forget that Deng is a *buonapartist*. He is capable of suddenly lurching a little the other way like a true drunken petty-bourgeois. According to him, the above-mentioned December 1978 Plenum, which opened up Chinese road to capitalism, had projected a balanced programme of One Centre (*zhongxin*) and Two Nodal Points (*jibendian*, i.e. *kaifang* and *gaige*). One Centre means Four Principles, namely, adherence to (1) Marxism and Mao Ze Dong Thought, (2) Socialism, (3) CCP Leadership and (4) Peoples Dictatorship. According to Deng, the Two Nodal Points, *kaifang* and *gaige* (openness and restructuring), were taken too far by Zhao Ziyang and the Tiananmen Square students. He, therefore, ordered their brutal suppression so as to tilt in favour of the Four Principles of One Centre (Zhongxin).²

Anyway, whatever be the vocabulary, whether Chinese or Russians, whether *kaifang* and *gaige* or *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the concepts stink. This reactionary formula is an exaggeration of the Leninist NEP, towards a revived rubbishy Bukharinism. The platform of the Right proposed by the troika of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky in the twenties in Russia, was thoroughly exposed by the Left Opposition. The central slogan of the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky troika was addressed to the rural kulaks and the urban petty bourgeoisie and it exhorted them to "Get Rich!" The bankruptcy of this policy was thoroughly exposed by 1928, when Stalin suddenly adopted the Industrialisation Programme of the Left Opposition and "liquidated the kulaks."³

Deng is applying the Four principles of One Centre (Zhongxin) with

2. See Tan Chung, *The Road To Tiananmen Square*, in *Indian Express*, Bombay, 25.6.89.

3. The Left Opposition had not advocated any brutality towards the kulaks and had suggested a gentle ratio of annual industrial expansion of seventeen to nineteen percent only. Stalin not only adopted the Left Opposition platform, but precipitously raised the ratio to 34% and beyond. He also pursued "dekulakization" with utmost cruelty and probably caused the death and imprisonment of 6 to 8 million peasants.

typical stalinist brutality today. But tomorrow he is capable of swinging to the Two Nodal Points (*jibendian* or *kaifang* and *gaige*) equally suddenly. At that time the western elitist circles will shower encomiums upon him as smoothly as the epithets that they are heaping upon him today.

As we have made clear in our Preliminary Remarks on Gorbachevism in Section One of this booklet, we are all for *glasnost* and *kaifang* (openness), as well as for *consequential political restructuring*. But we are totally opposed to any and all roads to capitalism and to economic restructuring, whether termed *perestroika* or *gaige*.

Down with Deng and all capitalist Roaders
in Russia and China!

Forward with *glasnost* and *kaifang*!

Down with *perestroika* and *gaige*!

Long live October!

Long live Democratic Communist China and Russia!

Our Era -- Era of Communism!

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GORBACHEVISM, ART SYSTEMS OF RUSSIA AND INDIA AND A HUNDRED FLOWERS OF COMPRADORISM

With a note on Deng's China

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