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■ Socialist Democracy in USSR: ■ Democracy and people: ■ Relevance of Gramsc's political thought: ■ Leon Trotsky and his contribution to the World Communist Movement: ■ Tribes as the 'Other' : A critique of the political anthropology of Northeast India: ■ Ethnic crisis in Manipur : An insight into Kuki-Naga strife: ■ Movement for Recognition of Nepali language: ■ Women's human rights and the feminist movement in India : Some Issues: ■ Dulles and Eastern Europe : A retrospection: ■ Regional economic disparities, Gorbachev's policies and the disintegration of the Soviet Union:

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GIRIN PHUKON

Editor

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SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY IN THE USSR

S.K. Chaube

.....the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. - K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

The one-party state is under the constant temptation to over-pass the boundaries beyond which liberty degenerates into dictatorship. - Harold Laski; *Liberty in the Modern State*.

PROBLEMS OF INSTRUMENTALITY

The essence of democracy is much instrumental as relational. Its original association with liberalism has rendered it certain institutions and certain values which are not adequate for the understanding of the intricacies of socialist democracy. Frequently they present certain praxiological dilemmas to Marxist statecraft.

The revolutionary programme of the Marxists has to be implemented through a revolutionary party by capturing state power. Ultimately, however, the Marxists look forward to the abolition of state power as an instrument of coercion and exploitation. Revolution, in marxist theory, thus encompasses a long process rather than a transformation on the spur of a moment though the capture of state power constitutes the critical stage.

In the liberal political theory, on the other hand, the state is more tangible than the party for, once the revolution is completed, the state structure acquired permanence and the parties are expected to operate with the existing framework. In fact the party is not a part of the liberal democratic theory and even in the early nineteenth century it was frowned upon. It is in the twentieth century that the party system is regarded as not only an instrument of the working of the liberal democracies but also a subscriber to its stability. The Marxist revolutionary parties are to grow within the perimeter of the state and to yet try to

capture state power, establish socialism and bring about the abolition of the state.

Withering away of the state is the anarchists' and the socialists' ultimate dream of democracy. But, whereas the anarchists do not have a theoretical problem over instrumentality, of the socialists, being dependent upon institutions, are continuously confronted with the problem of 'ends and means'.

The parameters of a strategy of political democratization of a revolutionary party are three :

- (i) When a revolutionary party struggles, its organizational strength depends upon a high level of efficiency and almost total secrecy.
- (ii) When a revolutionary party turns into a ruling party, certain qualitative changes occur in its character and style.
- (iii) When the ruling party becomes the single political party in operation, the question of its democratization assumes critical urgency.

The easiest way to solve this dilemma is to proclaim liberal democracy as a sham and assert that a socialist state in ipso fac to the embodiment of the supreme virtues of democracy in the way that Joseph Stalin did while moving the draft Constitution of the USSR for acceptance in 1936¹. In fact, Stalin coined the phrase 'socialist democratism' to underline the point that it was different from other kinds of democratism². The concept of 'socialist democracy', on the other hand, since Lenin's time, has been defined as a higher form of democracy than what the bourgeoisie has attained, not something different from that. Throughout his life Lenin strived to attain for Russia this socialist democracy³. Stalin came to believe that Russia under him had attained it.

DEMOCRACY IN THE PARTY

For Lenin, however, socialist democracy had to be achieved through socialism, socialism had to be achieved through a revolution and revolution had to be achieved through a party of revolutionaries. Lenin started from scratch. The principal ideas that *Iskra*, the newspaper of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, initially, advocated were, in Lenin's words :

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First, the idea of centralism which defined in principle the method of deciding all particular and detailed question of organisation, second, the function of an organ, a newspaper⁴.

One important point that Lenin strongly made in *What Is To Be Done* ? is that a revolutionary party needed secrecy and, therefore, could not afford 'broad democracy' in the sense of allowing publicity of vital party information beyond the circle of membership. Broad democracy, in such circumstances, could only lead to the arrest of revolutionaries. Lenin wrote :

The one serious organizational principle for workers in our movement must be strictest secrecy, strictest choice of members, training of professional revolutionaries. Once these qualities are present something more than democracy is guaranteed : complete comradely confidence among revolutionaries⁵.

In a way this is an idealistic concept of democracy because it equates freedom with commitment. In another sense it is sound commonsense. For Lenin was confronted with the individualistic eccentricities of the *Iskra* group. So the party rule no. 18 worked out in the second Congress (1903), forbade the minority to oppose the decision arrived at by the majority in a party Congress. The only body authorized to review the decision of one Congress was the next Congress. When the *Iskra* group refrained from attending the third Congress of the party, it was split. But the rules were amended to allow the minority the right to criticise the party decisions while conforming to them⁶.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Although the phrase 'democratic centralism' was incorporated in the party rules in 1907⁷, interestingly, Lenin used this phrase also with reference to the functioning of the Soviet State, particularly, federalism and autonomy of economic undertakings. In fact, Lenin's early intolerance of minority dissent in the party was considerably diluted by the need to build consensus around the time of the revolution. In October 1917 Lenin demanded the expulsion of Kamenev and Zinoviev from the party Central Committee but the differences were resolved by the intervention of other leaders like Trotsky and Stalin (the latter having gone on record that 'in fundamentals we remain of one mind'⁹.) The reason for Lenin's threat of expulsion was not that Kamenev and Zinoviev had disagreed with him but that they had publicly challenged

a decision of the Central Committee. On the other hand, sharp differences arose within the party on relation with the Left Social Revolutionary party and on the treaty of Brest-Litevsk. There was no split. Democratic centralism would not gag dissent but would not tolerate non-conformity after a decision was taken.

The fact is that in the Leninist theory of organization centralism is institutionalized and democracy is functional. Democracy depended more on human relations and personal style than on any institutional arrangement. The question whether Lenin, given more time, would be able to institutionalize democracy is a hypothetical one. Yet, it is undeniable that, after Lenin, there was a process of severe distortion of the process of socialist construction through a gradual development of what came to be known as 'personality cult'.

It is interesting to note that 'democratic centralism' was first institutionalized in the rules of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in 1934 with the following components :

- a. The application of the elective principle to all leading organs of the party, from the highest to the lowest;
- b. The periodic accountability of the party organs to their respective party organisations;
- c. Strict party discipline and subordination of the minority to majority;
- d. The absolutely binding character of the decision of the higher organs upon the lower organs and upon all party members.

Recent happenings in the former Soviet Union gives one the suspicion that the purpose of this institutionalization was to stress centralism rather than democracy. In the Constitution adopted by the USSR about the same time there is no mention of 'democratic centralism'. Instead, the 1936 Constitution gave the citizens the freedom of speech and freedom of press in civil rights. The only political activity granted to the politically conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other sections of the working people was to unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The Marxists' all-time dream has been to establish a society free from all kinds of exploitation. Liberal democracy has failed to ensure it

at least in the economic sphere. On the other hand, fighting economic exploitation has been a long, difficult and complex task for the Marxists. As the actual expropriation of the exploiters starts only after the working class captures state power, the possibility of the state power itself being misused remains a human problem. Any mechanistic dissection of a general social category is liable to lead it to either obtuscation or oversimplification and, therefore, misuse.

STATE BUILDING IN THE SOVIET UNION

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets was set up by the Bolsheviks as an alternative to the bourgeois legislative-Constituent machinery of the Provisional Government. The former ruling class was disfranchised and the urban working class was given weightage in the election to the Soviets¹¹. The Congress of Soviets elected a Central Executive Committee (V Tsl K) of not more than 200 members to act as the legislatures. The V Tsl K would in turn appoint a Council of People's Commissars for general administration. The structure continued through the 1924 Constitution except that, in view of the federation, it was duplicated and the All-Union Central Executive Committee was split into two chambers.

The 1936 Constitution was based upon the premise that all exploiting classes had been eliminated and socialism had been established. The Seventh Congress of the Soviets of the USSR had, on February 6, 1935, called for amendment of the Soviet Constitution in the direction of 'further democratizing the electoral system by replacing a not entirely equal suffrage by equal suffrage, indirect elections and the open ballot by the secret ballot'¹². The 1936 Constitution introduced uniform territorial franchise. It also merged the All-Union Congress of Soviets and the All-Union Central Executive Committee into the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, as the highest organ of State power discharging legislative and policy-making functions, appointing the ministers and judges of the Supreme Court of the USSR and other officials and holding them individually responsible for their actions. These amendments brought the USSR political system to some approximation of the parliamentary form of liberal democratic government.

The Supreme Soviet, however, failed to live up to the expectation raised by the conferring of enormous power on it by the 1936

Constitution. The main reason was, of course, the dictate of the party discipline requiring unanimity of the party members (and supporters) in every forum. At the same time, the election laws were drafted in such a way that only persons in total confidence of the party leadership could get elected to the Soviets. The Soviets, moreover, consisted mostly of part-timers who were primarily engaged in non-political occupations (e.g. in factories and farms) and regarded attendance in Soviets more as paid holidays than as serious work. The extent to which the workings of the Soviets were reduced can be gauged from the fact that in a whole year the total number of working days spread over two sessions would amount to two to three weeks. In fact the major decisions were taken in the party, the minor decisions in the legislative committees comprising the party leaders and conveyed to the Soviets by party leaders for unanimous support, sometimes with 'thundering applause'. The legislature was regarded as a 'public forum' where communists were not expected to exhibit differences. The decision was to be taken in the party.

The focus naturally shifts to the inner party affairs. The exposures since the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have brought to light horrendous evidences of suppression of dissent, cruelty to opponents and accumulation of power collectively designated as 'personality cult'. Most of it by Stalin who was not in the government until 1940. In fact, most of the tales of Stalin's excesses relate to the late twenties and early thirties. Stalin was then merely the Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF SOVIET POLITY : KHRUSCHEV TO BREZHNEV

While Article 126 of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR declared the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to be the 'vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system' and the 'leading core of all organisations of the working people, both public and state'. It was not exactly laid down that all political decisions of the Soviets would really be taken in the party and the Soviets would be reduced to mere public forums where such decisions would be 'unanimously approved'. Although the Soviets were supposed to be the basic organs through which the sovereignty of the working people was to be exercised, they were reduced to talking shops or

congregations for the pulpit speech of a leader who would always be accorded 'applause' and 'loud applause'.

At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU the maladies in the system were first exposed. Khrushchev started cleaning the Augean stable and as a sop, offered the plan of communism in twenty years. Resistance in the party to some of his action was so strong that he had ultimately to leave. But, the spirit of democratization had caught up. The 1977 Brezhnev Constitution spoke of greater democratization and 'greater openness' as the principal direction of Soviet polity. Criticism of bureaucratic policies ceased to be culpable. Greater popular participation in Soviets and other organs of the government was called for.

The 1977 Constitution was thus based upon the premise of developed socialism. Particular store was set by the growth of science and technology and the role of the intelligentsia. There is an even more intense awareness of the need for science and technology behind the Gorbachev revision of 1988. As a matter of fact, the Gorbachev revision retained the basic policy statements of the 1977 Constitution. But the structural amendments that were brought about were entirely political. In other words, the Gorbachev amendments, for the first time in the history of the USSR, addressed themselves to the task of political reform for its own sake.

ESSENCE OF DEMOCRATISM

There is a subtle inconsistency between the February 1935 decision of the Seventh Congress of Soviets calling for the 'democratization of the electoral system' and Stalin's claim, on November 25, 1936, that 'the democratization of the Draft of the new Constitution is not the 'ordinary' and 'universally recognised' democratism in the abstract, but socialist democratism¹³. The Congress decision clearly implied the 'ordinary', 'universally recognised', that is to say, the political meaning of democracy. Socialism is essentially an economic concept. The 1936 Constitution was entitled to claim itself to be a socialist constitution. However, this fact did not automatically entitle it to the status of a perfect political democracy. Indeed, democracy in its printing form is a political concept. Socialism can make it available to the poor working people. But to construe socialism as democracy is both illogical and dangerous. Complementarity is not substitutability.

The credit for establishing this point goes to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Nikita Khrushchev. As the first challenger of a formidable tradition, however, Khrushchev faced insurmountable odds. He started with what may be called a mass education programme, abolished the Cominform and got the programme of the CPSU revised¹⁴. His own deficiency, however, lay in viewing the problem of democracy as a problem of individual personality and not the institutional set-up as well as the culture that grows around it. He harped mainly on 'collective leadership' and failed to attack bureaucratism in the party.

The long term impact of the revision of the party programme was the Constitutional revision of 1977. 'The principal direction in the development of the political system of Soviet society' declared the 1977 Constitution of the USSR, is the extension of socialist democracy, namely, ever broader participation of citizens in managing the affairs of society and the state, continued improvement of the machinery of state, heightening of the activity of public organizations, strengthening of the system of people's control, consolidation of the legal foundations of the functioning of the state and public life, greater openness and publicity and constant responsiveness to public opinion'¹⁵. This quotation, in the first place, points out the distinction between 'socialist democracy' and 'socialist democratism'. In the second place, it paved the way for *glasnost* (openness) that was to shake the structure of Soviet polity ten years later.

NATURE OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVISIONS TILL 1977:

The Soviet Union had its first Constitution in 1918 enshrining the principles of dictatorship of the working class. The second Constitution enshrined the federal principle that was established in 1924. The third Constitution of 1936 enshrined the establishment of socialism in the USSR. The 1977 Constitution enshrined the establishment of 'developed socialism'. The philosophy of the first and the third Constitutions was rooted in the Marxist theory of class contradiction. The second Constitution was related to the territorial composition of the state. The issues of democracy touched the first three Constitutions only by implication as socialism addressed itself to the question of exploitation of one class by another and federalism addresses itself to the question of inequality among ethno-cultural groups. It was only in the fourth Constitution that democracy become a direct concern of Constitutional

reform.

Yet the logic of the 1977 Constitution was essentially economic. The 1936 Constitution declared the Soviet Union as a socialist state of workers and peasants because, after the consolidation and maturing of the dictatorship of the proletariat, all exploiting classes had been liquidated and only three non-contradictory classes (workers, peasants and intelligentsia) remained. The 1977 structure remained essentially the same but it was claimed that 'on the basis of the drawing together of all classes and social strata and of the judicial and factual equality of all its nations and nationalities and their fraternal cooperation, a new historical community of people has been formed - the Soviet people'. Hence, the declaration of the USSR as 'a state of the whole people' expressing the will and interests of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia¹⁸.

Now, the term 'people' is a non-class concept belonging to the domain of (political) democracy. The 1977 Constitution went to the extent of inducting the concept of 'democratic centralism' into the state Constitution explaining it to be consisting in (1) the electiveness of all bodies of state authority from the lowest to the highest; (2) their accountability to the people and (3) the obligation of the lower bodies to observe the decisions of the higher ones¹⁷. The second component of centralism in the party organization, namely, the acceptance of the decisions of the majority by the minority, is absent here for the reason that the state and the party are different. Suppression of dissent of the minority might more often than not lead to the tyranny of the majority. It may have particularly serious implications for a multi-ethnic state.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE GORBACHEV REFORMS :

There is no denying that Gorbachev was seriously concerned about the economic future of the USSR. There was an urgency about scientific and managerial innovation. A discerning analyst will, however, find something more in Gorbachev's approach - there was a moral element in his strategy. It will be recalled that the first movement that Gorbachev started immediately after assuming the party secretaryship was against drug addiction and alcoholism. The revised edition of the third CPSU programme made an appeal not only to the head of the Soviet citizens but also to their heart. The programme called for the unleashing of a great initiative by the people.

Given the release of this initiative, Gorbachev knew that the political-administrative structure of 1977 would, by and large, fail to give shape to the enthusiasm. Glasnost and Perestroika were two movements aimed at channelizing this popular enthusiasm. The 1988 constitutional revision was the institutionalization of these aspirations. There was conscious attempt to go back to the Leninist institutions of freely contested elections, the Congress of Soviets (with the new women clause of Congress of people's Deputies), the VTs IK (Supreme Soviet) with regular and prolonged sittings. Elements of the Presidential form of government were introduced, on the other hand, against Lenin's personal dislike for separation of powers. Yet the powers that the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had been bestowed with were largely routine or diplomatic. On the other hand, the innovation that members of the Councils of Ministers and Executive Committees of the Soviets other than their Chairman and the Judges would not be members of the Soviets which elect them is of considerable interest for students of Constitutions. Similarly the functioning of the Constitutional Inspection Committee of the USSR which took over a certain portion of the reviewing function enjoyed by the judiciary in some of the liberal democratic countries and, hitherto, by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was clearly addressed to a basic problem. Some of the party leaders, by virtue of their predominant position in the government, sought to influence the decisions of the Soviets and escaped its criticism. Separation of the Executive functionaries from the legislature would give the members of the Soviets real freedom to criticise them while the Chairman of the Council of Ministers or executive committee retained the link of the body with the legislature. The principle of separation of powers, thus, started operating in the revised Constitution of the USSR in only a limited way with the result that the Constitution of the RSFSR, which was a replication of the Constitution of the USSR, even after about 200 amendments, left scope for a tug of war between the Russian President and the Russian legislature.

END OF ONE-PARTY RULE :

There is no doubt that socialism as an ideology has numerous opponents. Preserving a socialist system is a task no less challenging than the task of building or perfecting it. It can be argued that, while a safety valve was provided in the first two Constitutions of the Soviet Union by differential franchise between the urban 'electors' and rural 'inhabitants', the 1936 Constitution, that introduced 'one person one

vote' principle, supplied it in the form of the one-party rule. When the Gorbachev leadership decided to do away with the CPSU monopoly, it banked upon the Presidency as the future focus of political unity. At the 28th CPSU Congress in July 1990 Gorbachev reminded his audience that the CPSU monopoly was over¹⁹ and assured it that he would use 'all the constitutional powers of the Soviet President' to implement perestroika.

The collapse of the Soviet Union (the USSR), however, robbed him of this power. For, whereas Boris Yeltsin had been directly elected President of Russia, Gorbachev had been elected indirectly by the federal legislature. His desperate effort to preserve the bone and marrow of the USSR was integrally connected with his own survival.

The collapse of the Soviet Union proved decisively that the institutionalization of democracy is a far cry from both capitalism and socialism.

THE CENTRE DID NOT HOLD :

When Marx set before the working class the task of winning the battle for democracy, he had the conviction that the working class would make it a better thing than the liberal bourgeois democracy. Under liberal democracy the form takes precedence over the substance. The working class would render democracy a content.

Marx was also convinced that, by winning the battle for democracy, the working class would win the battle for socialism. In 1847-48 Marx had his eyes on Germany where the working class was carrying on the struggle for democracy. The battle was won but the working class was denied the fruits of its success. (Incidentally, the logic may be extended to Russia in 1917 where the working class fought and actually won the battle for democracy and, by its extension, the battle for peace).

It was only after the failure of the German working class in the 1848 revolution that Marx conceived of a working class party. But that was not conceived as a direct instrument of capturing state power. This may also be said of the Social Democratic Worker's party of 1902. By 1902, however, the revolutionary programme was well entrenched in Lenin's thought and went into the evolution of the party into a secret revolutionary organization. Nothing succeeds like success. The success of the Bolsheviks obscured whatever shortcomings it had. But when it

emerged as the sole ruling party of the Soviet Union, identification of the party and the state created problems of democracy.

For democratization of a state is conducted under premises different from those of democratization of a party. Membership of a party is both optional and privileged. Membership of a state is compulsory and automatic. Entry into a party is regulated by its older members and their rules. Citizenship in the bulk is natural, that is, a birth right. Only naturalization is sanctioned. The functioning of a political party depends essentially upon trust. The full membership of a state is citizenship, based upon juridically defined rights. The rules of democratic centralism, as applicable to the CPSU, therefore, could not be applied to the Soviet Union.

Until 1936 the one-party system was not institutionalized in the Soviet polity. It was so done, only when the 'one person one vote' principle of election was introduced, as a safety valve for socialism against a liberal democratic revival. When the one party system was terminated by Gorbachev, he created a presidency as the rallying point of socialism in a multi-party system. But the presidency of the federation was indirect and, with the dissolution of the federation, had no moral right to command. The socialist system collapsed with the collapse of the federal presidency.

Socialist statecraft, therefore, may be viewed as a quest for a unifying principle/institution within a framework of political democracy but aspiring to end class exploitation. The fundamental unifying force is, of course, ideology. The institutions that were successively evolved, on the other hand, were (i) differential franchise, (ii) single-party rule and (iii) federal presidency. It seems that Gorbachev had not bargained for the dissolution of the federation.

Notes and References :

1. J. Stalin, *On the Draft Constitution of the USSR (and) Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1951, pp. 26-46.
2. 'The talk of democracy', taunted Stalin. 'But what is democracy ? Democracy in capitalist countries, where there are antagonistic classes, is, in the last analysis, democracy for the strong, democracy for the propertied minority. In the USSR, on the contrary, democracy is democracy for the

working people, i.e., democracy for all. But from this it follows that the principles of democratism are violated, not by the Draft of the new Constitution of the USSR, but by the bourgeois constitutions. That is why I think that the Constitution of the USSR is the only thoroughly democratic Constitution in the world' (Ibid., p. 46)

3. On the process of party building by Lenin see E.H. Carr, *History of Soviet Russia : The Bolshevik Revolution 1917 - 1923*. I, Penguin, 1966.
4. V.I. Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Step Back' in *Collected Works*, Vol.7. Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1974.
5. V.I. Lenin, 'What is to be Done', in *Collected Works*, Vol.5. pp. 480-81.
6. V.I. Lenin, 'Report on the Third Congress of the Social Democratic Labour Party', *Collected Works*, Vol.8. p. 432.
7. E.H. Carr, *op.cit.*, p. 197.
8. V.I. Lenin, 'Original Version of the article "The Immediate Task" ', *Collected Works*, Vol.27. pp. 207-08.
9. E.H. Carr. *op.cit.*, pp. 104-08.
10. There is nothing in the Marxian or the Leninist theory of statecraft which calls for a single party system. The elimination of the non-Bolshevik parties in the Soviet Union was an offshoot of the civil war in 1918-20. The rationalization of one-party rule in the Soviet Union by Stalin, however, makes interesting reading:

A party is a part of a class, its most advanced part. Several parties and, consequently, freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes whose interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable - in which there are, say, capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, kulaks and poor peasants, etc. But in the USSR there are no longer such classes as capitalists, the landlords, the kulaks, etc. In the USSR there are only two classes, workers and peasants, whose interest, far from being mutually hostile - are, on the contrary, friendly. Hence, there is no ground in the USSR for the existence of several parties and, consequently, for the freedom for these parties (Stalin, *op.cit.*, p. 45).

11. E.H. Carr, *op.cit.*, pp. 153-534.
12. J. Stalin, *op.cit.*, p. 11.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
14. The 1961 programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Road to Communism), Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962, aimed at

All round expansion and perfection of socialist democracy, active participation of all citizens in the administration of the state, in the management of economic and cultural development, improvement of the government apparatus, and increased control over its activity.

15. Article 9 of the *Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, 1977.
16. Article I, *Ibid.*
17. Article 3, *Ibid.*
18. *Documents and Materials, 28th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Moscow, Novosti, 1990, p. 70.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

DEMOCRACY AND PEOPLE

"It is better to travel than to arrive"

Dhiren Bhagawati

The title of this article appears to pursue the line of thought of John Stuart Mill who viewed with concern the threat to individual's freedom of expression from the majority's opinion. Mill opposing liberty of individual to majority rule could distinguish between two spheres of acts of individual - 'self regarding' and 'other regarding' acts and he upheld the supremacy of individual so far his self-regarding acts were concerned. The development of personality of individual being the ultimate goal, individual freedom as its means is counterpoised to society. Mill, of course, considered individual freedom not as a means but an end in itself. Mill's insistence on absolute individual liberty, absolute because the extent of other regarding acts of individual where social control being justified is very thin in his philosophical framework, should be read with his refusal to concede to the claims of universal suffrage, his justifying various qualifications to right to vote and his apprehension that a majoritarian democracy would destroy the talent and virtue of individuals who are few but are 'the salt of the earth'¹ and also his contempt for majority opinion, and it becomes clear how in Mill's scheme of things majority will is a threat to democracy of his variety. However, Mill's magnificent defense of plurality and non-conformity in public life is of enduring importance to democracy.

Democracy has travelled a long distance since Mill's time and settled itself to be the rule of majority. A persistent struggle on the part of working classes, women, colonial people and the blacks for civil rights ultimately establishes the majority principle of democracy. Majority principle, at least, means that majority matters, majority

involves itself actively and deliberately in civic affairs. It also means that wishes and aspirations of the majority are articulated so that democracy reflects the struggle against domination and suppression of the majority. The mythical belief in the apathy, callousness and inaction of the common man² has disappeared in liberal democracy and has given way to a more social and more rational belief in the nature of the collective opinion of the majority. It is accepted now that collective public opinion of people is rational, stable and real because it tends to assume a coherent pattern and it is the result of intercommunication among government, social and media elites and among elites and the people³. But what is, in theory, the principle of democracy, in practice is a contrived device by which the majority is manipulated, cajoled and hoodwinked. The recent history has shown that the majority principle is invoked by the minority to legitimize its rule. Hitler and Mussolini were as much democratic as they held periodic elections, obtained majority votes in those elections, could appeal to the emotion of the majority (distorted and illusive emotion) and could draw huge gatherings. Mussolini was said to harbour a sort of aversion to the masses and he admitted that the people were for him like wax which he could mould in the way he liked. The workers and the Jews who constituted the majority of the German people were the worst sufferers during Hitler's regime⁴. Hitler and Mussolini were off-shoots of the western liberal root.

The western liberal democracy in spite of its professed majority principle represents the particular interests of industry, trade and military, not that of people. There are two basic traits of the liberal democracy. First is its emphasis on autonomy or sovereignty of isolated and atomised individual and its upholding of inviolable individual freedoms. Whatever may be the justifying ground of the individual freedoms i.e. natural rights, utility, rational choice etc. the individual is reduced to a consumer in the market pursuing or promoting his particular and private interests. The other basic trait of liberal democracy is its close association or even sometime affiliation with the free market. Free market needs a minimal state and the liberal democracy provides it. Market needs absolute freedom of the individual at least in the economic sphere and liberal democracy upholds it. Market needs the majority people as consumers and free supplier of labour and liberal

democracy liberated the common man from the bondage of feudal institutions and introduced him as a free man. For such a view liberal democracy is the political arrangement of the market society.

The atomistic view of individual and the market basis of democracy are prominent in the theories of several apologists of liberal democracy⁵. Schumpeter rejects the principle of majority rule in democracy and proceeds on the assumptions of the entrepreneurial initiatives of capitalism but came to the absurd conclusion of capitalism leading to socialism without a view of social production and class war. He is called bourgeois Marx⁶. Schumpeter emphasizes that democracy is an arrangement for individuals to acquire power by means of competitive struggle for people's vote. So democracy and people's vote are means for individual's power⁷.

Berlin defines liberty as the absence of coercion on the individual's free actions and finds the concept of positive liberty as the threat to individual freedom. In his arguments the whole gamut of positive liberty developed by T.H. Green and others has been reduced to an instrument for denying freedom to individual's⁸.

Anthony Downs who constructs an economic theory of democracy in the same vein as the theory of market operation in economics, assumes that in the political world or democratic realm an individual behaves rationally so far he applies efficient means for his end and for Downs the end is the control over public policies, which he calls power. But power that Downs posits as the end is devoid of its ideological implications. In this scheme politician acts rationally by pursuing power and voter acts rationally by maximizing his interests by voting for a party that benefits him most. On the basis of such assumptions Downs makes an analysis of functional behaviour of voters and parties in a market democracy and concludes how it tends to equilibrium. Such an analysis of democracy which may be called a real world picture of the American democracy makes democracy the most sterile subject to talk about. Downs is an example of how an economist guided by principles of market economy does not appreciate the power of an ideal⁹. Our analysis of Downs' work may also apply with little modification to the works of certain behaviouralists on democracy, such as that of Dahl¹⁰.

A stalwart of the conservative liberalism in the latter half of the twentieth century, F.A. Hayek believes that the growth of society is

undesigned and is founded on unconcious combinations of countless persons. Only basic principle behind this development is unrestrained liberty of individuals. Hayek opposes any interference with individual liberty and for that matter collective planning¹¹. He believes in the same old theory that the extent of knowledge that an individual can master, when he is left free is the highest. Hayek goes beyond Mill in upholding a private sphere of individual's action. But it lacks the grandeur of Mill's arguments¹². Hayek makes individual completely free to leave him in the clutches of market. M. Friedman is more candid in equating democracy with capitalism. He asserts that capitalism alone can ensure individual freedom. For Friedman economic freedom is also an indispensable means towards the achievement of political freedom¹³.

The type of freedom that liberal democracy guarantees is possible in the capitalist economy only, it did not exist in any other forms of economy of the past and did not exist in the socialist economy as well. That freedom is not to be denounced but to be widened to make it meaningful for the average common man in the society. Liberal democracy has the promise to do it, though its exponents that we are discussing now do not admit it.

Another exponent of minimal state and liberal democracy, Robert Nozick starts with the assumption of natural inequality of men as better endowed and worse endowed. The scheme of operation in a democracy is an imposition on the better endowed. Democracy is compatible with minimal state only leaving individual absolutely free to pursue his goal. Nozick calls his democracy morally legitimate because it does not allow the individual to be used by others as a means of instrument¹⁴. It is like the Glauconian argument sophisticated and designed to fit the modern liberal democratic market society.

If liberal democracy presupposes a market society, it cannot provide for effective freedom of the majority of people simply because market economy cannot flourish without an insecure and bare living for the vast majority of people (thirty five million unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries alone). Unbridled economy results in massive inequality of wealth and inequality of wealth results in inequality of freedom in the society.

The last couple of years in the eighties of this century witnessed deconstruction of the communist regimes of the Soviet-Union and the Eastern Europe, collapse of the labour movements in Western Europe and the ultimate triumph of the western capitalism and liberal democracy. A philosophical analysis of this development with the Hegelian concepts is presented by Francis Fukuyama¹⁵. Fukuyama views the present development as the culmination of humankind's historical evolution. There is no alternative to the western liberal democracy because the communism has already failed, the Islamic fundamentalism and the eastern authoritarianism seem to be the passing phase of history. The western way of life prevails for mankind. Applying Hegel's concept of recognition, Fukuyama implies that liberal democracy satisfies the desire for recognition to every individual. Man's struggle for recognition on the earth is finally won in the free market society of the west. Fukuyama works on a larger plan than the other exponents of liberal free market society but his basic contention is the same with them. Liberal democracy is identical with capitalism and it is the only path for humankind to travel and no other alternative is there.

Democracy has so far been identified with liberal democracy. But in its origin democracy has another current springing from the Rousseauian tradition which is characterised by the social concept of individual freedom and by the notion of a distinction between the true human needs and the artificially created human needs. The Rousseauian tradition persisted in the democratic thought and was asserted by such diverse thinkers as T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, Harold J. Laski, J.K. Galbraith, J.W. Chapman, John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, M. Walzer and C.B. Macpherson. For this tradition freedom is more a positive concept than mere absence of restrictions and is closely related to social justice. It may look jumble to club these thinkers with so different ideas. Without violating the autonomy of individual which is regarded as the basic principle of liberal democracy these thinkers have attempted different relation between individual freedoms and social regulations. T.H. Green¹⁶ and L.T. Hobhouse¹⁷, associate freedom with virtue. Freedom as a moral virtue finds meaning in society alone and can be realized in living with others or in individual's participation in the life of the community, Harold J. Laski being a radical liberal argues for

opportunities for expression of autonomy and creativity of the individual, economic equality and full and just utilization of resources of society¹⁸. On the other hand, a moderate liberal democrat, John W. Chapman attempts to place the criteria of economic rationality, moral freedom and justice in juxtaposition in a model of liberal democracy. Taxations and welfare services by the state constitute the method that Chapman approves¹⁹.

John Rawls is perhaps the tallest figure in the liberal democratic thinking of today. Rawls makes a serious attempt to rationalize freedom by linking it with equality. The foundation of Rawls's democracy is that every person should be ensured equal freedoms compatible with similar freedoms of others and inequalities are permitted if they are to the everyone's advantage and positions and offices are open to all. The government is assigned the role of regulating economy to keep market competitive, resources fully employed, property and wealth widely distributed²⁰. In spite of his inconsistencies, it must be admitted that Rawls's emphasis on social context of freedom and his concern for a just society based on freedoms for all, particularly he is speaking from an unfriendly environment, go a long way in reviving an ideological basis of liberal democracy in the west. Rawls's influence is prominent on Dworkin who though disagrees with Rawls on utilitarian principles, argues that rights ultimately emanate from the concept of equality²¹.

Rawls's second principles conditioning inequalities has led Walzer to prescribe a scheme of distributive justice. Different spheres of public life are to be separated on the basis of goods to be served and criteria of distribution in any sphere will be determined by the social meaning of the goods. An overall equality covering all the spheres of public life will prevail and this he calls absence of dominances. If two individuals are unequal in one sphere this should not place one at an advantageous position over the other in other spheres of public life²².

C.B. Macpherson is not a theorist of liberal democracy but a critic of it and he is the most radical critic of it from within the liberal democratic world. Like Harold J. Laski, he permits certain Marxist notions to permeate through his critique. The notion that the capitalism is distinguished from any other economy by separation of labour from capital and the notion that control over matter leads to control or

domination over men and the application of class to analyse the nature of liberal democratic society are distinctively Marxist notions in Macpherson's analysis. His analysis of possessive individualism the origin of which he traces to Locke, which identifies freedom with possession, considers society as a relation of exchange or market relation of individuals and democracy as a device for protection of property is in tune with the Marxist interpretation. Still he remains within the liberal democratic tradition and refuses to accept the Soviet model as the viable alternative to the liberal democracy.

Macpherson closely examines the shifts in justifying assumptions of liberal democratic theory and points out their deficiencies. While accepting the claim that liberal democratic society maximizes men's human power, he insists that man's human power depends on his access to means of exerting his capacities. Macpherson's definition of democracy stipulates "equal effective right of individuals to live as fully as they may wish"²³.

Macpherson's rejection of traditional liberal theory but at the same time his hopeful note of a post-liberal democratic theory is marked by his arguing his case at a time of sublimation of cold-war and universal acceptance of the welfare state concept and emergence of the two third of the world as challenge to liberal democratic culture of the west. Since that has become a nostalgic past one cannot be as radical and optimistic at present as Macpherson. The fall of communism and the invasion of the two-third of the world by the ideology of free market make things tough for liberal democracy to create another Macpherson.

The other important characteristic of the current of democracy emanating from the Rousseauian tradition is the notion of a distinction between real human wants and artificially created human wants. Artificially created human wants make man slave to the forces that create them. Systematic exposition of this view is often noticed in thinking outside the purview of liberal democratic tradition. However, it also finds expression in the views of certain liberal democratic thinkers, one of them is J.K. Galbraith²⁴.

In a market society human wants are created by market, human choice is manipulated by market. When competition gives way to monopolistic control of market by large corporations, they produce

even when there is affluence and they control the media to manipulate and shape consumer's choice. Freedom of the consumer is reduced to fallacy. All the wants that market produces and imposes on men are artificial wants and they have no moral basis like the wants which men inherently acquire. If democracy involves real choice of individual, liberal democracy with market cannot ensure it.

In our discussion we have implicitly set two models of liberal democracy - libertarian model and majoritarian model. American system of democracy which dominates the world of democracy today and which attempts to export democracy to other nations through the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the multi-national corporations is more pronounced of the libertarian model. Louis Hartz considers the American system the model that any society in the world aspires to be because it is here alone everyone has the mentality of an independent entrepreneur and the masses are bound to be both capitalistic and democratic²⁵. The monadic concept of individual is to the core of the American democracy. But Philip Slater explains how the American way of life is, in fact, inimical to the idea of inter-dependence on which every human society is based²⁶.

The architects of the American system derived their impetus from the natural rights concept of the Lockean tradition. Tocqueville's apprehension of the tyranny of the majority did cast a permanent spell over the development of the American system. The supremacy of the absolute rights of the individual particularly the property rights, the constitutional provisions of checks and balance, the concept of due process of law implying the idea of natural rights are the logical conclusion of the Lockean tradition.

Though it is doubtful how these two models of democracy are essentially different, still we suggest that the westminster type and the democracy in general in Europe have assumed more elements of the majoritarian model because there were strong currents of progressive thought and movements, particularly trade union movements both within the purview of democracy and also outside it which left lasting influence on liberal democracy and some of these elements were well-accomodated within the fold of liberal democracy. The origin and growth of the British Labour Party is

one example of it and the socialists sharing power in liberal democracy at several European countries is another example.

But the American system was deprived of such an experience. American isolation from the events of Europe except those that shaped its war of independence, American prosperity resulting in its super power status contributed to the present development. Socialist movement did not take roots in the USA, the progressive thinking remained there outside the purview of the thinking of liberal democracy. Norman Thomas, Herbert Marcuse, Noam Chomsky could receive limited audience only. The civil rights movement and the organized opinion against American involvement in Vietnam could make the system responsive but were not adequate to bring any lasting change. The New-Deal of the thirties was entirely reversed by the Reagan administration of the eighties of the century. On the other hand, the intellectual movements of the twentieth century, that sprouted in the USA, like pragmatism and the behaviouralism had overtones of a conservative ideology.

The purpose of distinguishing between majoritarian and libertarian democracy is to emphasize how libertarian democracy pursues a narrow and limited scope of individual freedom. The libertarian democracy ensures individual a set of economic freedoms and all other freedoms that an individual may claim become auxiliary or appendix to economic freedoms. Economic freedoms are the basic for the success in market and other freedoms are important so far they have anything to do to promote or facilitate the opportunities in a free market. With such a limited view of freedom libertarian democracy cannot be a substitute for democracy. Freedom also implies freedom from domination. The distinction between private and public spheres of individual's life is now rejected from the perspective that family which represents the private sphere of individual's life represents as much domination as in society. Democracy for a woman means liberation from patriarchy in the family as well as in the society.

The question we have posed is how democracy can be meaningful to the majority people, how it can serve the majority instead of the possessing minority, how can the majority effectively and without being manipulated by others on economic interests, on sheer purpose of domination or on religious, caste, ethnic

affiliations, participate in the life of the community. We have attempted to demonstrate how democracy has been identified with market, capital and minimal state, how in the name of freedom of choice the common man's wants have been subjected to manipulation by big corporations. Democracy as the participation of the majority people in the life of the community is a strange notion for the libertarian democracy²⁷.

But democracy is still the catch-word for people living in the areas which are miles away in their economic condition and social life from the western way of life. Democracy is introduced to these people as the opportunity to participate in the life of the community as its equal members and the opportunity to express their voice in the formulation of public policy. The notion of equality, the notion of participation and the notion of shared public life cut at the very root of the tradition of domination, suppression and exploitation prevalent in the non-western societies.

But the realization of democracy in the non-western societies is thwarted by forces inimical to democratic principles; some of these forces are traditional like those resorting to fundamentalism and castism by taking advantage of mass illiteracy and poverty and others are modern unleashed by market and flow of indiscriminate foreign capital through multinational corporations into these societies. The latter forces resort to abuse of technology, as we have said, to make man slave of it, foster consumerism and nurture corruption in public life. The result is, in stead of active and effective participation of majority in public life, there is a growing sense of skepticism and estrangement among the people towards public life.

In conclusion we suggest that democracy should involve a wide range of freedoms for the individual, the purpose of freedom being to make the individual the best out of him or her and to recognize that every individual being an end in himself or herself. The purpose of freedom can be realized through active involvement of the individual in the life of the community. We have defined it as majority principle to distinguish it from Rousseau's general will which is a romantic myth. In our scheme the individual is not submerzed in the community or the majority. Rather it is to be said as the individual 'internalizing' the community. The individual

embodies the community in him not the community embodying the individual. Democracy centres round such an idea of individual's freedom and the individual.

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RELEVANCE OF GRAMSCI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Girin Phukon

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) has been the most important Marxist thinker after Marx and Lenin. The Prison Notebooks and his pre-prison writings bears the testimony of his philosophical genius¹. Gramsci's thought and his writings were the product of an exceptional specific national and international conditions. The post-first World War crisis, the emergence of facism in Italy, establishment of Italian Communist Party and the policy of the comintern towards facism greatly influenced his political thought. He has been credited with formulation of a strategy for communist parties of the developed states of the West. His ideas appeared to have offered a radical alternative to social democracy and autocratic party bureaucracy of the socialist countries. This view provided legitimacy for the Eurocommunist movement of the 1970s and early 80s. But now the question as to how far Gramsci's political ideas having distinctive Italian demension of his time could be relevant to-day and particularly even after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union? In order to examine this question, the paper is, however, limited to the understanding of Gramsci's ideas on two basic issues of Marxism i.e. problem of (i) economic determinism and (ii) revolutionary strategy. Indeed, it would be an interesting point to examine how Gramsci refutes the traditional view of Marxism on these issues. Since both these problems are interconnected and interdependent, they are virtually tagged together for discussion.

II

The traditional Marxism believes that the separation between the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of the social whole is 'artificial' and 'arbitrary'. The notion that 'economics' is

free from 'politics' and vice versa is an ideological 'abstraction' and 'distortion'². Further, it emphatically argues that there is no such thing as 'economics' but only as 'political economy' in which the political element is an ever present component³. In fact, politics is the pervasive articulation of social conflict, particularly of class conflict i.e. economic class. Thus the basic contention of classical Marxism⁴ is that the economic base is "the real foundation on which rises a legal, political and cultural superstructure and which correspond definite forms of social consciousness"⁵. As such superstructure comprises a broad spectrum of political, religious and cultural practices as ideological forms. Writing about this, Marx stated :

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness⁶.

It clearly indicates that according to Marx politics is 'determined' and 'conditioned' by the economic factors. This turns Marxism into an 'economic determinism' which deprives 'politics' of substantial degree of autonomy. Thus capitalism is seen as a development towards economic crisis and collapse as the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production become acute. The economistic approach has become prominent as a result of widespread use of the metaphor "base and superstructure" which is derived from Marx's famous prefaces to the *Contribution to Critique of Political Economy*⁷. In this perspective, developments are understood in terms of economic base, whereas political struggles are considered only as a part of the superstructure erected on the base. Economism, as such is a kind of interpretation of Marxism which implies that political developments are expression of economic development.

Since the beginning, Marxist theory has suffered from the defect of 'economism'. It has prevented an accurate understanding of the nature of capitalist domination, and the strategy required to end it for establishing socialism. As such Marxism and Leninism failed to work out a theory linking between class struggles and popular democratic movement when capitalism has been relatively stable. In periods of stability, there has been a tendency to revert to an economic approach. The complexity of social democracy with its rightist and leftist tendencies has been simplified and understood in terms of 'class' only. This in turn become an obstacle for the furtherance of revolutionary socialist movement. Similarly international communist movement was deeply imbued with a form of economism which reduced the popular movements and struggles to purely 'class struggle'. Since then the 'economism' came to be understood in terms of 'class reductionism'. Lenin, however, denounced the reductionist approach, and characterised it as the fundamental political tendency of economism which believes in saying "let the workers carry on the economic struggle and let the Marxist intelligentsia merge with the liberals for the political struggle"⁸. Though Lenin criticised economism, there were important limitations in his approach too.

Marxists define the state as 'an instrument of the ruling class' and as a machine for the repression of one class by another. It implies that parliamentary democracy under capitalism is a dictatorship over the working class. In a socialist revolution it is required to destroy the parliamentary democratic state and replace it by a fundamentally different type of state in which dictatorship of the proletariat over the capitalist will prevail. Thus Lenin assumed that there is a mechanical relation between economic structure and changes in the form of the state. The appropriate form of state for capitalism is parliamentary democracy, while for socialism it is a kind of direct democracy. The Marxist and Leninist theory of parliamentary democracy has been a serious obstacle for the communist parties engaged in the popular front. If parliamentary regimes were instruments of bourgeois domination, the support of the communists to it was only tactical. Otherwise, the Communists were permanently committed to parliamentary democracy of a capitalist brand. The solution of this contradiction still left

the theoretical issues of the nature of democracy, and the relation between socialism and democracy unresolved. It may further be noted that according to Marx, the misery of capitalism could be removed only through socialism, as the next stage of social development of the human society. His projection was that the first successful socialist revolution must occur in the developed industrial capitalist countries of the west. However, Marx's postulated socialist revolution did not occur in those countries - Why? Gramsci, provides an answer to this question.

III

In fact, Antonio Gramsci shows how the full potentiality of Lenin's critique of Economism could be realised and the limitation of Marxism could be overcome. The connecting theme of much of Gramsci's work is that of 'economism'. In his view, the problem of economism is a theoretical question which has fundamental practical relevance. It is assumed that economistic theory leads to errors in political practice. As a result, a great deal of Gramsci's work is devoted to examining the alleged practical effect of economistic theory. The political event of the post first World War period merely underlined for him the fact that economistic theories of capitalistic breakdown were untenable⁹. Gramsci therefore, emphasises the dialectical interaction, the mutual determinism and the ceaseless process of development within and between reality. In his writings he campaigns against economism in Marxist theory as well as political practice. He is a determined opponent of economic determinism within the traditional Marxian debates. As such, Gramsci repeatedly attacks the reductionist interpretation of *base and superstructure*. He argues superstructure is evolved on the basis of structure. Thus he maintains :

A class is formed on the basis of its function in the mode of production; development and the struggle for power, for the conservation of power, creates superstructures that determine the formation of a special material structure (of the superstructure)¹⁰.

It appears that Gramsci is not associated with the view that the superstructure is directly and only conditioned by the economic system. His main thrust of argument is that while the base is the ultimate

determinant of social change, the ideological factors also play a vital role as they provide the consciousness of contradictions existing between the base and the superstructure. Therefore, Gramsci refutes the simplistic and mechanistic logic that relationship between the base and the superstructure is like that of the relationship between the cause and effect. Thus he observes :

The claim presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented as an immediate expression of the structure must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx, the author of the concrete political and historical works¹¹.

It seems evident that Gramsci recognises the relative autonomy of the political and ideological power of the state from the economic structure. In view of this, he may be regarded as the first Marxist to challenge the mechanistic base and superstructure model of politics. Accordingly he provides a rigorous redrafting of Marxist theory of state¹². Gramsci's elaboration of his famous concept of *hegemony* is in large part an alternative formulation of economic interpretation of the base and superstructure relationship and as such it provides an alternative strategy for socialist revolution.

In fact, the core of Gramsci's work is largely connected with the concept of *hegemony*. It refers to a relation between classes and fraction of classes where one group exercises leadership over another by gaining active consent. Hegemony, therefore is a relation, not of domination by force, but of consent by means of intellectual and moral leadership. Gramsci highlights the distinction between domination and intellectual of moral leadership when he asserts that :

A social group can, indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well¹³.

The concept of *hegemony*, thus refers to the leadership too. As such, Gramsci asserts that the proletariat must seek to exert influence over other potentially allied classes such as the peasants, by getting them to

identify with its interest through political and ideological means and not by pursuing a narrow self-interested policy¹⁴. He is of the firm view that the working class can only develop into a hegemonic class by taking into account the interest of other classes and social forces and combining them with its own interest. Thus he observes :

The proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliance which allows it to mobilise the majority of the population against capitalism and the bourgeois state¹⁵.

More importantly, hegemony implies the organization of the cultural, moral and ideological consent of the population to the prevailing political and economic system through the institution of civil society such as schools, cultural association, churches trade unions and political parties etc.; as well as the family. Civil society is the sphere where capitalists, working classes and others involves in political and ideological struggle. Therefore, it is in civil society that the struggle for hegemony between the two fundamental classes take place. Although it is related to the realm of politics and relatively autonomous from the economic sphere, Gramsci insists that true hegemony could only be exercised by a class that is dominant economically¹⁶. It appears that he considers the establishment of hegemony as a necessary condition of the effective functioning of any regime whether it be bourgeois or proletarian.

It may be noted that Lenin also understood hegemony in terms of an alliance of classes. Gramsci, however, has added new dimension to it which he called 'national popular'. According to this concept a class cannot achieve national leadership and become hegemonic, if it confines itself only to class interest. It must take into account, Gramsci asserts, the popular and democratic demands and struggles of the people which may not have a class character¹⁷. Thus he argues that the movement for civil liberties, national liberation, women's emancipation; and movements of ethnic groups and students have their own specific qualities which cannot be reduced to class struggle. Thus hegemony has both national popular and class dimensions. It, therefore requires, Gramsci believes, the unification of various social forces into a broad democratic

alliance expressing *national popular* collective will preserving their own autonomy and contributing towards the advancement of socialism. This strategy of building up a broad block of different social forces has been called by Gramsci as *war of position*¹⁸. In fact, the struggle for the establishment of hegemony is a pre-condition of an effective socialist politics. Perhaps, for this reason, Gramsci insists that an effective socialist politics has the objective of mobilizing support on a 'national popular' basis. It is, however, suggested that the struggle for hegemony will be decisive both before and after the revolutionary process. The very process of socialist transformation is a kind of hegemonic struggle. The struggle for hegemony will even take place after the seizure of the state power which will shape the nature of regulated civil society under socialism. Thus it is obvious that Gramsci treats socialist transformation as more of a process than an event.

IV

From the above discussion it clearly emerges that Gramsci is critical of the economic determinism of traditional Marxism and reductionist interpretation of base and superstructures. As against determinism, Gramsci counterposes his notion of the social formation. This approach investigates social realm as the ensemble of relations. For him, Marxian theory's concept of the concrete real is, that of an ensemble of relations understood to be constituted as a necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure. This reciprocity is real dialectical process. Thus it appears that Gramsci made a unique attempt to develop a Marxist understanding of *super structural* question relating, in particular, to the cultural and political domain of society. Gramsci's basic strategic proposition is the long term ideological struggle i.e. a *war of position*. He firmly believes that this will become increasingly important to socialist politics in modern capitalist society. The concept of *war of position* has crucial place in Gramsci's theory. While on the strategic level, it is an attempt to correct the error of economism, on the theoretical level it is closely connected with the concept of *hegemony*. Gramsci is convinced that the bourgeois rule not only by the force of power but also by establishing their ideological and intellectual hegemony over other social strata. He wants the working class to challenge this by

building up a counter hegemony and producing a new breed of intellectuals of their own what he called "elite of intellectuals of a new type"¹⁹. Indeed, he desires to create the superstructure of the modern secular state with the hegemony of a new ideology which can overwhelm the counter hegemony of a rival ideology and force. Therefore, the Gramscian conception of the need of hegemony of a new culture to create a fresh society and consciousness has not lost its relevance even to-day.

Thus, Gramsci's concept of hegemony forms the most distinctive feature of his renewed Marxism. Its associated concept of civil society as the sphere of class and popular-democratic struggle contesting for hegemony between the two fundamental classes adds a new dimension to Marxism. It provides a solution to the problems of socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries of the west. He however, distinguishes the revolutionary strategies required in the developed states of advanced industrial western countries, from those suited to the less complex states of peripheral western nations such as the Italy. At any rate, since the struggle for a broad democratic alliance forms the central theme of Gramsci's conception of *hegemony* it recognises that popular democratic struggle and the parliamentary institutions do not have a necessary class character rather they are a "terrain for political struggle" between the two major classes - working class and the capitalist class²⁰. In order to advance socialism, therefore the labour movement has to link the popular democratic struggle with socialist objective to achieve a position of national leadership what Gramsci called *hegemony*. As such the chief achievement of Gramsci is to reinterpret the concept of *hegemony* which had been pioneered by Lenin. Thus it appears that his conception of *hegemony*, *civil society* and other related ideas are still considered to be relevant because they provide an answer to the question as to why there has been no social transformation in the advanced capitalist countries despite having objective conditions for a revolutionary change ? Further, more importantly, the rise of social movements such as the growing militancy in the trade unions, terrorist movements, students' movement, the new wave of feminism, the ecology movement and a great variety of community movements have made the Gramsci's political thought relevant for a serious academic exercise.

Notes and References :

1. It needs to mention that Gramsci was the general secretary of the Italian Communist Party during 1924-26 when he involved in intense political activity and organised movement against Mussolini's Fascist regime. For this reason, he was arrested on November 18, 1926 and remained in captivity till April, 1937. Although Gramsci was released from jail as a result of pressure of International public opinion due to his acute illness, he died after three days of his release. In spite of difficult condition in the prison, and the lack of any Marxist literature, he succeeded in writing 2,848 pages in 33 Notebooks between 1926 and 1935. After this he could not write any more due to his ill health. The fragmented and scattered nature of the prison writings of Gramsci were published during 1948-51 in six volumes which came to be known as the Prison Notebooks. In addition to these, Gramsci's Pre-prison writings are also being published in recent years. See, Richard Bellamy (ed.); *Antonio Gramsci : Pre-prison writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1994.).
2. Ralph Miliband; *Marxism and politics* (Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin which were product of specific circumstances having theoretical orientation of politics may be called classical Marxism.
5. Karl Marx and F. Engels : *Selected Works* Vol. No. 1 (Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962) p. 503.
6. Preface to "A contribution to the critique of Political Economy" in Karl Marx and F. Engels. *Selected Works*, London, p. 182.
7. *Ibid.*
8. V.I. Lenin; *What is to be done ? Against Revisionism* (Progressive publishers, Moscow, 1972. p. 48.)
9. Les Johnston ; *Marxism, class Analysis and socialist pluralism*, Allen & Unwin, London 1986. p. 59.
10. A. Gramsci : Selection from Prison Notebooks (edited and translated by Q. Hoare and N. Smith) London, 1971 cited in Aditi Misra; *Political Philosophy of Antonio Gramsci* (New Delhi, 1991) p. 131.
11. *Ibid.* p. 133.
12. See details Carl Boggs ; *Gramsci's marxism* (London, 1976) p. 12
13. Selection from the Prison Notebooks. *op cit.* p. 57. cited in R. Simon; *Gramsci's political thought* (London, 1988) p. 22.

14. Richard Bellamy (ed); *Pre-prison Writings, op cit.* p. 37.
15. A. Gramsci; *Selection from political Writings, 1910-20*, edited by Q. Hoare, London, 1977, p. 443. cited in R. Simon, *Gramsci's Political thought op cit.* p. 23.
16. Richard Bellamy (ed.); *Pre-prison writings. op.cit.*
17. R. Simon; *op.cit.* p. 24.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Sondip Bandyopadhyay; "Education; Gramsci and Freire" *FRONTIER* Vol. 27, 1994. p. 59.
20. R. Simon : *op. cit.* p. 18.

LEON TROTSKY AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Archana Upadhyay

Leon Devidovich Trotsky was the man who was largely responsible for the triumph of the Russian Revolution and for its survival when sixteen foreign armies attacked the infant Soviet republic from every side¹. A towering figure, giving orders, commanding armies, spinning theories, shaping and organizing the republic, there was hardly any corner of it that did not bear the stamp of the intelligence. He was not only Lenin's close comrade in arms but also latter's, designated successor². He was a revolutionary, statesman commander of the Red Army, a political strategist of a high order, the author of twenty books and a man whose brilliance shown out with remarkable clarity. Of all the Russian revolutionaries, without doubt, he was the one with the most clear-cut intelligence and the most philosophical turn of mind.

Born on 26 October 1879, Trotsky's political career began rather very early in life, when he was arrested in 1898 and sent to Siberia for having organized an underground group. It was in course of his imprisonment that Trotsky became a Marxist. The 1905 revolution in Russia saw Trotsky rise to towering heights. His brief stint as the last President of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers Deputies, established him as a leader and revolutionary of rare calibre. In 1906, he was sent to Siberia for the second time from where he escaped to Vienna where from between 1908-12 he edited the *Pravda*, the mouthpiece of the Bolsheviks. After developing his theory of 'permanent revolution', Trotsky found himself closer to the Bolsheviks on matters of ideology, but closer to the Mensheviks on the question of party organization³. On his arrival in revolutionary Russian in May 1917, he declared his solidarity with the Bolsheviks and when Lenin was forced to go into hiding

he became the dominant figure in the party. He became the President of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and as Chairman of the Military-Revolutionary Committee he master-minded the October Revolution⁴.

As people's Commissar for Foreign Affairs he took part in the negotiations with the Central powers for the peace of Brest-Litovsk. When his policy of "neither war nor peace" failed, he resigned from this post⁵. Next he took control of the people's Commissariat of war and in a relatively short period of time, he founded the Red Army. Soon after Lenin's death, Trotsky was isolated from the rest of the party and towards the height of Stalinism, Trotsky became a forgotten man. History was re-written to avoid any mention of his name and by Stalin's orders he was reduced to a non-entity. But, the more the Soviet Government attempted to silence him, the louder became his voice resulting in his expulsion from the Communist party in 1928 and finally his assassination on August 20, 1940.

TROTSKY IN THE MAINSTREAM

a. The Theory of Permanent Revolution.

Developed between 1904 and 1906, this theory ranks as the most important contribution of Trotsky to Marxism and is often regarded as synonymous with Trotskyism. Although the expression "revolution in permanence" comes from Marx (address of the Central Committee to the Communist League in Marx, Engels SW, Vol.-I), it was also used by Lenin and Franz Mehring in 1905. What is specific and new in Trotsky's theory is the radical nature of the series of arguments with which he sought to prove that agrarian Russia - from a purely chronological point of view - could in fact spearhead the world revolutionary movement.

Understanding the prevailing reality in Russia, Trotsky pointed to the fact that Russia was still very far from being an industrial state - a necessary pre-requisite for the building of socialism, according to Marxian theory⁶. Most part of the Russian industry was supported by foreign capital. The state itself was a substantial participant in the economy with the largest single interest in mining and metallurgy besides owning extensive colliers, oilfields and gold mines. It also owned two third of the railway networks. Thus, in the heavily populated areas of Russia, he argued, it was the proletariat which gave the cities their character, a large bourgeoisie

not as yet having emerged. The peasants though potentially a reservoir for revolution, were too unlightened and too widely dispersed throughout the country to be rallied together for concerted action⁷. As Trotsky saw it, the Russian revolution would thus be reduced to a confrontation between two parties the proletariat and the autocracy. The sole guarantee that the programme of bourgeois revolution would be carried out, was according to Trotsky, a dictatorship of the proletariat. He argued that the revolution was to be and would remain, bourgeois in its aims but would be proletarian in its methods. This meant that the representatives of the petite bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the intelligentsia would be permitted to participate in the new regime on condition that the proletariat kept the reins of government in its hands. This stage being attained, the proletariat, by skilful propaganda was to wrench the rural population from its apathy. The new regime would have to approve the seizure of land, support strikes to combat the employers and even disposses them in certain circumstances. These measures would unavoidably transform the bourgeois revolution to a socialist revolution. This would be the first stage of the socialist revolution. The first real difficulty would be faced by the new regime when collectivization would begin resulting in the narrowing of the support base of the new dictatorship. The only solution would be in a revolution in the West. The revolutionary Spark from Russia would ignite the European power keg. In this way the circle of permanent revolution would be complete : the bourgeois revolution would pass over into a proletarian revolution and the proletarian-national revolution into an international one⁸.

Lenin alone came close to adopting Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, but he was too well-founded in Marxism to be able to gloss over its theoretical principles as lightly as Trotsky. Like him, Lenin too invested the proletariat with the leadership of the revolution. According to his theory the bourgeois, democratic and socialist revolutions were so closely linked that one would inevitably lead to the next, but unlike Trotsky he did not run the different stages together⁹. The real difference between their respective theories is reflected in the slogans "revolutionary - democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" (Lenin) and "dictatorship of the proletariat" (Trotsky). On the surface, Lenin appears to place the peasants on the same level as the workers.

Dismissing Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as an

"absurd leftist" phrase, Lenin claimed that Trotsky had no appreciation of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, that he had overlooked the bourgeois - democratic character of the forthcoming revolution in Russia and that he had no clear idea of how the socialist revolution would supercede the bourgeois one¹⁰. But in the year immediately following the October Revolution Trotsky's theory was in no way a source of contention within the party. His pamphlet *Results and Perspectives* was published in Moscow in 1919 without any member of the party leadership expressing misgivings.

b. Party Question

In the beginning Trotsky manifested very little interest in the party question being strongly imbued with the belief that history would of its own accord lead to socialism. His trust in the elemental force of society and in the logic of history inevitably brought him into conflict with Lenin who forcibly put forward his belief that only a strictly organized party could guarantee the success of the revolution. In his *Our Political Tasks*, a work directed against Lenin, Trotsky stated that the party must be broadly based with the workers being allowed to take the initiatives¹¹. He warned that the division of the party into a central will and a powerful executive apparatus would lead not to a dictatorship of the proletariat but to a dictatorship over the proletariat¹². The Revolution of 1905 had confirmed Trotsky's belief that the organization of the social-democratic party would develop almost automatically just by keeping pace with the political developments. The Soviets then had sprung up spontaneously and Trotsky remarked with Lenin in mind, they were not conspiratorial groups which had carefully laid their plans in advance, but were the spontaneous expression of the will of the masses¹³.

But Trotsky was far from dispensing altogether with a party to lead the masses. However, he did come to the conclusion that it was possible to create a party which would merely have to raise the unarticulated strivings of the workers to the level of a conscious will and channel it into the right course. With his own conception of a broad based party tolerating wide freedom of opinion, he opposed the Bolshevik ideal of a strictly disciplined party. According to Trotsky neither the Bolsheviks nor the Mensheviks had their roots in the people. The true party which would unite both factions once the extreme elements in each had been expelled

would have to be a mass organization¹⁴.

After the October Revolution, Trotsky unconditionally defended the one party rule of the Bolsheviks. As a leading figure in the Bolshevik party he seemed to have lost all his misgivings concerning the use of those Jacobin methods which Lenin had at one time demanded. At the height of the purges Trotsky took the view that room must be made for two, three or even four parties.

III

THE DEBATE OVER STALIN'S DOCTRINE OF "SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY"

In accordance with the theoretical principles of Marxism, in the years immediately following the October Revolution, the Russian Communists including Stalin held the view that socialism could only be achieved through the combined efforts of a large number of industrial countries. In December 1920, Stalin declared his intention of building socialism in one country for the first time¹⁵. The slogan "socialism in one country" was clearly contrived to meet the needs of the then prevailing situation. With hopes of a world revolution having been evaporated, the theory of "socialism in one country" appealed to the Russian vanity, promised them a special role in the world, inspired optimism and reinforced their national self esteem¹⁶. Describing it as a unique kind of "national socialism" Trotsky drew attention to the dangers of this new phenomena. Trotsky firmly believed in what he called the world revolution. In his own words :

The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable... The socialist revolution begins on the national area, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet¹⁷.

In reality, Stalin's way of putting his theory of socialism in one country into practice represented a considerable departure from the internationalism of the early Leninist period. In the course of the 1920's the Communist International originally founded as an offensive weapon in the struggle for revolution was reduced into an instrument of national defence. Trotsky tried repeatedly to represent Stalin's Comintern policy as a sequence of blunders.

IV

THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED.

In his criticism of Stalinism, Trotsky was principally disturbed with the defective state administrative machinery which he regarded as nothing more than a relic of Tsarist officialdom. Pointing at the character of Soviet Union under Stalin, Trotsky described it as a contradictory society half between capitalism, in which : (a) the productive forces were still far from adequate to give the state property a socialist character¹⁸; (b) the tendency towards primitive accumulation created by wants emerged through innumerable dents of the planned economy; (c) pattern of distribution preserved the bourgeois character of the state; (d) the economic growth promoting the swift formation of a privileged strata; (e) the bureaucracy taking advantage of the prevailing social antagonisms had converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, although betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in the property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) the accumulating contradictions could lead either to socialism or back to capitalism¹⁹; (h) on the road to socialism the counter revolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the final analysis, the question would be decided by a struggle of the living forces both on the national and the international arena. Comparing the Russian situation to the situation prevalent in France after the French Revolution, Trotsky argued that instead of a dictatorship of the proletariat, a dictatorship of the bureaucracy had installed itself. According to Trotsky the dialectic of history had used Stalin as a suitable instrument. He further pointed out that despite the betrayal, the revolution had not been defeated. A victorious revolution was much more than a programme or banner or a set of institutions. It was a system of social relations which could not be replaced by a mere betrayal. The October revolution although betrayed by the ruling stratum had not been overthrown. It had a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations and the living force of the proletariat²⁰.

In his *Transitional Programme*, Trotsky described the Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers state". To quote him, "..... The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a degenerated workers state²¹."

With the decline of the Third Communist International and the

establishment of the Fourth, Trotsky's overall position suggested that transition was underway everywhere except on the level of party leadership. The programmatic document of the new International embodying its principles were *"The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International"*, subsequently known as the Transitional Programme. Here Trotsky begins with the crisis in leadership :

The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat. The economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's productive forces stagnate all talk to the effect that historical conditions have not yet 'ripened' for socialism is the product of ignorance or conscious deception. The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only 'ripened', they have begun to get somewhat rotten..... The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership the chief obstacle in the path of transforming the pre-revolutionary condition into a revolutionary one is the opportunist character of proletarian leadership"²².

The Fourth International was, thus, an attempt to provide an alternative proletarian leadership.

Without any doubt, Trotsky was one of the giants of our time. He possessed physical courage and dared to do the impossible. Characteristic of his thought was the rejection of false claims made for Marxism as a universal system, providing the key to every problem. Emphasizing the role of non-rational factors in politics he pointed out : "In politics one must not think rationalistically, and least of all where the national question is concerned"²³. Although the Trotskyist movement today is split into many groups of different currents, a strong belief in the feasibility of world revolution is common to all Trotskyist groups.

Notes and Reference :

1. For details see, E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Vol.I (Penguin Books, 1966) pp. 44-55.
2. L. Schapiro, *Communist party of the Soviet Union* (London : Methuen, 1975), pp. 271-275.
3. Carr, n.I, pp. 33-35.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 70-75.
5. For details see, Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, (Bombay, The Time

- of Indian Press, 1969) pp. 50-55.
6. For details see Robert V. Daniels, *Trotsky, Stalin and Socialism* (Westview Press Inc., 1991), pp. 97-109.
7. *Ibid.*
8. For details see Baruch Knei - Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 385-410.
9. For details see Irving Howe (ed.), *The Basic Writings of Trotsky* (London : Mercury Books, 1964), pp. 160-169.
10. For the details of the debate on Trotsky's 'Theory of Permanent Revolution', see Schapiro n.2. pp. 290-293.
11. Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London : Bookmarks, 1984) pp. 60-65.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Isaac Deutscher, *Trotsky : The Prophet Armed* (London : Oxford University Press, 1954) pp. 92-100.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Deniel, n.7. p. 60.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Leon Trotsky, *Towards Socialism as Capitalism ?* Tr. by R.S. Townsend and Z. VengrEROVA (London : Methuen, 1926), pp. 85-86.
18. Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed : What is the Soviet Union and where is it going ?* (Calcutta : Gupta, Rahman and Gupta, 1947) pp. 120.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
20. Leon Trotsky, *Real Situation in Russia*, Tr. by Max Eastman, (London : George Allen and Unwin, n.d) p. 93-98.
21. *Ibid.*, pp.102-110.
22. G. John Wright, *Trotsky : First Five years of the Communist International*, Vol.I (New York, Pioneer Publishers, 1945) pp. 73-74.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

TRIBES AS THE 'OTHER' : A CRITIQUE OF THE POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF NORTHEAST INDIA

Samir Kumar Das

I. A Case for Homicide

May I pray to the Minister of Higher Education (Government of West Bengal, SKO)? I do not know whether my prayer will reach the ears of hon'ble Minister. Nevertheless, I request you to stop this child's play. Why have you been maintaining this Department of Anthropology (Vidyasagar University, Medinipur, West Bengal, SKD) ? To know whether the adivasis have disbowelled themselves ? Today they have no rice in their stomachs, no clothes to wear, nothing over them to cover their heads. Hence they have forgotten how to disbowel themselves. What will your Department of Anthropology research on ? Why do the students of the Department go to their villages and irritate them ? May I fervently make this appeal of not conducting this sort of research any more? I really feel shy to speak out. How does my wife become pregnant ? Is it a thing to be explained to them ? Moreover, this Department keeps propagating that the data supplied by you will be sent forthwith to the Central Government. On the basis of which aids will be released. We don't need your aid, instead, stop these barbaric acts of the Department of Anthropology. All that hurts the 'self-dignity' of the adivasis. The readers will be stunned to hear what sorts of torture are meted out by it. Perhaps, no polite society (bhadrā samaj) ever approves of conduction surveys on their wives and daughters¹.

This is an otherwise long excerpt taken from a statement albeit unrefined, yet firm, signed off by a little-known Shankar Kumar Kotal, himself a semi-literate tribal-certainly not as much erudite as anybody in any august assembly is, but who more than anybody of us has the audacity the anthropologists on a subject in which he hardly has any formal degree or specialization worth its name.

audacity that overtakes the expected humility that goes with any prayer and an audacity born out of the personal tragedy of losing his own sister - Chuni Kotal, slightly elder in age but his only playmate since the days of their childhood at a love-forsaken land that deprives them of any contact whatever with the surrounding larger society pre-dominantly of the Hindus, a vigorous lady who could achieve the rare distinction of becoming the first successful graduate amongst the Lodhas - a tribe that has still to carry the stigma of a 'criminal tribe' once appended to them by the colonial administration. Having been constantly subjected to the embarrassment and ignominy, stigma an opprobrium, irritation and torture and all sorts of murderous assault on the 'self-dignity' of her tribe, in short, to what Foucault would call, 'the Anthropological gaze', she had decided to take her life. The advice of her younger brother contains no ambiguity for it says that all anthropological researches on tribes should be immediately stopped or otherwise the rage that was directed inwardly to kill her beads to be directed outwards to kill the entire Anthropological establishment of the country. It is by no means his personal tragedy, nor even the tragedy of the Lodhas he belongs to; it is the collective tragedy of the tribes as a whole all over the country or may be, the world.

The narrative of tribal agony reflects the limit to the applicability of rules that our 'polite society' has set for ourselves. No such society as Shankar Kumar Kotal tells us, ever allows its 'wives-and-daughters' to be investigated upon and thereby lecherously gazed by 'honourable' anthropologists. But, the same rules do not apply to the tribals and there is no reason why they should apply to them. Since they remain outside the corpus of the 'polite society' they do not deserve to be treated by its rules. They are a case *sui generis*. The distinction between the 'polite society' and the tribal societies is too yawning to be bridged.

Anthropological perceptions towards the tribals as revealed in (i) our thinking and practice of strategies of tribal welfare and development and (ii) our imaging them as insurgents or what Eric Hobsbawm once called, 'primitive Rebel' point to an *essential distinction* between the 'polite society' - a term reserved for the

"Brahmanical, Hindu, consumerist, national mainstream" and the tribals who are taken to be outside it, between "us" and "them". The present paper has two objectives : It first of all, makes an attempt at understanding how our perceptions about them are derived from the dominant anthropological framework of knowledge concerning what we are - our own collective personality. Secondly, it also proposes to examine the possible responses of the tribal youth to our perceptions about them. Viewed thus, it has some major limitations : First, it situates us - the non-tribals occupying the mainstream and tribals as our objects of investigation and research. It involves a certain transformation of the tribes into mere objects - their objectification. But, in the second part, we also like to focus on what it is like to be investigated and researched upon and in the process, reduced to objects. In that context, it also makes an attempt - nevertheless a preliminary one, at recovering their subjectivity. Secondly, unless otherwise stated, whatever we have to argue in this paper has only to do with the case of present-day Assam. Assam is a state where unlike many other states of the Northeast, the tribals are in a minority in the composition of the total population. It may be taken as a caveat that our arguments and conclusions do not have a ready-made applicability to other parts of India - even to some parts of the Northeast; Thirdly, the paper privileges the youths in tribal societies as 'leaders' in the Gramscian sense, that is to say, in the sense of enjoying not only wider but uncritical acceptance amongst the ordinary members of their respective societies. In actual practice, this assumption of wider and uncritical 'moral and intellectual leadership' needs further probing and scrutiny.

II. The Distinction

An acknowledgement of the distinction between the mainstream and the tribal societies is nowhere more glaringly illustrated than in one of the celebrated statements of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who as we all know, was primarily responsible for crafting the post-colonial state in India.

I am speaking for (then Undivided, SKD) Assam and other areas for the

moment. The difference seems to be this. The tribal peoples in areas other than Assam are more or less Hinduised, more or less assimilated with the civilisation and culture of the majority of the people in whose midst they live. With regard to the tribals in Assam that is not the case. Their roots are still in their civilisation and their culture. They have not adopted mainly or in a large part, either the modes or the manner of the Hindus who surround them. Their laws of inheritance, their laws of marriage, customs and so on are quite different from that of the Hindus. I think that is *the main distinction* that influenced us to have a sort of scheme for Assam from the one we have provided for other territories².

This acknowledgement has provided the strategists of tribal welfare and development with a wide spectrum of policies to choose from : At one extreme, there was the policy of isolation pursued since the days of colonial administration almost uninterruptedly down to the middle of 1960s. Such a policy rechristened as the 'Nehru-Elwin model' in post-colonial India was built on the assumption that these societies were too distinct to be administered at par with the mainstream. The assumption in fact runs through the outlines of tribal policy described as Nehru's *panch sheel*, drafted 'probably by Verrier Elwin'. It for instance, makes it imperative that 'we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory' although 'some technical personnel from outside may be needed in the beginning' of their development. Its first principle declares absolute non-interference with tribal affairs : "People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture".

The 'Nehru-Elwin model' according to K.S. Singh, was 'in a shambles by the mid-1960s'. The earlier policy of isolation gave way to a strong advocacy and sometimes, the practice of the policy of isolation. It was by no means a simple advocacy for quickly assimilating the tribals into the so-called mainstream. It was also mandatory that assimilation should be so smooth and perfect that it would not leave any residue or trace of their individuality and identity. Hence, the corollary of the much-publicized policy of assimilation was de-tribalization whereby they would be 'helped in

becoming just Indians' in course of time with an antecedent loss of their individuality and identity. The policy of assimilation-cum-de-tribalization situated at the other extreme of the policy of isolation mentioned earlier both recognizes the distinction between the mainstream and tribal societies and transcends it but definitely on terms set forth by the mainstream if not for any other reason then at least for the simple reason that the mainstream is never asked to assimilate into the other.

The distinction also accredits a hierarchy for it establishes in the same vein the aesthetic superiority of the mainstream by way of denouncing the tribes as people inferior to it. The policy of isolation was in no measure, a recognition of their cultural superiority. As we will have occasions to see later, it was issued from the twin necessity of (i) establishing before the world, our love for the marginal peoples and (ii) exhibiting them as 'museum pieces' to serve as constant reminders of our own superiority to them in all conceivable matters, bolstering thereby our confidence in ourselves at a time when it was desperately called for. Besides, the policy of isolation actually severed their connexion with the greater material culture in which their societies are embedded. By uprooting them from it, tribal communities were broken as it were, into 'floating bits' which then were sought to be combined and recombined in ways which were hitherto unknown to them and which had invested them with what pierre Bourdieu calls, a 'cultivated naturalness'. While the policy proved fatal to the tribal communities, it was a means of congratulating ourselves. Similarly the policy of assimilation presumes the aesthetic superiority of the mainstream. As Thanzauva writes : "The fundamental problem responsible for the failure of Government's efforts for development in Northeast India is the ideology of dominant groups or cultural imperialism which perceived the tribal culture as inferior and hindrance to development. Therefore, the task of development is to make the tribal *catch up* other advanced people This ideology which is rooted in the uni-linear concept of history, suggests that certain societies are far more advanced than the tribal society; having these advanced societies as the destination of development, the tribal

communities have to follow the footsteps of advanced societies by leaps and bounds"³. We take pride in believing that what we are now is what they will be in future. They will develop along a path already traversed by us. The tribals are eternally condemned to a time-lag.

Besides, their image as narrow and chauvinist - closed in on themselves, always unhappy, restive and belligerent runs counter to the much-vaunted pluralistic and accommodative nature of the mainstream. Again, the mainstream is taken to be at peace with the outsiders. The tribes for instance, living close to the societies of the mainstream are allowed to be 'absorbed' into the Varna-Hindu hierarchy. Nirmal Kumar Bose, one of the pioneering anthropologists of our times has designated it as 'the Hindu mode of tribal absorption'. Such a process even for Bose, is neither smooth nor unproblematic and is frequently fraught with refusals - sometimes of more stubborn and obstinate nature, on the part of the tribals to get 'absorbed' into it and thereby to lose their individuality and identity. Contrariwise, the Varna-Hindu mainstream in question never refuses to allow them to get 'absorbed' into it. Their refusals are seldom matched by our refusals. Thus according to Tanmoy Bhattacharjee, there is hardly any problem in accepting the Karbis as the Hindus. He argues that the advantage of Hinduism as a 'non-proselytizing religion' is that "a member of the society automatically comes under its hold and no individual enrolment of membership is necessary"⁴. This makes the whole issue of acceptance totally redundant.

At the same time, the restive and belligerent image peculiar to the tribals takes a beating in the wake of the insurgency spearheaded and perpetrated by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). It was as Dhruva Jyoti Borah tells us an insurgency 'from within the Indian mainstream'⁵. But, the distinction is kept alive at the level of the Central Government's divergent patterns of responses to insurgency from within and those from without. While in the former the Government has chosen to adopt softer measures of cajoling and capitulating the cadres, condoning their acts by

granting the mass clemency and bribing them into submission by doling out huge sums of cash and concessions, in the latter it has adopted the strong arm tactic of meeting teeth with teeth.

III. The Aesthetics of Distinction

Orthodox Marxists often attribute this distinction to the prevalent class distinctions within the society. The problem with this formulating is that the distinction between the mainstream and tribal societies does not readily coincide with that between classes. In fact, the problem occurs at both levels : On the one hand, a single class may be seen to be ethnically divided while a single tribe may in turn be divided into classes. Thus, writing on the Chaudhris in the far-off context of South Gujarat, Ghanshyam Shah notes :". the educated Chaudhris are closer to the urban non-tribal middle class in their political beliefs and attitudes (yet) the urban middle class, dominated by upper and middle-caste Hindus, look upon the educated tribals and call them 'backward' and 'primitive':6. Similarly tribal politics in Tripura, is marked by what J.B. Ganguly calls, 'an isolationist stand' and Tripura Upajati Jubak Samiti (TUJS) according to him, was by and large 'successful in convincing many tribals that the tribals as tribals (sic.) can protect their interest' independently of either Congress (I) or CPI(M) speaking allegedly on behalf of the outsiders. He however suggests that such an 'isolationist stand' will not be beneficial to the tribals in the long run. Secondly, that a tribe is divided into two or more classes does not rule out its distinctiveness as a tribal community. Shah's brilliant analysis takes cognizance of this development.

Considering that this distinction between the mainstream and tribal societies cannot be subsumed under more generic class distinctions within the society, the important questions are : How does this distinction come about ? How is the aesthetic superiority of the mainstream established and asserted over the tribal societies? Are these questions altogether divorced from those of class ? Here we may refer to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'distinction' that has the great merit of linking the questions of aesthetic superiority of

tastes and judgements with the questions of class distinctions within the society. The aesthetic superiority is not seen in a void but is related to prevalent class distinctions. Such a theory may be adapted to our context - of course with suitable modifications and necessary amendments.

Aesthetic superiority according to Pierre Bourdieu, is never conceded to the mainstream like a walkover. It is accomplished by 'struggle for monopoly of aesthetic legitimacy' and those who have the 'economic capital' can establish their rule of cultural capital'. In his words, "at stake in every struggle over art there is also the imposition of an art of living, that is, the transmutation of an arbitrary way of living into the legitimate way of life which casts every way of living into arbitrariness"⁸. Insofar as his argument is centred on this, he is well in conformity with the classical Marxist tradition. But, his treatise also leaves room for accommodating the anomalies that emerge in the Indian context : First, we may refer to the tribal elite that has to a varying extent, the economic capital but still does not establish its rule of cultural capital. What is it that prevents it from 'transmuting its way of life into the only legitimate way of life' ? The problem with it is that its acquisition of economic capital was preceded by a loss of its cultural capital - a cultural proletarianization, so to say. It has no culture of its own to establish, nothing worthwhile to struggle for in spite of the fact that it has come to acquire economic capital - thanks to the whirlwind changes that have swept the tribal societies. Culture exists as a whole - not always a self-sufficing one but, when it is broken into 'floating bits', there is nothing in it that can be pitted against the invasion of the mainstream. In fact, it was Furer-Haimendorf more than anyone else, who could draw our attention not quite long ago, to a 'hopeless' asymmetry. In spite of all their sincerity and spirited efforts, they are destined to be 'weak' in their battle against the ever-strong mainstream. It is a losing battle for them. Tribal rebellions therefore, are marked more by negation than affirmation⁹. Indeed, we may take the point a step further to argue that the loss of its cultural capital was a precondition for its acquisition of economic capital. The point has been amply recognized by the assimilationists who

had argued that there was a need for de-tribalization, if they were to be inserted into the 'urban-industrial complex' that was to endow them with the economic capital¹⁰. We may now turn our attention to the second anomaly. What about those who belong to the mainstream but visibly lack in economic capital? how do they find their cultural capital establishing a monopoly without the requisite economic capital? While it may be true that the aesthetic superiority of the mainstream is never established by all those who belong to it but by those who have the economic capital to establish it, it is also true that the persistence of aesthetic superiority once established depends in a large measure on the vast majority of those who lack in economic capital but have the cultural capital in the sense of belonging to and sharing it. Had they sided with others outside the mainstream, it would have been far less weak than what it is today. This is what Bourdieu calls, 'a pure aesthetic' that commands legitimacy so long as the relationship of the mainstream to 'the dispositions and interests of a group defined by strong cultural capital and weak economic capital remains unrecognized'. For them, the mainstream provides a sort of 'absolute reference point'¹¹. Their entitlement to the mainstream necessarily avoids 'conspicuous spending' and is governed by what Bourdieu calls, 'the pursuit of maximum cultural profit for minimum economic cost'¹². For them, celebrating a Republic Day means watching the parade on the box, a visit to the zoo or museum that in a country like India costs little unlike the economically richer patrons of the mainstream for whom celebrating it implies viewing a live cultural extravaganza in an exclusive Hall, 'freaking out' in the evening and attending a midnight party on its eve in a Five-Star hotel.

IV. The Other as the Dumping Ground

In the preceding two sections, we have examined the nature of the distinction between the mainstream and what may be called, its other composed mainly though not exclusively, of the tribals. We have also pointed out that anthropological knowledge about the other is guided by what the mainstream thinks and feels about it

rather than what the other thinks and feels about itself. It is obvious that what the mainstream thinks and feels about the other does not always correspond to what the other thinks and feels about itself. This calls for an appreciation of the *constructedness* of the other¹³. This section concentrates on how the construction of the other is derived from the mainstream's perception of it through a process of negation. Indeed, the aesthetic superiority of the mainstream according to Pierre Bourdieu, is determined through negation : "In matters of taste, more than anything else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance of the tastes of others Aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent. Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between classes; class endogamy is evidence of this"¹⁴. Let us now see how this negation is functional to the articulation and persistences of the mainstream.

Swanson in an excellent essay on the development of individual personality argues that it has to build up defensive mechanisms 'because it always and necessarily undermines the commitments it has made to itself and other' and that it needs to do so is a proof of its 'fundamental commitment' to these commitments it has made to itself and others. Since it holds these commitments in high esteem and does not want them to be broken, it has to build up defensive mechanisms acceptable to itself and others, should they receive a jolt¹⁵. Swanson's whole essay is addressed to the problem of individual personality. But we feel that it has the potential of being extended to the problem of collective personality of the mainstream - albeit with suitable modifications.

We may argue that in at least two crucial sectors of social life, the mainstreams commitments both to itself and others were fatally undermined : India's poor and in growing cases, dismal records of human rights especially in such bordering areas as Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and the states in the Northeast - inhabited by the marginal peoples outside the mainstream has received wider publicity in quality international press and in such organized forums as

Amnesty International and National Human Rights Commission¹⁶. Even individual nations - not too notorious for their hostility towards us, takes serious and alarming note of the situation. Our dismal performance in these areas has already been adversely commented upon by the makers of international opinion. Never before in our history, we felt so vulnerable in this respect. India has never been made subject to such a meticulous and thorough scrutiny. At a time when our dismal record of human rights is questioning our survival as world's biggest democratic republic, little, but precious doses of government induced philanthropy might go a long way in encouraging us and keeping our records straight to avoid any censure by the comity of nations.

Secondly, India's credibility as a vibrant political system both willing and able to accommodate heterogeneous social and ethnic interests has undoubtedly been lowered in recent years - if not tarnished. What is however at issue is not so much that she promotes the mainstream in the name of accommodating the heterogeneous interests but very much that the way she promotes the mainstream has already resulted in a considerable disarticulation and obliteration of the others outside the mainstream. Since the matter has already attracted a good deal of scholarly attention in the writings of Rajni Kothari and his associates, I do not feel it necessary to go into its minutest details. To sum up, our commitments have been undermined both from within the nation - state as well as from without. There are two crucial sectors where our commitments were very firm and solid for they are commitments that 'we want and keep' and continue to do so in the years to come. The mainstream is caught up as it were, in a crisis of conscience. It cannot be true to what it has once set for itself. It is interesting to see how the mainstream has chosen to respond to the crisis. One of the principal means of resolving it is to resort to what political Anthropology calls, *othering*. Othering can be done in either of the two modes, may be, a combination of them : First, the mainstream may do it in a more direct manner by externalizing all that it regards to be an unmixed evil and therefore aesthetically inferior to the moral standards that it has set for itself and projecting it on others outside

its corpus. Tribals as the 'other' provide a vast dumping ground into which it has thrown everything that the mainstream tries hard to get rid of, but with little success. The construction of the 'other' is acquired through a simple process of elimination in so far as it is the sum total of what in the eyes of the mainstream, it is not or even can never be. Thus, its transformation into what it thinks, it is not in actual practice is skilfully transferred to the other in an exercise to distance it from all evils. This helps in strengthening the collective personality of the mainstream much in the same manner in which patients, reported to be possessed of ghosts are exercised by the shamans. The instrumentality of projection has been emphasized by ethno-psychologists and since I have elsewhere touched upon the same problem, I refrain from repeating it at this point. It is this process of elimination that looks upon the Nagas as people 'absolutely' devoid of a word-ethnic¹⁸ and Karbis as people who are far too lazy to contribute to the development of the productive economy of the concerned region.

Besides, there is also the indirect mode whereby the mainstream's inability to live upto the standards it has set for itself is attributed to the external factors - to factors beyond its control. These are factors induced by ever-conspiratorial and continuously scheming other that being irrational itself gives lie to all rational calculations by the mainstream. Thus, while in power (1985-1990), one of Asom Gana Parishad's oft-repeated accusations was that it could not make much headway in building 'the greater Assamese nationality' due to the machinations of a section of the Bodo elite visibly enjoying the indulgence of the central government. Both these modes often encourage some of the zealots of the mainstream to make a plea for wiping out the other. Encountering an ever-conspiratorial and continuously scheming other is considered to be worse than doing without the other. Much of the argument for genocide banks upon this simple logic of preference. To our mind, being deprived of an other would amount to being deprived of a scapegoat and the mainstream has still to be obsessed with the problem of how to defend its collective personality badly battered by its inability to stand up to its own moral standards, to be what it

thinks itself to be.

V. The Seamless other

When the other defined by way of eliminating all that the collective personality symbolizes and stands for, it turns into a residual and seamless category that does not sensitize us to the varieties of cultural configurations accommodated into it. To say that the tribes are the other of what the mainstream is, is taken to mean that they constitute a homogeneous category contraposed to the much-exalted mainstream. But, that the other includes tribes of diverse cultural configurations - at times, incompatible with each other is compulsorily ignored in the architecture of modern political Anthropology of North-Eastern India. This has generated a good deal of macro-level writings on the tribals of the region under review. The sudden attenuation of cultural differences implied in any categorization of the other pitted against the mainstream - though fatal to the autonomy of the concerned community, only helps the mainstream in theorizing a bewildering variety of phenomena, fitting them into one single grand scheme of history and reducing their problems to tractable proportions and most importantly, to convenient and meaningful grasp of political Anthropology. It enables the anthropologist to make sense of what is otherwise insensible.

In fact, the necessity of studying *each* tribal community separately and of delving deep into 'an insider's or emic view of a community and culture' was recognized not quite long ago by prof. A.C. Bhagabati of Gauhati University. "The time has now come to attempt the not so meat but more meaningful insider's or emic view of a community and culture"¹⁹. Even this plea one may wonder, retains political Anthropology as the handmaiden of the mainstream for it is still for him - an outsider to 'come to attempt an insider's view' and while making this attempt he has to be what Bhagabati says, 'sound, scientific and objective'. His plea for obtaining an insider's view has to be read together with his initial assertion that "a sound scientific and objective understanding of the myriad

aspects of life in a community is a prerequisite for making predictions about the future as well as making policies with an accent on harmonious development and welfare". If the 'sound, scientific and objective' imply that we do not allow our views and values, predispositions and predilections to colour the anthropological knowledge then Political Anthropology will be for us, that is to say, for those who belong to the mainstream. Certainly, it will not be 'sound, scientific and objective' for an anthropologist who is also an insider himself and for him the task of acquiring anthropological knowledge is to state his own view. In other words, his Anthropology cannot but be coloured by his own views. Bhagabati does not envisage this possibility and for this reason his plea for obtaining the insider's view surely privileges the anthropologist of the mainstream - essentially an outsider who is asked to be sufficiently sincere and sensitive to the insider's view, without getting it prejudiced by his own. Surprising but true, his plea does not entitle the other to contribute to anthropological knowledge on his own, but only through the mediation of an outsider. Such a position does not confer subjectivity on the tribes.

VI. Tribal Youths in a Quandary

Tribal youths today are in a hopeless quandary than ever before. The distinction between tribal societies and the mainstream has offered to them a choice whether to be assimilated into the mainstream or to remain outside it. Each of them has its own dilemma and in this concluding part, we will make an attempt at focusing on the travails of this dilemma. Assimilation as most of the studies on tribals in North Eastern India inform us, seem to be unacceptable to them basically on two grounds : First of all, it destroys their subjectivity. Once they hitch themselves into the mainstream, their development becomes subject to the development of the mainstream. In effect, they do not develop in accordance with their own genius. In a strange trade-off, they are asked to sacrifice their freedom of making a choice of designing their own development to a development chosen, may be for them, by an outside agency,

in this case the mainstream. They 'develop' nevertheless but not in the same way they might have voluntarily chosen, left to themselves. To borrow a phrase typical of Rousseau, they were forced to develop. Secondly, assimilation is also a self-limited process. The mainstream that we are talking about is not a homogeneous body - undivided and indivisible. It also inheres a (Varna-) hierarchy. It is interesting to note that the tribals are invariably permitted to assimilate - if at all, into the lower echelons of the hierarchy. The ex-tribals therefore do not become Brahmins. If they become Hindus, they become Shudras at their best. It is ironic that sometimes tribals do not mind and are comfortably adjusted to such a situation. For instance, the Bodos in the words of D.P. Mukherjee and S.P. Mukherjee were 'for a long times eager to be accomodated into the lower rungs of Hindu hierarchy'²⁰ at least till early-1960s. The same is true of other tribal communities as well.

If what they choose to remain outside the mainstream, they will comply with the mainstream expects of them, that is to say, to be its other. To be treated as the other outside the mainstream also makes it imperative to put up a culture *vis-a-vis* the mainstream. But, the problem here is that their headway in the direction of assimilation has already resulted in a disarticulation and obliteration of their culture into 'floating bits'. This calls for an altogether different project of assembling and re-assembling them in a coherent framework that would be the *vis-a-vis* of the mainstream. This project is not revivalistic for it does not seek to revive the old framework of tribal culture. Reviving it is impossible at a time when it is in the throes of a crisis and is getting disintegrated into 'floating bits'. But its materials and ingredients may be rearticulated and rendered serviceable to the requirements of restoring a subjectivity independently of the mainstream. This according to K.S. Singh, has just begun in India and in different parts of the North-East only recently²¹.

In this connexion, we may refer to only one aspect of re-articulation - that of discovering a script and building up an indigenous literature in tribal languages. In a study on the Morans

of Assam, the authors have noted with concern that 'though their original languages belong to Bodo speech of language, at present they completely give up their traditional language like other members of the Matak community in favour of Assamese'²². The case for the Meiteis is however not as much hopeless as the case of the Morans for in their case, the loss has inspired the attempts at restoration. The 'total replacement' of Meitei script as Kailash Aggarwal informs us, went hand in hand with the sweep of Vaishnavism enjoying for long the patronage of the royal courts since the early part of the eighteenth century. but, in this movement for the assertion of a separate tribal identity, the Meiteis have 'restored the old Manipuri script' and its restoration has subsequently taken to the Manipur Legislative Assembly by 1978²³.

The tribals in short, are in a quandary as they receive the worst of both worlds - the mainstream and their own.

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ETHNIC CRISIS IN MANIPUR : AN INSIGHT INTO KUKI-NAGA STRIFE

C. Joshua Thomas

Ethnic crisis is a socio-political phenomenon in most civil societies and in the present century it has been of the most important source of large scale conflict, leading to civil war, insurgency and even disintegration of states. The phenomenon of ethnicity has not been something specific and peculiar only to the developing countries, to which South Asian States belong, but has also manifested itself in the developed countries as well. For instance, the demands of the blacks in the United States as an ethnic group, the issue of Quebec in Canada, the Irish conflict in the United Kingdom, the clashes between the Flemings and the Walloons in Belgium and the endemic nationalities question in the former Soviet Union can be cited as indicators of the persistence of ethnicity with possibilities of exacerbation of inter-ethnic conflicts in these post industrial modern States¹.

The word "ethnic", derived from the Greek word "ethnikos", refers to : (a) 'nation not covered in Christianity : heathens, pagans'; (b) races or large groups of people having common traits and customs; or (c) groups 'in an exotic primitive culture'².

Some scholars have attempted to define ethnic groups by taking the one from the last definition. Naroll, for instance, defines as ethnic unit as a comparatively small community with a predominantly archaic character³. Naroll's usage of the term within a narrow gamut, may at best be useful for a traditional anthropological approach to study tribal societies. In contrast to this has been the approach of a large number of authors, including Soviet Anthropologists, who argue that the term includes not only small communities but also those with a large memberships, embracing the primitive, backward people and also those in highly industrialised, 'developed' societies⁴.

There has also been a debate regarding the status of ethnic group. Often an ethnic group has been viewed as a substitute for a minority⁵. Such term has come from Social Scientist of different ideological persuasion, such as, Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, who rightly point out that it is the critical factor in ethnic group identification.⁶ Again, some authors, like Milton Goadon, view ethnic group as a "people"⁷. 'People' again is too general a connotation. In any case, in its wider sense, the term 'ethnic' encompasses the meaning of the term 'people'.

Sociologists claim that cultural markers, like race, are closely connected with ethnic identity. Language and descent⁸ are the other cultural emblems competing with race. But history does not substantiate the perception of cultural emblems as immanent attributes of ethnic group identity. For instance, colour has too many shades and religion too many sub-divisions. To Barth, the exclusive emphasis on ethnic groups as culture-bearing units reflects a narrow view which stresses social continuity rather than social adoption⁹. Thus an ethnic group can be defined as a historically formed aggregate of people having a real or imaginary association with a specified territory, a shared cluster of belief and values connoting its distinctiveness in relation to similar groups and recognised as such by others¹⁰.

The above definition thus has five components : (a) a subjective belief in real or assumed historical antecedents; (b) a symbolic or real geographical centre; (c) shared cultural emblems, such as race, language, religion, dress and diet, or a combination of some of them which though variegated and flexible, provide the overt basis of ethnic identity; (d) self-ascribed awareness of distinctiveness belonging to the group; and (e) recognition by other of the group differentiation. It is thus a self-defined and 'other-recognised' status¹¹.

Thus an ethnic group encompasses the attributes of a presumed or fictive sense of 'relatedness' a kindred-like feeling which is perpetuated by myths and memories are re-inforced by 'common understanding concerning the meaning of a set of symbols'¹². According to Senake Bandaranayake, "What ethnic group signifies is a historically defined, self-conscious community, which has its own distinctive history and culture, of which language and religion often constitute important aspects, and which has or had definite territorial applications, in the present

and/or the past"¹³. Thus thnicity is not a static pre-determined category, but the manifestation of ethnic groups in the political arena to defend or sustain economic, political, and cultural interests and wrest more concessions. In the process, it becomes device as well as a focus for mobilising the members of the group into social and political action¹⁴.

An overview of the ethnic atlas of the globe indicates that while multi-ethnicity has been a socio-political phenomenon in most civic societies, inter-ethnic group cleavages have not only turned out to be far more overt but have assumed a marked intensity in the present century. Ethnic conflict/crisis thus, have posed a varied and severe systematic challenge to a large number of States. And more than often, the outcome of such conflicts have considerably influenced by the pressure and pulls of transnational forces¹⁵.

Ethnic groups are especially numerous in countries inhabited by people of many different national origins. South and South East Asia are ethnically the most heterogeneous of the world's regions. Centuries of large scale migration, successive waves of religio-cultural movements, wars and trade and colonial conquest have produced an ethnologist paradise¹⁶. Many of the ethno-linguistic groups which co-exist in the South and South East Asian States have their own customs and traditions, which by a large guide their life styles and influence their behavioural norms. Power and authority play a critical role in the process of social change in South Asia. The inter-ethnic group cleavage being basically political, the ethnic conflict is mainly the competition for power sharing and its exercise¹⁷. It appears that the constitutional neglect and mishandling of the initial demands for linguistic accommodation, regional autonomy, unequal treatment in education and employment avenues often turn the autonomist into secessionist which retard the national.... building process. In South Asia the case of undivided Pakistan was ultimately driven by repression to secession, is an example. The ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka is another example in this regard. Thus ethnic conflict in particular has frequently been not only a deterrent to integration but also the source of political instability¹⁸.

In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the ongoing ethnic crisis in Manipur with particular reference to the Kuki-Naga strife and the role of the Government of Manipur and the Government of India

towards it.

II

The State of Manipur is hemmed in by tribal inhabited areas of Nagaland (North), Shan (East) and Chin (South) States of Myanmar/Burma, Mizoram (South-West), and Cachar (West) district of Assam. Manipur or the Imphal valley existed as an independent kingdom till its annexation by the British in 1891. On October 15, 1949, Manipur was merged fully with the Indian Union.

Manipur is one of the smallest States of Indian Union covering an area of 22,129 sq.km. Except the narrow central valley which measures 2,040 sq.km., rest of Manipur is hilly. The majority of Manipur's population about 67.5% live in the valley. The vast hills of Manipur which account for nearly 32.5% of the States' population comprising of Scheduled tribes¹⁹.

Manipur's total population of about 1.8 million present a remarkable combination of ethnic and cultural diversity. This is probably because Manipur was one of the ancient trade routes between India and South East Asia, and different waves of migration of Aryan, Mongolians and even Dravidians passed through Manipur over the centuries.

Administratively, Manipur is divided into eight districts - Imphal, Thoubal, Bishnupur in the valley, Ukhrul (East), Senapati (North), Tamenglong (West), Churachandpur (South) and Chandel (South-East). Of the eight districts, the first three districts cover the entire valley which probably made up the former independent kingdom of Manipur before its annexation by the British. The remaining five hill districts were added to Manipur at different stages of the States' reorganisation during colonial times and after Independence of India.

Agriculture is the main occupation for the people of Manipur. The yield is so poor that Manipur's farmers are best described as subsistence farmers. Except for a handful of small scale and household industries which consist of handicrafts, weaving and bamboo or cane works, there is no industry worth the name in the entire State. In fact, industrially, Manipur is one of the most backward States in the country.

Ethnically, Manipur is heterogeneous. The people inhabiting Manipur can be divided into two broad categories : the tribal communities and the non-tribal communities. In terms of distinct ethnic identity, the people in Manipur can be broadly classified into 3 distinct groups :

- (i) the Meiteis
- (ii) the Pangans
- (iii) the Hill tribes

The Meities are the main inhabitants of the Imphal valley. Often the Imphal valley and the Meiteis are usually taken as synonymous. The Meiteis claim that they are the oldest residents of Manipur. The Manipuri Muslims or the Pangans are roughly 17% of the total population of Manipur. They are to be found chiefly on the fertile tracts of land between the Imphal river and Iril river²⁰. It has been a general convention to divide the tribal groups of Manipur into Naga and Kuki. The Mizo who are mainly concentrated in the South district, constitute a third alignment in the States' ethno-politico tribal setting.

The Nagas are a distinct Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid race who migrated to the present Naga inhabited areas from the East, a few thousand years ago. In Manipur, the Nagas occupy extensive areas in the five hill districts with the exception of Churachandpur district which is predominantly inhabited by the Mizo and Kuki tribes. The Tangkuls occupy the entire East district with some pockets of kuki population along the Manipur-Myanmar borders. The Northern district is the home of Mao, Maram, Koirang, Targao, Thangal, Chiru and Paimei Nagas. The West district is the home of the Zemei, Liangmei and Rongmei or Zeliangrong or Kabui Nagas and Chandel district is predoninantly occupied by the Anal, Lamkang, Moyon, Maring, Mongsang and Chothe Nagas interspersed by the Thandous (Kukis). A section of the Kabuis Thangkul Nagas are settled in the Imphal valley.

The Kukis constitute one of the 3 main groups of Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic family inhabiting India, Bangladesh, and Burma. Kukis of India live in Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Tripura. The main bulk however is concentrated in Manipur where they again form one of the 3 ethnic groups besides Meiteis and Nagas. It appears that the Kukis might have migrated from the Chin hills of Myanmar probably in the year 1834. In

1840 a British Political Agent Mc Cullah brought in a large number of Kukis to fight against the Nagas. Subsequently, within a short period of time thousands of Kukis were settled as subjects of Manipur. However, the majority came after the First World War.

The Kuki sub-group includes : Gangte, Hmar, Lushai (Mizo), Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. Kukis are in majority in the eastern and southern part of Chandel district, scattered in the whole of Churachandpur district²¹. They are also sparsely scattered along the foothills in the valley districts of Thoubal and Bishnupur. The Kangpokpi sub-division of Senapati district in the North has the largest Kuki population.

III

When the British granted Independence to India in 1947, the Nagas also demanded Independence under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, of the Naga National Council (NNC) which was founded in 1946. Since NNC's demand for secession was not conceded, by the Government of India, it entered into a protracted under ground armed struggle against the Government of India and the security forces. During November 1975, a group of leaders of the underground Naga Federal Government (NFG) entered into an agreement with the Government of India, which was popularly known as "Shillong Accord"²². The Shillong accord not only split the underground Naga secessionist movement but also created sharp differences between the Nagas themselves. Phizo called the Shillong accord as the "accord of treason". Isak Swu, Vice President and Th. Muivah, General Secretary of NNC denounced the Accord, broke away from the parent body and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). In 1988, the NSCN suffered a big set back due to factionalism which led to fratricidal killings within the organisation. As a result NSCN was split into two factions, the one led by Khaplang (NSCN-K) and the other led by Isk Swu and Th. Muivah (NSCN-IM). In the present strife in Manipur NSCN-IM is directly involved.

Although the Kuki National Assembly (KNA) - a regional political party in Manipur - was found in 1947 itself, militant outfit of Kukis came to known only by 1987. Some of the documents issued both the Naga and Kuki students' union reveal that the Kuki National Army

(KNA) was formed on August 5, 1987²³. There is also a Kuki "Inpi" which is an apex organisation of the Kukis, which take care of Kukis interests. It was remained defunct for many years but now recently revived. "Inpi" is now actively involved in the relief work among the Kuki refugees.

The year 1990 witnessed the proliferation of several Kuki militant groups such as, Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki National Front (KNF), Kuki National Organisation (KNO), Kuki Commondo Force (KCF), Kuki Independent Army (KIA), Chin-Kuki-Revolutionary Force (CKRF) etc. It should be noted that the KNO and KNA are demanding an autonomous State for the Kukis in the Sagaing division of Myanmar; whereas the KNF and KDF wants a Kuki homeland comprising the whole of Chandel district, the South Western part of Ukhrul district, the Sardar hills area of Senapati district, parts of Churachandpur district and Kuki inhabited areas in Nagaland and Assam.

The Kuki-Naga strife has a long history. The former Naga hills district of Assam became a State in 1963. The Kuki leaders also aspired for a "Kukiland" comprising the districts of Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong parts of Ukhrul in Manipur and parts of Nagaland, Assam and Myanmar. This demand was presented before the Indian Government through various forums, such as, the Kuki refugee settlement. Kuki militant organisations such as the KNA, KNO and KNF have time and again asserted their claim to the areas which would constitute Kukiland. For instance, in a memorandum signed by Nehlun Kuki, Chairman, KNF, dated September 24, 1992, addressed to the President of India, stated :

That, it has also, at the same time, been an admitted and undeniable fact known to all that the State of Manipur has given its birth in total negligence and complete suppression of the genuine claims of the Kukis for KUKI-LAND; the State of Mizoram has given to its birth for Mizos, the State of Tripura for Tripuris, the State of Nagaland for the Nagas, the State of Assam for the Assamese, the State of Meghalaya has given its birth for the Khasis and Garos including the Jaintias, the State of Punjab for the Punjabis and Bihar for Biharis etc. If so, there is no reason for laying stumbling blocks for the creation of KUKI-LAND for the Kukis if the Kukis are the children of the North Eastern region of India²⁴.

But, Kukis demand has been opposed by the NSCN (IM) which is at the forefront of the confrontation with the Kukis.

Ethnic violence escalated in May 1992 in a low key manner when the Kuki militants asked the Nagas to leave Moreh, a small town near the Burmese border. Moreh has a sizeable population and thrives mainly on smuggling, unspecified quantity of purified heroin is smuggled out of Moreh into Manipur and from there to the rest of India everyday. The security forces are bribed to turn a blind eye to these activities. On occasion, even army and Manipur Police Battalion vehicles were used to transport drugs²⁵. The militant groups are indifferent to most things as long as they receive their self-imposed taxes and commissions from the smugglers. They use this money to procure arms and ammunition from across the border.

The Kukis claim that the violence began with their refusal to pay "loyalty tax" to the NSCN. Whatever the reason, it is clear both groups wish to maintain defacto control over Moreh. For not only was this the best way to get money to buy arms, but also to have easy access to Myanmar and the rest of southeast Asia²⁶.

By way of comparison, combined Kuki-Naga population is around 6,00,000. While the latter outnumbered the former by a thin margin, yet it is the former that have suffered the greater casualties so far. In a sense, the two warring groups as a whole are now in direct clash over conflicting "homeland" demands. For the Kukis, "Kukiland" is their cherished desire but for the Nagas the same is anathema²⁷.

V

The events of past few years in Manipur reveal, that, the ethnic problem in Manipur has its root in the dirty politics. Had our politicians played the "good samaritan" and "honest broker" role, this unnecessary monster might not have raised its head. Politicians, both in ruling and opposition parties, in one way or in another, favouring militant groups of their own choice in order to consolidate their own position. On the other hand, government both at the Centre and the State with the aid of the security forces encouraging one group in order to neutralise the other group. Somehow our politicians are not learning from the history. Mention may be made on the fiasco of India's misadventure in Sri Lanka. When ethnic violence broke out in the year

1983 in Sri Lanka, the then Government of India deliberately encouraged the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) supplied all the needed resources and training to the LTTE. But when the LTTE refused to accept the Indian sponsored Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 29, 1987, the then government deliberately encouraged the Eelam People Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) to neutralise the LTTE. But, it is a well known fact, that this policy of divide and rule, appease one and despise other ended in disarray.

The problem in Manipur is not merely one of ethnic problem. It has deep historical, political, economic and social roots. The Central and State governments should take steps to alleviate poverty and unemployment. Popular dissatisfaction with living conditions provides breeding ground for terrorism. Building a separate law enforcement force for the North East will not address long standing grievances. Counter insurgency operations, president's rule and army presence can best provide only a "temporary respite"²⁸.

Now what can be done ? The best plausible way to restore amity and peace in Manipur is to involve the scholars, social activists and faithful church workers and constitute a peace committee to bring reconciliation between the warring groups²⁹. A massive campaign against drug abuse should be taken up by the NGOs and voluntary organisations. Sensitive areas like Moreh should be under strict vigilance. Politicians of all colours should try to win underground leaders and followers. Guns will not and cannot solve the ethnic crisis in Manipur. Massive small scale industries should be encouraged to come up in order to arrest the vast army of unemployment among the youth.

Opening new government of office or autonomous organisation is not going to solve the problem of unemployment. It may give opportunities to a few hundred people but the majority will be unemployed and naturally it may tempt them either to guns or to drugs. Both gun and drug culture should be replaced by industrialisation culture, which will automatically develop a hatred towards guns and drugs³⁰.

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MOVEMENT FOR RECOGNITION OF NEPALI LANGUAGE

Rudraman Thapa

The linguistic urge of diverse groups in a multinational state like ours has been a living phenomenon in the politics of India. The constitutional provision for conservation, cultivation as well as development of one's language and culture have obviously encouraged the diverse groups to be organized and articulate for the maintenance of distinct identities on the basis of language. It appears to the emerging elite of different groups that in order to remove socio-economic backwardness the mobilization of their people on respective language consideration is imperative. In fact, it is believed that the constitutional recognition of language so as to enable its cultivation and development is inextricably intertwined with the maintenance of distinct identity as a measure of removing socio-economic backwardness. As such, it may be said that formulation of the state Re-organisation Act, 1956 for creating new states on language basis was a measure of converting such a belief into reality. This Act in due course has further become a great source of impetus for the various ethnic groups in India to pursue demand for constitutional recognition of their languages as a measure of accelerating their socio-economic advancement. Some of them even have gone to the extent of demanding a separate state for this purpose. Thus, the linguistic urge of diverse groups has become a factor which influences the politics of our country. The present paper, however endeavours to examine the urges of the Indian Nepalese with a reference to Assam for the constitutional recognition of their language as a measure of maintaining distinct identity so as to eradicate socio-economic backwardness.

II

"Nepali, according to Encyclopedia Britanica, the language (sometimes called Khaskura, Gurkhali or Parbatiya) of the Brahmins

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and Chhetris, is of Sanskrit derivation and has become lingua-franca of Nepal but the Mongoloid tribes and Newars have their own languages which belong to Tibeto-Burman groups"¹. Indeed, Nepali, the national language of Nepal, bears a great deal of similarities with any other constitutionally recognized languages of India especially of Sanskrit origin. Being encouraged by such similar feature of their language with other Indo-Aryan languages supported by the constitutional provision for conservation and development of one's language and culture the Indian Nepalese began to feel the need of placing their language at par with other recognized languages. Because the nascent Nepali elite strongly believed that recognition of their language might help them enjoy a number of facilities for the maintenance of distinct Nepali identity as a measure of removing socio-economic backwardness.

After independence, the thriving Nepali elite of India, therefore, began to assert that since they constitute a substantial number of country's total population their language deserves the constitutional recognition so as to ensure their distinct identity in the state. The initiative to this effect however came from the Dehradune district of Uttar Pradesh when the *Jagrata Gurkha* a Nepali magazin was published under the joint editorship of Anandsingh Thapa, Birsingh Bhandari and Narendrasingh Rana. While arguing for the cause of constitutional status of Nepali language in a memorandum submitted to the President of India on January 18, 1956 the editorial Board of the *Jagrata Gurkha* pleaded :

Nepali language has been neglected by the government of free India by not including it into the constitution. More importantly, it is a great injustice that the language spoken by fifteen lakh Indian Gurkha citizens has been labelled as a foreign language whereas the British Indian Government recognized it as one of the languages of the country. Consequently, our posterity will be deprived of learning own language through the educational institutions².

In order to justify their linguistic demand the Nepali elite referred to the constitutional right for the protection and development of distinct language and culture of different communities. Therefore, they increasingly conceived that in a bid to maintain their distinct identity in India it was absolutely essential to get their language constitutionally recognized. Moreover, it may be noted that after independence, when the provinces were to be recognized on the basis of linguistic

principle, the Nepali elite probably realized the need of raising the demand for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language so that they might claim a separate state on the basis of their linguistic identity in future. Perhaps considering all these aspects, they started mobilizing the Nepalese scattered all over India in order to popularise their demand. As a result, it appeared that the people of Darjeeling district in West Bengal - a mostly Nepali populated area became more concerned and assertive of their linguistic demand. Perhaps for this reason in the late sixties, the leadership of the movement for constitutional recognition of Nepali language was shifted to Darjeeling when the annual conference of its District Committee held on May 13, 1967 the *All India Gurkha League* (AIGL) unanimously resolved :

Nepali is a well developed language not inferior to other languages already recognized under the Eighth schedule of the constitution. In matter of population we are not behind from the population speaking language that has recently been added to the Eighth schedule. It should, therefore, be given a place alongwith other languages in the Eighth schedule³.

What accentuated linguistic demand of the Nepalese was the remarks made by the eminent literateur like Suniti Kumar Chatterjee who in his book "Languages and Literatures of Modern India" maintained that "other Indian languages are to be added in this (Eighth) schedule following the wishes of their speakers and their importance i.e. Sindhi and Nepali"⁴. Being inspired by such remarks the Nepalese decided to pursue their linguistic demand, which they believed, might ensure the maintenance of their distinct identity in India. Meanwhile Sindhi language was given the constitutional status by the government of India in 1967 on the plea that "since Sindh is now in Pakistan and Sindhis have no state of their own; it was important to include Sindhi in the constitution to make its speakers at home as Indians"⁵. Such plea obviously became another source of inspiration for the Nepalese to advance the cause of constitutional status for their language. Simultaneously they regretted that though Nepali language was in no way inferior to Sindhi it was not granted the constitutional recognition. Expressing such a sentiment the *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* (1924), Darjeeling, one of the premier literary organizations of the Nepalese, while presenting a memorandum to the President of India on November 12, 1969 strongly asserted :

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, our national professor and an eminent linguist, in his authentic treatise "Languages and Linguistic Problems in India, has

considered both Nepali and Sindhi among the fifteen principal languages of India but unfortunately though Sindhi has been recognized as one of the National languages and included in the Eighth Schedule, no such status has been given to Nepali so far. This has been a matter of great disappointment and dissatisfaction to the Nepali speaking population of the country⁶.

Further they maintained that the Nepalese constitute majority population of many areas such as "the hills of the Darjeeling district, the Doars of the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, the state of Sikkim, Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh, Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh and numerous pockets of Northeastern states of the country"⁷. Similarly, while citing the number of their population, the Nepali elite asserted that as per the Census Report of 1971 they had more than 1,400,000 population all over India whereas Sindhi speaking people numbered only 7,00,000. In fact, the Nepali elite sought to justify that their language is the lingua-franca in the sense that it is not only widely spoken by the different sub-castes of the Nepali community but also spoken by lakhs of non-Nepali speaking people of the Himalayan region which reinforced their numerical strength. In view of big numerical strength and existence of compact areas, the Nepali elite began mobilizing their people as well as non-Nepali speaking people in support of their linguistic cause that ultimately paved the way for the formation of the *All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti* (AINBS) on January 31, 1972 at Darjeeling which spearheaded the movement in this direction. As such in a memorandum submitted to the President of India on March 4, 1972 the AINBS argued :

Nepali written in the Devanagari script, is an important modern Indo-Aryan language. Nepali is the mother tongue of five million Indian nationals besides being the official language of our neighbouring country - Nepal and the language of majority population of Sikkim and Bhutan. In short, Nepali is the dominant language of the lower Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan region of India We hope that Nepali will also find its legitimate place in the Eighth Schedule⁸.

Moreover, while substantiating their argument the AINBS pleaded that the inclusion of Nepali language into the constitution of India might act as a cementing force in developing a nationalistic tendency among the Nepalese of the country. But what added fuel to the fire was that while reacting to a memorandum of the AINBS on the issue of their linguistic demand in 1977, the then Prime Minister of India, Morarji

Desai unequivocally termed "Nepali as a foreign language"⁹ for which it could not be accorded the constitutional status. Such remark seemed to have made the Nepalese not only aggrieved but also pledged for getting their "legitimate demand" realized which eventually led them to perceive the essentiality of strengthening and extending the organizational base of the AINBS among the Nepalese living in other parts of the country. In effect, the Nepali leaders continued to mobilize people throughout India which culminated in the opening of good number of branches of the AINBS in other Nepali populated areas of the country such as Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Thus, in due course, it appeared that the Nepalese of India got actively entangled by heart and soul in the movement demanding the inclusion of Nepali language into the Eighth schedule of Constitution under the banner of the AINBS. By and large, the demand for constitutional recognition of Nepali language assumed an all India character. In view of this, here it is intended to highlight briefly the role played by the Nepalese of Assam in this direction.

III

The Nepalese constitute the highest number of their population in Assam compared to the rest of northeastern states¹¹. Notwithstanding this till the mid-forties of this century virtually there was no any statewide organisation of the Nepalese in the state. It was the Nepali elite of Darjeeling who took initiative in opening an organization viz, the *Assam Provincial Gurkha League* at Shillong in 1944 (it was re-christened as the *Assam Gurkha Sammelon* in 1966) as a branch the AIGL which has been continuing even to-day. Being influenced by the Darjeeling counterparts the budding Nepali elite of Assam began to mobilise their community for the cause of more or less identical objectives with that of the AIGL. As such quite similarly in case of the demand for constitutional recognition of their language, the Nepalese of the state were greatly activated by the Darjeeling counterparts. Thus, in due course, they became equally concerned about the constitutional status of their language. It was a fundamental criterion, they believed, for establishing their community into a rightful place. In view of this, in the 13th annual conference held at Tirap of the then undivided Dibrugarh district on April 28, 1968 the *Assam Gurkha Sammelon* (AGS) for the first time unanimously resolved :

India is a country inhabited by the people of diverse caste, language, religion, numerical strength etc. since time immemorial. In order to bring about all round development the Government of India included their languages into the Eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution. Similarly the Nepalese, who constitute one of the communities of the country, have been demanding for the inclusion of their language into the Constitution of India. But the Government of India has paid no heed to it so far. In view of this, this session of the Assam Gurkha Sammelon urges the Government of India to include Nepali language into the Eighth schedule of the Constitution of India¹¹.

In order to justify demand the Nepali elite of Assam, like the Darjelling counterparts, advocated that the language of theirs was the mother-tongue of the Nepalese who constitute a substantial number of country's total population. Apart from this, a sizeable number of their people working in defence as well as other security forces, they argued, use to speak Nepali language. In a similar vein, the use of Nepali language by the non-Nepali communities like the Lepchas, the Bhutiyas has added a strength to their demand, the Nepali elite pleaded. It seemed to them that their language, like any other constitutionally recognized languages of India, is also equally advanced and rich. More importantly what they forcefully asserted was that Nepali language traces its origin to Sanskrit for which there is a great deal of similarities with other language incorporated in the Constitution of India. As such in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India at Shillong on January 20, 1972 the AGS strongly asserted :

Nepali is a language which is spoken by nearly five million of Indian Nepali citizens and over one lakh of defence and security personnel leaving aside hundreds and thousands of other community people such as Lepchas and others who are also speaking this language. It has a sufficiently advanced literature, rich and very ancient culture and can rightly claim to deserve recognition as Major Indian language. Being in the major lineage of Sanskrit, it is very closely related to Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Marathi and other languages of Indo-European groups. We, therefore, urge upon your benign self to recognize Nepali language as one of the Major Language of India and include it in the Eighth schedule of the Constitution of India¹².

Thus while asserting the linguistic demand the Nepali elite went on arguing that Nepali was introduced as the official language in Darjeeling district in pursuance of the West Bengal Official Language Act, 1961. Moreover, Nepali language was recognized as the state lan-

guage in Sikkim and associate state language in west Bengal. Likewise the Universities of Calcutta, North Bengal, Bhagalpur, Patna, Benaras, Gauhati and Dibrugarh had recognized it as a subject of Major Indian Language in the degree course. Over and above, they referred to the Legislative Assemblies of West Bengal, Tripura, Sikkim and Assam which had passed resolution endorsing the constitutional recognition of Nepali language. As such, Nepali elite asserted that their linguistic demand was "legitimate and democratic" one which deserves constitutional status. They, therefore, hopefully believed that the Government of India might be sympathetic towards the fulfilment of their long-cherished demand. Expressing such a hopeful sentiment in a memorandum presented to the Prime Minister of India on July 24, 1980 the *All Assam Nepali Student's Union* (AANSU) categorically maintained :

That the Nepali speaking people of India have a long-standing grievance viz, nonfulfilment of their legitimate demand for the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of Constitution. After the last Lok Sabha election, Indian Nepalese have entertained the hope this just and legitimate demand of theirs would be fulfilled soon. We, therefore, urge upon the Government to take necessary steps towards the constitutional recognition of Nepali language - a language spoken by more than 50 lakh of Indians¹³.

It is, however, to be noted that the Nepalese of Assam not only put the linguistic demand before the governments of the days but also enthusiastically and evenly collaborated the all India level organizations like the *AINBS*, *Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Parishad* etc. in all phases of movements. In the similar vein, apart from the *AGS* and *AANSU* the various organizations of the Nepalese in the state such as the *Navadhwani Sangathan* (1969), *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan* (1971), *Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Assam* (1974), *Assam Gurkha Sangram Parishad* (1990) etc. also became equally concerned and made endeavours at their level best from time to time with a view to getting the linguistic demand constitutionally recognized. In spite of all these, the non-fulfilment of their demand appeared to have made the Nepalese more aggrieved and disappointed. Consequently a section of them even reportedly went to the extent of forming a "*Suicide Squad*" in Assam¹⁴ for their linguistic cause. But whether they genuinely wanted to take any drastic step or used it as a strategy to meet their demand was difficult to ascertain.

It is however, interesting to note that even a section of the Assamese

as well as non-Assamese intellectuals seemed to be sympathetic towards the linguistic demand of the Nepalese. For instance, while addressing seminar titled *Recognition of Nepali Language in the Eighth Schedule* held in Guwahati on February 8, 1979 under the initiative of the AINBS, Assam Branch the former Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University, Deba Prasad Boruah pleaded :

Language is a legitimate demand and it is necessary for the sake of unity and integrity of India. More than seven lakh population of a community is needed for getting their language constitutionally recognized in our country. But the number of Indian Nepalese is seven times more than Sindhi speaking people of India. In view of this, the recognition and inclusion of Nepali language into the Eighth Schedule of the constitution will not detriment the constitution rather it will add the composite culture¹⁵.

Similarly another Assamese intellectual, Tirthanath Sharma, the former president of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha*, also subscribed to this view. While arguing in favour of Nepali language he emphasized the fact that unlike Sindhi, there was a substantial number of Nepali speaking people particularly in Darjeeling and Sikkim. He also maintained that like any other recognised language, the origin of the Nepali language too was Sanskrit¹⁶. Thus endorsing this view, the former president of the *Bodo Sahitya Sabha*, Lakhyadhar Brahma also pleaded that the Nepalese had a fundamental right for their linguistic demand as the *Sahitya Academy* had duly recognized the same¹⁷. Likewise, a section of the non Assamese elite also subscribed to such views. For example, while pleading in favour of Nepali language, in a complimentary message wishing success of the second annual conference of the AINBS held at Darjeeling in 1978, an established Bengali writer viz., Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar maintained :

Nepali language is like a second mother tongue to me. I have been fighting for the last 25 years in my own way for the due recognition of the Nepali language. The demand for its (Nepali) constitutional recognition is a just democratic demand of the Nepali-speaking citizens of India. This recognition will add a new colour of the many splendoured unity in diversity that is India. It will also open up new vistas before the development of the Nepali language and literature¹⁸.

Such remarks of both the Assamese and non-Assamese intellectuals obviously encouraged the Nepali elite of Assam to further the cause of their linguistic demand. However, realizing the legitimacy of linguistic demand of the Nepalese the government of India ultimately

decided to include the Nepali language into the Eighth Schedule of the constitution of India. For this purpose, the Parliament of India unanimously passed the bill dealing with the constitutional recognition of Nepali language alongwith Manipuri and Kankani on August 20, 1992. Thus the incessant efforts and determined attitude of the socio-cultural organizations of the Indian Nepalese eventually converted their long-charished (1956-1992) dream into reality.

IV

The above discussion shows that initially the seeds of linguistic demand of the Nepalese were sown by a small group of teh Nepali elite of Dehradun district of Uttar Pradesh. In due course probably because of emergence of strong Nepali elite under the banner of an articulate organisation viz., AIGL, the leadership of the linguistic movement was shifted to Darjeeling - a Nepali majority area where it gained momentum.

It however, appeared to the Nepali elite that the recognition of language was the fundamental criterion for the maintenance of their distinct identity. Because the constitutional status of their language, they thought, might bring about certain facilities which would enable them to dispel their socio-economic backwardness. They therefore, accelerated the movement for the constitutional recognition of Nepali language culminating in the formation of the AINBS which subsequently spearheaded the movement resulting in the opening of a good complement of its branches in various states of India including Assam. It is worthwhile to note that it was the most common demand of the Indian Nepalese for which all their organizations whether social, literary or political made it as their most pressing demand. Another factor which also helped the Nepalese being successful in their mission was the support they gained from a section of the non-Nepali speaking elite that ultimately led the ruling authority to accord the demand for constitutional recognition of Nepali language.

Notes and References :

1. William Bentorn, *Encyclopedia of Britanica*, University of Chicago, Volume 16, 1966. p. 223.
2. See, *SMARIKA (SOUVENIR)* of the Sixth annual conference of the *All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti* held at Nalbari on December 28, 1986, p. 36-37.
3. Chiranjib Kumar Kar, *Sub-Regional Movement in India : A Case Study Political History of the Gurkhas of Darjeeling District*, Calcutta, 1991, p. 32.

4. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "Languages and Literatures of Modern India" cited in Ugen Golay's, *Some Aspects of the demand for Constitutional Recognition of Nepali Language*, SMARIKA : HAMRO BHASA, the Souvenir of the second annual conference of the All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti, Darjeeling, 1978, p. 63.
5. Mohananda Paudel, *Nepali Bhasako Sangbidhanik Manyata : Kino, Kosori Ro Kohilay* (in Nepali), SMRITIGRANTHA, 20th annual conference of the Assam Gurkha Sammelon, Silver Jubilee Session held at Guwahati on December 27, 1992, p. 14.
6. *Memorandum Submitted to the President of India by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelon*, Darjeeling on November 12, 1969.
7. *Memorandum submitted to Smt. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India by Prem Kumar Alay, President of the All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti*, Delhi, September 26, 1983.
8. *Memorandum titled : "A Brief Introduction to Nepali Language and Literature" submitted to the President of India by the AINBS*, Darjeeling, March 14, 1972, p.1.
9. Prem Kumar Alay, *Mul Sachibko Protibedan*, SMARIKA : HAMRO BHASA, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
10. Following are the figures of the Nepali population in the northeast region as per the consus of 1971.

Assam	3,53,673
Arunachal Pradesh	85,000
Manipur	36,604
Meghalaya	10,000
Mizoram	4,000
Nagaland	---
11. *Resolution No.3 adopted in the 13th annual conference of the Assam Gurkha Sammelon held at Tirap of the old Dibrugarh district on April 28, 1968.*
12. *Memorandum of the Assam Gurkha Sammelon submitted to the Bharat Ratna Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India at Shillong on January 20, 1972.*
13. *Memorandum of the AANSU presented to the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi on July 24, 1980.*
14. Reported in the AGRADOOT (Assamese bi-weekly), December 4, 1991.
15. *Appeared in the Assam Gurkha Sammelon Bulletin No. 23, 1979, p. 8.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Complimentary message addressed to the editor, HAMRO BHASA : SMARIKA from Satyendra Narayan Mazumder of Calcutta on the occassion of the second annual conference of the AINBS, *op.cit.*

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA : SOME ISSUES

Nisha Garg & Pradeep Kumar

At the outset, we would like to begin this paper with a clarification that may sound somewhat defensive in nature. A lot has been written and said about the exploitation and repression of women in a patriarchal value system that characterises most societies in the world. We don't question all those sentiments that aim at working for women through various agencies. We also don't wish to underplay the efforts made by the feminist intellectuals and activists in last three to four decades on various fronts, some of which successfully, others not so successfully. But we in this paper wish to highlight some of those issues which need to be looked into if we want the women's movement to be rescued from being hijacked by those who may not have imbibed the essence of feminism, and whose enthusiasm may ironically prove counter productive to the movement. While most such intellectuals may be doing so indeliberately, others may be simply jumping on a popular bang wagon. It is in this perspective that an attempt has been made in the following pages to sift real issues from the elaptrap of all that goes with feminism today.

II

Even though it may be somewhat absurd to make any distinction between women's rights and the human rights, it becomes imperative to do so in view of gender specific or gender based curtailment of human rights in the society. Not all cases of impairment of women's human rights are necessarily gender based. In other words many a woman may be deprived of her human rights on account of several non-gender related factors viz. caste or social backwardness, poverty or even religious and other cultural toboos. Obviously in such cases we shall not count them as cases of women's rights violation. It is only when the gender of a woman becomes the sole or

even primary causal factors, that we include it in the category of women's rights.

This preliminary explanation may sound somewhat childish and uncalled for in a gathering of academics, but in our humble opinion, it is necessary to avoid any distraction from the discussion on the rights of women qua women. Women's rights are actually related to (a) primarily the issue of patriarchy, reinforced by culture, religion and literature etc. (b) Subsequently the rights of women may get further curtailed by the boosting factors like communalism and fundamentalism.

In fact if we think coolly on the issues that we tend to discuss and catalogue in different articles and seminars, they broadly get boiled down to the domineering and far reaching influence of patriarchy. Much of the cultural religious indoctrination or "socialisation" or "internalisation" of male values is actually only a result and not necessarily a cause of this patriarchy. In fact it is the "beauty" of any dominance or "hegemony" that it tends to get reinforced, repeatedly literature, culture, religion and societal taboos etc., thereby legitimising the basic values of the dominant ideology in all walks of life. To analyse literature, culture and religious texts at length to discover the causes of patriarchal values is in fact to start from the wrong end.

Interestingly communalism, more than fundamentalism, is a subsequently boosting factor promoting not only patriarchal value system, but all that is rightly or wrongly associated with religion. Many sociologists will tell us that fundamentalism is directed against one's own community's supposedly anti-religious practices and is therefore more dangerous to women's liberation than communalism which is essentially political in nature and is aimed at the "other" community. While this distinction may be very important, in practice any communal polarisation tends to "homogenise" the respective communities, even if this "homogenisation" is utterly superficial and temporary in nature. The very tendency to "defend" one's religious practices along with a whole lot of religious malpractices associated with entirely non-religious historical reasons, vis-a-vis the "attacks" from the "rival" communities, tends to make both the communities more and more status quoist. This affects women's issues much more than other religious taboos. Thus a Shah Bano becomes an issue of Muslim

identity, a Deorala gets mixed up with Kshtriya and Rajput pride. Even many a non-supporter of these obsolete practices feels shy of fighting against his own religious practices. That is why when a young Muslim girl is sold off to an old Sheikh in Hyderabad, the Muslims get agitated at the media attention that the issue gets. Ironically it is always the "rival" community leaders who quote cases of women-related injustices, not so much to plead against the gender injustice as to look down the other community. Naturally the real issue gets distracted and the "faithfuls" and "defenders" of their respective faiths devote all energy to underplay or even justify these grossly unjust acts. The recent Lucknow bench decision of the Allahabad High Court in regard to triple talaq is just one such example. These can infact be multiplied endlessly.

III

In the following pages we aim to discuss briefly some of the issues that the women's movement faces and is likely to continue to face in the years to come. This list is by no means an exhaustive one, but only is illustrative in nature.

Of utmost importance today is the problematic nature of feminism. There was a time when feminists knew what direction they were to take or where did they want to go. It began with sheer male bashing and soon led to male imitation, even if indirectly or indeliberately. Radical version of feminist, which was so popular in the West at one time and which continued to be the dominant trend among the Indian feminists even till as late as the 70's, has today been questioned by the protagonists of the new-feminism or authentic feminism. In other words the attempt is to liberate the movement from the clutches of masculinism and reintroduce authenticity by feminising the feminist movement. This has however not been a smooth exercise. There have been several issues related to this neo-feminist version of the women's movement. While it may be alright to make a good academic distinction between post-feminism and conventional values of treating women as basically different from men, the distinction recedes into oblivion when some neo-feminists start talking about the "distinct female instincts" or "basic female characteristics" almost (apparently atleast) in a language that would have put the radical feminists in rage. We are not denying the need to rescue the feminist movement from the male trap that had

ironically led to idealisation of male values - via imitation of masculine characteristics by the so called liberated women. However, the issue that we are trying to raise is that this whole trend has brought the movement at the cross roads where the question being raised once again is "whither feminism"? Is there any such thing as "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics that are independent of social constructions; if yes then how to guard against the conventional stereotypes reinforcing all gender based prejudices in the name of these supposedly "inherent differences"; which of them are really genetic and which are merely artificial constructs of patriarchy?

Another major issue that the movement faces today is that of elitism. It is beyond doubt that the leadership of most of the women related movements is largely in the hands of the urban/upper class elitist women. In fact to a great extent feminists have confined their clientele, or it has remained confined, to not only urban but only a few metropolitan cities viz. Delhi and Bombay. We are not maintaining that elite character of any movement is *ipso facto* bad. We even accept that it is in the very nature of intellectual movements to originate in the elitist minds of the society. In a way it is inevitable for even mass-movements to be led and controlled by the educated elite. So much so that despite all talk of massification of the Indian National Movement, its leadership comprised by a large urban middle class English educated elite. But then what is pertinent to note is that this leadership always commanded respect, gratitude and admiration of the masses on whose behalf it claimed to work, and was never subjected to ridicule as is the case with many a strand in our feminist movement. At times the women on whose behalf feminists claim to fight, simply fail to share their enthusiasm and find themselves distanced from the "Cigarette smoking westernised English speaking" feminist leaders. We in no way necessarily share this cynicism but then it remains important to investigate why is it so? Our nationalist elite of the freedom struggle was far more distanced from the poor ill fated masses, than is today's elite in terms of its values and life style yet this "schism" was not so discouraging as it is today.

The other related problem is that of feeling shy of fighting the "internal enemy" i.e., the female indoctrination and socialisation in the patriarchal value system. It is not enough to underplay the negative

role of a large number of women who make a hue and cry against the injustices perpetrated by the men of the species but simply succumb to "feminine" docility themselves when it is their own turn to fight against this value system. On most occasions this fight is very unpalatable and even embarrassing, but then so it is with men who have also been socialized in the male dominated value-system of the society. We do appreciate the utter lack of opportunities for women to wage such a fight, but then we should not let the female of the species go lightly either. Feminism is a liberating ideology that is more concerned with the fight against mental aviary than against the physical disabilitation. And any liberating ideology should infact liberate the oppressed as much as the oppressor. Be it capitalism or poverty or caste or gender based oppression, the liberation must also help liberate the oppressor by providing him the opportunity to develop the lopsided part of this partially suppressed personality. The fight against this internal enemy should not be postponed in the name of ensuring unity and popularity.

We must not overemphasise the "indoctrination of women" factor beyond a limit. That is giving too much leverage to women's incapacity to fight patriarchy in the name of their *Samskars*, or maintaining that, those women who fail to fight patriarchal values are "victims" of male values is not excusable beyond a point. If stretched too much, this logic will also give a long rope to all those male conventionalists who may also quietly claim that by not granting equal rights to women folk in their own families they are merely "succumbing" to their age old *Samskars* which their parents have helped them to internalise.

Not all women are feminists and not all acts of injustice against women are actually directed against women *qua* women. There are actually a host of grievances which are not gender-related, still they get grouped with them. That is unfortunate. Most categories of people which are socially and economically backward continue to practise a very large number of taboos and rituals which are anti ethical to all canons of justice, egalitarianism and individual's self respect. To take out these as cases of gender injustice and then try to suggest remedies would be like recommending measures to supply fresh potable water to all children in poor villages without realising that this can't be done without supplying drinking water to the entire family. The question is not just that of fairness but also of feasibility of such proposals. The

time has come when women's movement must come out of the initial stage of cataloguing grievances. While some feminists may deny this charge, most articles in news papers and magazines continue to do just that.

It takes us no where, except making the movement more and more militant, aggressive and trade-union like. There may be nothing wrong in adopting militant postures, but when this militancy and trade unionism tend to blind a movement in terms of justness and fairness, it becomes not only undesirable but also counter productive. Any attempt which tends to sideline the issue of innate justness of the movement by underplaying the moral dimension of women's liberation, is bound to lend a helping hand to patriarchy by legitimising latter's attempts at reinforcing conventional hegemony by counter mobilising men. All this may sound like black mailing. Surely it is not that. The issue that in our opinion needs to be the guiding force of the feminist struggle should be the principle of justice and rationality, rather than the trade union like capacity of the women to be united against the men.

No male-hatred, or myth of female "superiority" should be promoted. It is as illogical to talk of this as that of male superiority. In the West resentment is already discernible among male job aspirants against "female favouratism". While there may be no favouratism in reality, the pronouncements of feminist enthusiasts are sometimes like those of the politicians who have been accused of "Muslim appeasement" in India without actually having done anything for them. Thus feminism should guard against another version of "Minorityism" with its emphasis on vote bank and rising reservations. All "patronage" must be rejected e.g. tax relief in income-tax that infact trivialised women's related issues; reservations, particularly if some urban women resented the Mandal Commission report. Feminists should not be seen as "favouring" women under *all* circumstances. Women clubs, women judges, all-women-staffed-feminist-journals, infact go against the principle of meritocracy, more on women's capacity to unite against men than on the principle of justice. And it is the latter that can enthuse men to join this movement. It would lose much of its appeal and rationality if it fails to attract all progressive and fair minded persons, thereby transcending the biologically gendered boundaries that "divide" the Homo sapiens.

Thus we will prefer empowerment of women through literacy and poverty alleviation programmes; to any kind of sectarianism based on a trade union's strategy of making unilateral demands on the system, which at times lay even result in exclusive female institutions *a la* conventional emphasis on female exclusivity. Thus any demands for exclusive women press-clubs ladies' specials, ladies seats etc. may ultimately sound like fundamentalists' insistence on keeping women distanced from men's world in the name of protecting women's "modesty". Frankly speaking reservations of all kinds should never be treated as a panacea. Contrary to its goals, the system based on reservations promotes sectarianism and ultimately is counter productive to the healthy development of any system. The whole issue of skimming off the creamy layer from among the OBCs can also be raised in women's reservations. This is not only because it sounds utterly ridiculous to provide reservations for all kinds of "deprived of" sections (including domicile based reservations) thereby making the very calculation of these quotas a complicated exercise, but also because all reservationists tend to claim "homogeneity" for their reference groups. Just as all the OBCs are not backward, all women are also not deprived of vis-a-vis the men. At least a section of these, the most vocal one, has succeeded in coming out of the clutches to patriarchy. Thus there are vast differences in terms of deprivation when one moves from women working in unorganised agrarian sector to these occupying managerial positions in urban metropolises. To maintain that even the latter suffer some discrimination, may be true but discrimination in a society is not merely gender based. An individual's rural or tribal or hilly background can also be a cause of discrimination in an urban local. But then all these shades of discrimination can't be fought with the weapon of reservations.

Women's movement has also to be cautious against the attempts of the communalists to hijack it by ensuring women's greater "participation" in their communal politics. Infact it has been observed that the communalists of various shades have been tremendously successful in mobilising women in recent years. Much of this mobilisation is not on women related issues but it gives the illusion that women have been empowered through politicisation. The issue is not merely that the women remain mere followers of their male counterparts in

these political parties, but more than that this participation is nowhere near any issues related to them as women. Interestingly much of this, reinforces the traditional images which almost all religions claim to eulogise. Needless to say much of anti-woman writing in conventional literature (both religious and secular) is by way of eulogising their traditional roles rather than by outrightly condemning them. This creates an illusion of women's empowerment, and when this is done by communal groups by using the language of religion, the task of distancing women from these conventional role models becomes all the more difficult.

The issue raised in this paper may leave the audience/ reader with the impression that the paper intends to attack the movement, more than support it. But if we replace the word "attack" by "introspect", that is precisely the objective indicated in the beginning of this paper.

Notes and References :

1. A few years ago some newspapers in Punjab raised the issue of discrimination against the women when some Punjab policemen tattooed the words *Jebkatri* (pick pocket) on the foreheads of some women in the State. It seems that in such cases as these, it is class i.e. the economically backward status of the victims, that is more important than their gender. One clearly remembers the infamous Bhagalpur blindings in Bihar where a very large number of under trials in jails were blinded by the police, surely all of them were not women.
2. Of course we do not mean here the cases where a caste itself may be a factor for gender related discrimination.
3. For a further elaboration of this point, see Pradeep Kumar, "Is the neo-feminism sustainable"? in *Mainstream*, May 7, 1994.
4. There have been some women related movements in the areas far away from the metropolises, viz the anti-liquor movements in the Garhwal-Kumaon region of Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. But most of these movements were led by the local leadership and were, by and large, not inspired by the metropolitan elite of the feminist movement.

DULLES AND EASTERN EUROPE : A RETROSPECTION

Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed

Eastern Europe, as had been past, is and will remain a major area of American foreign policy interest. But no one in the US Administration was so preoccupied with the fate of the region than John Foster Dulles, for, he alone made characteristically distinctive approach to the problem of Eastern Europe created by the Western acquiescence to Soviet domination of the entire region at the end of World War II. The West conceded the Soviet demand to convert the region from traditional corridor invasion of the Soviet Union to Soviet sphere of influence in order to achieve a limited and immediate objective, i.e. the unity of action in scoring a military victory in the War and in creating a new international body. This eventually, as Hans J. Morgenthau argued, "opened a new threat more dangerous than one against which the Second World War had been fought"¹.

At the end of the War, unlike many isolationists Dulles pleaded for an active and involved role of the United States in world politics. As early as January 1945 he said that his country should play an active role in world affairs reflecting the Wilsonian concept that leads to a syllogism : (i) peace is indivisible, (ii) American has an interest in peace, and therefore (iii) America in its quest for peace can accept no geographical limits of interests². US tacit recognition of Soviet sphere of influence put a limitation on the American role in Europe. This position went unchallenged till Presidential election campaign in 1952. The spillover effect caused by the Fulton speech of Winston Churchill at the initial stage was turned to an academic debate by Walter Lippmann³ and later on conservative Republicans like Senator Robert A. Taft and Alexander Wiley took it up for a political campaign against what they called it to be the immoral policy of containment of the

Truman Administration. These critics of the Democratic Administration, however, did not suggest an alternative policy to deal with the situation than obtaining in Eastern Europe, although US Congressman like Chalres J. Kerston made an unrealistic proposal urging his government to grant \$100 million for organizing a military force with the escapees from Eastern Europe to fight against the communist governments in the region⁴.

None of these arguments appeared more appealing to the Americans than what had been suggested by John Foster Dulles in a series of writings and statements on the fate of Eastern Europe. As early as 1946, still serving as a consultant of the Truman Administration he made his first lengthy and systematic statement on "international communist conspiracy" which was later on published in the *Life* magazine in June 1946 under the title "Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and What to Do About It". It conceptualized the extension of Soviet domain in three zones - inner, middle an outer zone; Eastern Europe being the middle zone of Soviet domination, and prescribed measures to check future Soviet expansion. These included encouragement of the promotion of freedom of religious and political faith, activating the UN mechanism to deal with any form of expansion and US preparedness to resist all expansive manifestation of Soviet policy, *Pax Sovietica*⁵. Three years later, he argued in favour of a policy promoting the ideas of liberation of the peoples of East and Central Europe⁶, and this was further expanded, although disjointedly, in his book published a year later⁷. He advocated a moral offensive against the Soviet donation in Eastern Europe and believed that such a step would not only incapacitate the Soviet Union to consolidate its hegemony but also inspire the "captive peoples" to keep the hopes of liberation alive. This inspiration was not to be mistaken as an act of incitement to revolt, for, he wrote clearly : "'Activation' does not mean armed revolt. The people have no arms, and violent revolt would be futile. Indeed, it would be worse than futile, for it would precipitate massacre we have no desire to weaken the Soviet Union at the cost of those who are our primary concern"⁸.

Two years later, in 1952, Dulles made a comprehensive statement on the policy of liberation which eventually replaced the containment policy as Dwight D. Eisenhower moved on to the White House. In his famous election year article "A Policy of Boldness", Dulles advanced two characteristic alternatives to the containment policy : (i) the Ameri-

can military preparedness capable of resorting to instant and massive retaliation against any aggressive expansion of the Soviet Union and (ii) political offensive against the Soviet Union to weaken it internally⁹. The second alternative was based on moral assumptions that "dynamic prevails over static" that the "non-material forces are more powerful than those that are material". He wrote : "We shall let these truths work in the through us. We should be dynamic, we should use *ideas* as weapons, and these ideas should conform moral principles". Criticising the Truman's Administration's policy of compromise on the fate of Eastern Europe, he argued that mere statement of American wish and expectation of liberation of the captive peoples "will put heavy burdens on the jailors and create new opportunity for liberation"¹⁰.

The Dullesian policy of liberation of Eastern Europe envisaged a programme of action, viz, a declaration that liberation as a peaceful objective of American foreign policy, creation of a political 'task force' of dependable escapees from Eastern Europe who would develop a freedom programme for each of the satellite countries, coordination of freedom programme of the Radio Free Europe with the Voice of America and snapping of diplomatic ties with the existing European governments when the freedom programme and eventually the movement would progress. He tried to convince that such a programme was not to mean US incitement to armed revolt in Eastern Europe, for, he wrote : "We do not want a series of bloody uprisings and reprisals. There can be peaceful separation from Moscow, as Tito showed, and enslavement can be made so unprofitable that the master will let go his grip. Such results do not come to pass overnight ... we can be confident that within two, five or 10 years substantial parts of the present captive world can peacefully regain national independence"¹¹.

Dulles's resignation as foreign policy adviser of President Truman marked the end of bi-partisan commitment to the Administration's foreign policy and paved his way to assume the role of foreign policy planner of the Presidential candidate of the Republican party and eventually to the office of the Secretary of State. The foreign policy plank of the Republican party authored by Dulles and adopted on July 10, 1952 was a thorough assault on the Administration's acceptance of status quo position in Europe and thus abandoning the East European nations to be the victims of Soviet domination. It carried the message of liberation as it reads : "The plicy we espouse will revive the

contagious, liberating influence which are inherent in freedom. They will inevitably set up strain and stresses within the captive world which will mark the beginning of the end"¹².

Dulles made identical statement in the form of an address before the annual meeting of American Political Science Association held in Buffalo on August 27, 1952 conceptualising the liberation theory as a reflection of American will to be pursued by the next Administration. Dismissing the contention of the proponents of the theory having received the popular support, Averell Harriman opposed in the meeting itself the Dullesian thesis of liberation and said that such unrealistic ideas would spread tension in Europe and it was a trap prompting revolt in the Soviet sphere of influence. Dulles too did not waste time to refute Harriman's criticism saying that his policy was not a trap, but a concrete and workable plan to liberate the 'captive peoples'. President Truman also assailed the liberation campaigner for raising false hope and for playing "gutter politics"¹³.

Behind the rhetorics of liberation of Eastern Europe, there was definitely a vote-catching motive in view of the ethnic voters of East European origins having their strong concentration in a number of cities and urban centres as testified to by Arthus Bliss Lane's appeal to Dulles not merely to internationalize the plight of the East European nations living under the Soviet sphere of influence but to make it politically profitable¹⁴. This former US Ambassador to Poland distributed two pamphlets entitled *Betrayal : Over 100,000 East Europeans by the Democratic Administration and Republican Policy of Libration or Democratic Policy of Containment*. But Eisenhower, the Republican Presidential candidate, having unparallel war experience in Europe as the Supreme Commander of the Allied forces during the second World War, knew it well that there were serious limitation on the extent of the propagation of liberation of Eastern Europe, and hence, stayed away from making concrete commitment to the peoples of Eastern Europe on the nature and extent of American help to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, the Dullesian rhetoric on "peaceful liberation" of Eastern Europe appeared to be impressive to those who were unhappy with the Roosevelt-Truman concessional policy toward the Soviet Union on the fate of Eastern Europe. This invariably worked as a contributory factor to the victory of Eisenhower in the Presidential election of 1952. Notwithstanding the electoral gains scored by the Republican candi-

date as a result of liberation campaign, Dulles himself did not seriously subscribe to some of the statements he had prepared for the election purposes. He was aware of the consequences of the oversimplification of the liberation issues¹⁵, and therefore, carefully avoided the explanation regarding the extent of the American involvement in the actual act of liberation. Herman Finer, of course, did not like to question Dulles's sincerity in the liberation policy intended to expedite the eventual fall of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe¹⁶. All what he spoke or prepared for Eisenhower to speak in the election campaign was a part of the American psychological warfare against the Soviet Union to weaken it from within, without, however, clarifying the operational dynamic of the theory. At any rate, it provided an emotional umbrella to Eisenhower capable of holding together the enormous ethnic support for him which proved to be decisive in the Presidential election.

It is not out of context to mention that the unitary character of the 1952 US Presidential election campaign issue was viewed in Western Europe with skepticism and apprehension. The idea of liberation of Eastern Europe appeared to be appealing theoretically, but it carried dangerous implications of military show-down between the United States and the Soviet Union affecting the security of Western Europe directly¹⁷. Keeping in mind the benefits derived from the Marshall Plan and the indispensability of the US support in economic and military respects, discreet silence in the Western capitals in the matter of liberation campaign was understandable. One could, however, notice the contradiction between liberation campaign carrying the potentiality of a war with the Soviet Union and Eisenhower's pledge to go to Korea to bring peace and conclude honourable armistice.

The liberation ideas, notwithstanding their practical limitations, constituted the core of the Eisenhower Administration and Dulles became the key policy mover in this regard. His testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in connection with his nomination as the Secretary of State bears the clear evidence of his commitment for a "dynamic and positive policy" conceived in the framework of liberation of Eastern Europe. Thus said Dulles before the Committee :

It is only keeping alive the hope of liberation, by taking advantage of that whenever opportunity arises, that we will end this terrible peril which dominate the world, which imposes upon us such sacrifices and so great fears for the future. But all of this can be done and must be done in ways

which will not provoke a general war, or which will not provoke an insurrection which would be crushed with bloody violence¹⁸.

Dulles could foresee that a liberal atmosphere free from Moscow's interference could be possible in Eastern Europe as shown by Marshall Tito in Yugoslavia. He said before the Committee that he did not admire Tito's regime, but he was convinced that Tito's breakaway from Moscow demonstrated in unmistakable terms that "it is possible to disintegrate this present monolithic structure". At the same time he or his President could not overstep the barriers of international commitments like that of the Yalta Agreements although there was an election pledge to repudiate such agreements in the interest of the "captive peoples". Dulles himself wanted to bury the "realm of controversy" over the secret treaties of the past and move for the future dawn in Eastern Europe¹⁹.

Dulles, in his life time as the US Secretary of State, saw helplessly three uprisings in Eastern Europe against the Soviet domination while the first two - the Berlin riot of July 1953 and the Poznan uprising of June 1956 were sudden and short lived, and the other i.e. the Hungarian revolution was massive anti-communist and anti-Soviet in content and character. Unable to do anything positive for those who rose against the Soviet or communist domination, Dulles only found correctness of his 'diagnosis' of the eventual and inevitable erosion of the Soviet control over Eastern Europe. At the end of the East Berlin episode he said :

The unquenchable spirit of the people were dramatized in East Berlin where unarmed youths tore up paving stones from the streets to hurl in defiance at tanks. Such a spirit can never be repressed and this love for freedom is more and more manifesting itself through the captive peoples²⁰.

The suppression of East Berlin riot did not dampen Dulles's conviction of his thesis that Eastern Europe would regain independence through peaceful means and changes. He told the UN General Assembly on September 17, 1953 that "it is not in the interest of peace, or the goals of our Charter, that they (Eastern Europe) can no longer live in their tradition and their faith" but the United States "does not call for exporting revolution or inciting others to violence. Let me make it more emphatic. We believe that violent changes destroy what it would gain. We put our hopes in the vast possibilities of peaceful change"²¹.

The possibility of peaceful changes in Eastern Europe at least in terms of creating a liberal atmosphere became brighter when the process

of de-Stalinization began in the Soviet Union. Dulles, however, was skeptical about the real motives of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin. He said : "The fact that the Soviet rulers now denounce much of the past gives cause for hope, because it demonstrates that liberalizing influence from within and without can bring about peaceful change"²². His optimism for a change in eastern Europe was accentuated by the visit of Tito to Moscow in June 1956, because it offered an implication that the Soviet leaders had accepted the concept of "different" road to communism and showed Moscow's tolerant approach to the growth of national communism in Eastern Europe.

Dulles probably failed to assess or visualize the limits of Soviet tolerance to the growth of national communism in the period of the Cold War. Therefore, the entire concept of liberation of Eastern Europe suffered from the vagueness of hope, and it did not take time to see how was such hope badly shattered by the crackdown of Poznan uprising and also the Hungarian revolution. Even then he continued to cherish the hope of liberation. Reacting to the suppression of Poznan riot, Dulles expressed optimism for a change in Eastern Europe. His hopes received credence with the rehabilitation of Gomulka in the political life of Poland and the beginning of the Poznan trial with considerable fairness. Dulles's interview with the CBS on October 21, 1956 just a few days before the Hungarian uprising reaffirmed his optimism for the beginning of Polish reemergence to independence. Two weeks after the suppression of the Poznan troubles, he told newsmen : "It is not a matter for this year or next year, but I believe that this second postwar decade will see these new forces take charge of the situation and we can really hopefully look forward a transformation of the international scene"²³. A few months later, such forces in Hungary tried desperately to take charge of the situation for a couple of days, but were crushed by the Soviet interventionist army.

The United States, before and during the Hungarian uprising, ruled out the possibility of extending American military aid to the anti-Soviet rebels in Eastern Europe. This position was not only clarified by Dulles in his interview with the CBS on October 21, 1956 but also by Robert Murphy before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He said in unequivocal terms that the United States would play a very limited role in inspiring the East Europeans to strive for freedom²⁴.

At any rate, the news of the Hungarian uprising delighted Dulles.

It was a vindication of his much-talked-about thesis of liberation of Eastern Europe. As Finer puts the words of Dulles :

".....the people of Poland and Hungary, their leaders, have seen that it is possible to be independent of Moscow! We kept alive the yearning for freedom. It worked in Poland and Hungary. The great monolith of communism is crumbling"²⁵.

He was careful enough not to give an impression that the American military action was forthcoming in aid of the rebels. The first official statement of President Eisenhower prepared by Dulles was worded carefully to state merely that "The United States considers the development in Hungary renewed expression of the intense desire for freedom long held by the Hungarian people"²⁶.

The early developments in Hungary suggesting enough premonition of a stormy revolt in Budapest appeared encouraging to the US Administration. Dulles was particularly happy over the fact that East Europeans had taken arms against the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower reviewed with Dulles the Hungarian crisis and wanted to "explore the chance of helping to assist the centrifugal, disruptive currents in the Iron Curtain countries"²⁷. But the nature of help was not formally or informally decided upon. Even the position paper drafted on the advice of President Eisenhower left no fabric of impression to say that the US Government incited the Poles and the Hungarians to revolt. Dulles made a lengthy statement at Dallas on October 27, 1956 pin pointedly clarifying that the United States desired sincerely the freedom of the captive peoples of Eastern Europe but gave no idea or impression of American action toward the realization of the desire²⁸. That is why Khrushchev never took seriously the Dullesian theory of liberation of Eastern Europe²⁹. Robert Murphy, however, felt that the United States gave an impression that it had been sponsoring the anti-Soviet revolts in Eastern Europe, but at the hour of need the Administration refused to extend any help except offering political asylum to 21,000 escapees from Hungary³⁰.

Dulles probably did not anticipate a Hungarian type of massive and armed revolution in Eastern Europe so soon, and it appeared that when his hope for the liberation of the "captive peoples" was taking a turn to reality, he was caught unaware. The lack of a definite contingency plan to meet such an eventuality compounded by the outbreak of the Suez war cornered Dulles to a precarious position in which he was

unable to gear up the State Department or to motivate President Eisenhower to initiate diplomatic or military moves in the aid of the Hungarian rebels. He even could not force a debate in the General Assembly on Soviet intervention in Hungary overtaking the deliberations on the Suez war for obvious reasons of limitation of a super-power in the face of a strong third world lobby in support of activating the UN machinery to end the war in Middle East, probably, even at the cost of the Hungarian revolutionaries. These limitations were clear and profound, and therefore, in preparing Eisenhower's speech Dulles had to concede *idealpolitik* to *realpolitik*: "We cannot, of course, carry out this policy [liberation] by resort to force. Such force would have been contrary to the best interests of Eastern European peoples and to the abiding principles of the United Nations. But we did help to keep alive the hopes of these peoples for freedom"³¹.

There was strong pressure on the State Department with the "proposals ranging from outright military action to plans for welcoming thousands or refugees" as Robert Murphy recorded later on³². And everything ended with the US offer of asylum to 21,000 Hungarians as a "practical effect to the American people's desire to help the victims of Soviet oppression"³³.

Unable to do anything concrete to the advancement of liberation of Eastern Europe even at the peak moment of the Hungarian crisis, Dulles realised the operational constraints of the liberation thesis, and therefore, he began to disown any responsibility of the Administration in the events in Hungary, and instead he prescribed the idea of "evolutionary process" of liberation, which later on came to be known as "gradualism" of liberation in Eastern Europe, ruling out the possibility of US military action in support of the liberalization or democratization of the political system in the communist dominated region of Europe.

The preparation for change of US policy toward Eastern Europe from liberation to gradualism began in the life time of John Foster Dulles. He himself gave the first official indication of the switch over in his major foreign policy address of April 22, 1957 when he said: "We seek liberation of captive nations But we do not ourselves incite revolt. Rather we encourage an evolution to freedom"³⁴. On this line of thought the US House Committee recommended that the United States should continue to encourage the growth of nationalism in Eastern

Europe³⁵. Senator Mike Mansfield advised the Administration to develop more cultural ties with the governments of Eastern Europe and suggested that the Secretary of State should visit these countries, for, such activities would eventually enable these governments to strive for an assertive and more independent role in international politics. Dulles rejected the proposal probably on the ground that his visit would amount to a tacit recognition of the *status quo* position in Eastern Europe³⁶. He preferred to mention in his statements frequently the shift of US policy from liberation to gradualism. For example, in his prepared speech before the Atomic Power Institute, New Hampshire, on May 2, 1958, he stated that his country would extend support to the "evolutionary forces of freedom without provoking the awful horror of World War III"³⁷. Two weeks later he defended the stand favouring evolutionary process of freedom: "I have constantly said that we need to keep our foreign policy flexible and adaptable to changing situation"³⁸.

With the death of Dulles in 1959, the idea of US encouragement to the peoples of Eastern Europe for an evolutionary course toward freedom or to a position of lesser dependence on Moscow did not die. It continued to grow during all the subsequent decades through different phases, such as, President Kennedy's theory of peaceful engagement taking Poland as a test case and President Johnson's theory and practice of "building bridges". Although the Czechoslovak experiments in "communism with a human face" in 1968 under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek doomed with predictable failure and the United States had no role to play except drawing the attention of the United Nations to the Soviet led Warsaw pact intervention there, the people of Eastern Europe, as Dulles believed, continued to cherish the idea of liberation and waited till the moment of opportunity surfaced. At the same time, the successive governments of the United States also continued to extend moral support in the growth of liberalism in Eastern Europe which yielded positive results. As the internal weaknesses of the Soviet Union surfaced in the early 1980s, the Solidarity movement in Poland fired the first salvo to loosen Moscow's grip on Eastern Europe. A series of breathtaking events took place in Eastern Europe such as the bloody uprising in Romania leading the summary execution of Nicolae Ceausescu, Hungary's pull out of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and reunification of Germany, eventually the peaceful liberation of Eastern Europe, a dream of Dulles

became a fact of life even before the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. All these historic events philosophically point out to the laws of objective reasoning : no one can be permanently dominated by an external will. And here Dulles appears to be be prophetically correct.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC DISPARITIES, GORBACHEV'S POLICIES AND THE DISINTEGRA- TION OF THE SOVIET UNION

Santosh Kumar

INTRODUCTION

Soviet regional policies, from the outset were, carried out within a framework of highly centralized economic administration and geared to serve the perceived interests of the Union as a whole. Whereas republic planners sought to create relatively diversified economies, Moscow planners opted for specialization enforced through its control over investment. Although political rhetoric long proclaimed the goal of evening out levels of development among the republics implemented did not fully promote the desired goal. But, no doubt, to a limited extent they did foster some industrialization everywhere and they put in place systems of universally available education and health care. The ultimate consequences of Soviet regional policies could be seen in the large disparities at the levels of development among the republics.

In the late 1980's, the poorest republics, i.e., Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had estimated per capita GNPs of only about a third of that of the RSFSR. Living standards in Tajikistan, as measured by the per capita consumption, were only about half the Russian level, which in turn was 22 per cent below that of the Russian level in Estonia. Differences had widened before the disintegration. All republics had economic structures that were severely distorted with overblow industrial sectors and grossly underdeveloped service sectors, especially retail trade and personal services. Environmental damage was present everywhere. The physical embodiment of the distortions and damages were discernible in each republic in its patterns of land use, its plants

and equipment, and the skills and distribution of its work force.

Moscow's preference to Regional specialization and its inclination for gigantomania combined to produce monopolistic industries and large interrepublic trade dependencies. Most republics conducted bulk of their trade with one another, and that trade supplied critical needs to sustain domestic consumption and also provided outlets for surplus production. Such were the physical legacies and economic realities that Soviet regional policies bequeathed to its fifteen successor states in varying degrees and configurations. Other legacies were republic governments without experience in real governance and ethnically fragmented population structures.

Although Gorbachev had sought to revitalize the Soviet state and its constituent peoples, his often contradictory and misguided policies tended to hasten its demise. *Glasnost* provided the republican leaders with various fora where they were able to express their long-standing grievances against the policies made in Moscow, and their consequences being felt elsewhere. *Perestroika* with its inconsistent economic reforms added to the list of grievances, but also accorded the republics and enterprises more leeway in economic decision making. The latter, coupled with the policies of *democratization* as engineered by Gorbachev, and the provision of greater autonomy for republics in general, fuelled the smoldering fires of latent separatism that were inherent in an overarching administrative structure based on dominant nationality groups.

This paper is an attempt to review the Soviet economic development policies that were pursued which had affected regional economies and political structure. The fifteen erstwhile republic, presently the separate nation states, were the main focus of the "national question" and thus have been taken as the unit of analysis. The paper focuses on the level of development, distorted economic structures, economic interdependencies of the republics, and environmental degradation, among the former republics, allowing for intra-republican nationality differences where ever possible. Finally, Gorbachev's economic policies and their consequences are examined as they unfolded in 1990 and 1991 and culminated in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union, giving rise to the Commonwealth of Independent States.

SOVIET REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The goal to proportionate and symmetrize the levels of development and equalize the living standard among the constituent republics was proclaimed through the Soviet government policy statements for many decades¹. Considerable progress, air too, was made in reducing the enormous economic disparities that originally existed when the Union came into existences. This was particularly true of Central Asia and Transcaucasia, where industrialization had proceeded swiftly from very low levels and universal public health and education systems were put in place². Following Leonid Brezhnev's declaration in 1972 regarding the problems of regional economic disparities among national groups the issue of economic disparities in a regional context had been basically solved³ and the theme of 'evening out' was dropped. But, the promotion of economic development in all republics through appropriate but widely differing investment allocations continued.

Within the framework of a general policy of fostering economic development in all the republics, however, implementations of that policy was always carried out explicitly, with the objective of promoting the interests of the Soviet Union as a whole. As a result, the particular interests of individual republics were given short shrift in planning and resource allocation process. The long term regional consequences of industrial location decision and development priorities were largely ignored, along with many problems peculiar to specific republics. Republic leaders, through the political process, had the opportunity to lobby on behalf of local concerns, but their efforts, bore fruits only on matters of minor consequences, such as small increase in budget allocations for one or another purpose⁴.

From the outset, a highly centralized structure of economic administration imposed and implemented Centre's purposes. Only for a brief span of seven years - the period of Nikita Khrushchev's *Sovnarkhoz* reforms - did the republics have a substantial voice in influencing the allocation of investment and, therefore, in determining the structures of their economies. The results of their actions became apparent in increased industrial and infrastructures investment and moved towards a more balanced development patterns in that period, at least in Central Asia⁵. Moscow, predictably, viewed such actions as manifestations of "Localism" and disregard for the interests of

the country as a whole.

Expect for the Sovnarkhoz period, all major decisions about the location of plants, the development strategy, and the allocation of investment in each region were formulated by the USSR Gosplan and the economic ministries based in Moscow. These ministries, which controlled nearly the total of heavy industry, were initially impervious to regional influence. Even in the case of activities managed through union-republic ministries, development strategies were formulated by Gosplan at Moscow. Republic offices of such ministries, as well as the republican Goasplans, had little real power, although they could submit proposals and lobby for their adoption.

The diktat of the central government persisted despite a stream of decrees ostensibly giving republics and local governmental bodies greater authority and responsibility for planning and implementing strategies in their territories⁶. The issuances in 1986 and 1987⁷ formed part of Mikhail Gorbachev's evolving strategy for "radical" economic reforms. Until 1990, such decentralization by decree had been ineffective, not only because major decisions were made by the bureaucracy at the Centre, but also due to Moscow's control over the expenditure. The republics did not have independent revenue-raising authority, but the centre-set sources of revenue were allocated to republic budgets, via assorted formula determined by Moscow. Expenditures in republic budgets were fixed in accordance with various centrally-set normatives. Having had little real power and no independent fiscal authority, the republic leaders with the advent of *Glasnost* felt justified in blaming Moscow for the detrimental effects of its regional policies and did so in a rising chours.

THE SOVIET REGIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Disparities in Levels of Development :

Soviet regional policies by no means equalized levels of economic development among the republics. Whether regional gaps were reduced depended on the measures selected and method of analysis used⁸. Table 1 (Appendix) presents some of the indicators of economic development in the republics in the 1980s. For the msot part, the data refer to 1988,

or 1989, considered to be the last normal years before the USSR's break-up.

All the four indicators reveal large disparities among the republics. The commonly used measure of GNP per capita shows that in 1989 the poorest republics - Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - had levels of only about one-third of that of Russia, while only Latvia and Estonia exceeded that level. These disparities increased since 1980, but the general pattern has been stable, with Russia and Baltics ranking the highest and the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan ranking the lowest. The other indicators - percentage of urban population in total, share of agriculture in the total labour force, and infant mortality rate - display similarly large differences among the republics, with four Central Asian republics (except Kazakhstan) and Azerbaijan consistently ranking far below the RSFSR and with the Baltic republics above it in terms of level of economic development. The latter four republics are far more urbane, have smaller shares of the labour force in agriculture, and have lower infant mortality rates than that of other five republics.

Distorted Economic Structure :

As compared to the Western countries, at similar levels of growth, the Soviet development strategy of extremely unbalanced growth produced a drastically deformed and biased economic growth⁹. As it reflected in the distribution of the labour force, the share of industrial employment was inordinately high and the share of the service sector was very low, most notably the share engaged in retail trade and personal services. A similar conclusion could be arrived at for all other republics.

The disparities in the levels of development among the republics resulted not only from relatively initial starting points and rates of population growth, but also from relative investment allocations, which were determined centrally. The share of the RSFSR in total investment went up steadily since 1970s while those of Ukraine and Kazakhstan fell markedly. These three republics alone accounted for more than four-fifths of the total investment. There were diverse trends in other republics, which were related to Moscow's resource exploitation priorities especially in five years plans. In accordance with Gorbachev's policy of pushing industrial modernization by renovating existing facilities rather than building new ones' the investment share of largely

industrialized European-Russia arose during 1986-90, while that of relatively underdeveloped Central Asia fell.

Gorbachev's rhetoric on regional policy also emphasized repeatedly the priority of national interests and the general intent to make resource allocations to individual republics dependent on their relative "contribution"¹⁰. Thus, Moscow's reluctance to invest in those republics with relatively low level of labour productivity was evident.

As the data in Table-2 (Appendix) show, there were large differences among the republics in investment allocations expressed in terms of per capita and per worker. In 1986-90, for example, levels of investment per capita ranged from 37 per cent of the RSFSR level in Tajikistan to 88 per cent in Lithuania. Investment per worker relative to the RSFSR ranged from 58 per cent in Kyrgyzstan to 96 per cent in Kazakhstan. On both measures, the relative positions of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics deteriorated markedly after 1985. Clearly, neither Gorbachev nor his predecessors were inclined to accommodate investment allocations to fast-growing populations and work forces in the Southern tier. Thus, these republics faced a situation of confusion and dilemma.

The four poor Central Asian republics (except Kazakhstan), perhaps, presented the most celebrated case of distorted economic development wrought by Moscow's policies¹¹. There, Moscow for decades vigorously promoted cotton growing to satisfy domestic needs provide a source of hard currency export. Moreover, Soviet policy relegated Central Asia to the role of a producer of raw materials. Although, machinery industries were developed in Central Asia, these, too, were oriented towards cotton production and the processing of raw materials. Similarly, industrial investment was concentrated on the extraction of energy and non-ferrous metals, at the expense of creating processing facilities and capacities for manufacturing. Central Asian economy was aptly described as "colonial", a "plantation economy"¹².

Regional development policy and its consequences became the subject of acrimonious debates between Moscow and Central Asia for a very long time¹³. With the advent of Gorbachev and his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the issue became a central focus for Central Asian grievances against Moscow. At the Central Committee Plenum

on Nationality policy held in September 1989, for instance, the Party first Secretary in Uzbekistan and the Party Secretary in Tajikistan made a point with regard to the failure of repeated attempts by local leaders to persuade the centre to site cotton textile factories and other labour-intensive facilities in the republics.

Other republics voiced similar grievances. Ukrainians complained that the Centre had assigned their republics the role of producer of mainly extractive and intermediate goods, thus, creating a lop-sided economic structure and unnecessary dependence on other, republics for final goods¹⁴. In general, it seems that whereas local sentiment sought to promote a diversified pattern of economic development, the Union ministers chose specialization with its consequent high levels of interrepublic trade.

Environmental Degradation :

The state of the environment was another contentious issue between the periphery and the centre that surfaced with the advent of *glasnost*. Environmental issues were certainly not used for the first time by the republican leaders for lambasting the central economic ministries which was cast as the principal villain for environmental degradation. A notable case in point was the protracted controversy that raged over the erstwhile project to divert Siberian rivers to ease the pressure on water supplies in Central Asia and halt the drying up of the Aral Sea¹⁵. Although this mega-project was halted by the Central government, largely on grounds of its huge cost, the debate continued.

After this, the heady mix of environmentalism and nationalism became evident everywhere. In Kazakhstan and Central Asia, environmental and developmental issues became closely intertwined¹⁶. Latvians protested dam construction and the military activities in the republic as environmentally disastrous; Armenians protested en masse against air-pollution there; Estonians cited severe pollution of water and air. Kazakh leaders demanded the closure of a nuclear weapons testing range on grounds of damage to the population's health, and stated "millions of hectares of land have been kept out of economic use by military departments alone"¹⁷.

Ukrainians expressed bitterness about plans for developing electric power in the republic; at the 19th Party Conference in June 1988. From

this platform itself, the Lithuanian party First Secretary argued on the same line. In addition, republican spokesmen frequently attacked the central ministries for the general failure of socialist central planning to accord priority to pollution control and to pay attention to local requirements for municipal services and social infrastructure when new facilities were built. Finally, some local governments even shut down polluting enterprises, despite the outcries of the buyers of their products, and some nuclear power plants were mothballed following the Chernobyl disaster.

Inter-Republican Economic Dependencies :

Soviet regional development strategy created large and in many cases growing economic dependencies among the republics¹⁸. Their extent could best be studied from the republican input/output figures and trade flows, the complete figures of which were never published by the USSR. They released only fragmentary ones for four years - 1959, 1966, 1972 and 1988, but even for these years statistics were not made available for all the republics. From non-Soviet works, however, an idea could be developed of the overall size of these dependencies¹⁹. The Table-3 (Appendix) highlights the data on the relative dependencies of the republics on one another for imports and exports in 1988 and 1989, expressed as shares of total consumption and the total value of production in each republic, respectively. In those years, the shares of imports in republican consumption ranged from 16 per cent in Russia to 31 per cent in Armenia, the shares of exports in republican production ranged from 11 per cent in Russia to 27 per cent in Azerbaijan.

The national leadership clearly regarded these large and growing economic interdependencies among the republics as evidence of the success of Soviet regional development policies. In his speech at the Party Plenum on nationalities policies in September 1989, Gorbachev noted, "As a result of many years of development on the basis of plans, the Soviet Economy has become highly integrated and is now a single national economic complex"²⁰.

GORBACHEV'S ECONOMIC POLICIES AND ITS REGIONAL IMPACT : 1985-1989

The evolution of the economic policies of Gorbachev's bearing on

the overall nationalities policy could be considered under three rubrics : reduction of regional disparities, the role of all Union interests; and the scope of economic autonomy to be accorded to the republics.

(A) Reduction of the Regional Disparities :

With regard to reducing economic disparities, on which communist Party pronouncements were silent for - almost a decade, Gorbachev took a rather hard-line position. He suggested in 1986 that the budget allocation for the social needs ought to be related to the efficiency of a region's economy, i.e. its "contribution" to the national economy as a whole, but the 19th Party conference in June 1988 did not mention reduction of regional economic disparities as a desirable objective. With the outbreak of national violence and the outpouring of national economic grievances in many forms, however, Gorbachev concluded that depressed economic conditions could be fuelling ethnic tensions, especially in the Southern republics. Thus, at the Party plenum on nationalities question held in September 1989, Gorbachev stated, "Despite the impressive progress made in 'evening out the differences', serious problems still remain in this field"²¹. He broached the idea of setting up some kind of mechanism for using state budget funds "to consistently resolve the pressing problems of the region that lag behind". The resolution adopted at the plenum was specific :

The country must have a system of economic levers and incentives which enables the USSR government on the basis of the efficient use of state budget resources to pursue in conjunction with the republics a purposeful line aimed at eliminating the lag in the economic development of individual regions due to objective factors²².

(B) The Role of All-Union Interests :

In many pronouncements, Gorbachev insisted on the primacy of all-union (State) interests in the formation of the economic policy. He repeatedly railed against "national egoism", "chauvinism", "selfishness", and "separatism". With the rise of independence movements in the Baltics and elsewhere in 1988 and 1989, his speeches often cited figures showing the large economic interdependencies that had developed among the republics. In the speech to the Party Plenum on nationalities policy in September 1989, he stated, "A major advan-

tage of all of our republics and regions is without doubt the existence of a practically unlimited all Union market"²³.

But he also referred to "negative processes" that had led to "social tensions and the flare-up of conflict situations including the sphere of inter-ethnic relations". While citing as causes the "baneful effects of excessive centralization, diktat, and arbitrariness of departments in the development of various economic branches", he also pointed out that the Republic governments themselves had pressured the centre to locate new plants and industries on their territories. "Much for which the centre is now being blamed emerged as a result of persistent, repeated requests from republican and local bodies", he said.

(C) The Scope of Autonomy for the Republics :

An important facet of Gorbachev's evolving radical economic reforms pertained to moves to grant the republics and local government sustainability for managing their economies within the framework of an all-union "national economic complex". Initial decrees adopted in July 1986 towards such decentralization, mainly in the social spheres and in construction²⁴. As part of an overall reform package, a decree of July 1987 went much further and seven formerly union-republic ministries were given all-union status in 1987 and 1988, and most union-republic industrial ministries were abolished. As a result, the share of centrally controlled industrial production increased in some republics e.g., REFSR, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia.

In the meantime, something potentially far more radical appeared - the movement towards full economic autonomy for the republics. The general idea was initially endorsed in mid-1988 in the Resolutions adopted at the 19th party conference, but "with a clear definition of what they were expected to contribute to union-wide programs"²⁵. In September 1988, Party Central committee authorized an experiment along those lines in the Baltics, Belarus, the Tatar ASSR, Sverdlovsk Oblast, and Moscow, starting in 1990. Independence-minded reformers in the Baltic republic seized upon this idea and proceeded to develop quite radical models to be used to pave the way for full political sovereignty"²⁶.

FAILURE OF THE REFORM PROPOSALS

Following publication of ever more radical proposals by the Baltic republics, notably Estonia, and contentious debates at the September 1989 party plenum on nationalities policies, the USSR Supreme Soviet on 27 November 1989 adopted a "Law on the Economic Autonomy of the Lithuanian SSR, the Latvian SSR, and the Estonian SSR", which, while not meeting all of the demands of Baltic leaders did accord them considerable room and scope²⁷.

In this speech to another CPSU plenum in late December 1989, Gorbachev spoke fervently about what he regarded as the folly of attempts at economic (and political) independence for Lithuania, where the CP (party) had just broken away from Moscow. He was forced to say by the course of development, "Those who concern themselves with policy and not with emotions understand that the economic separation of Lithuania cannot and will not lead to any material prosperity either now or in the foreseeable future"²⁸. At the next CPSU plenum held in early February 1990 to prepare the platform for the 28th Party Congress, Gorbachev called for the continued "principled" fight against "nationalism, chauvinism and separatism", but he also spoke of development of a "treaty-based principle" for the Soviet federation and the possibility for "the existence of various form of federal ties"²⁹.

On economic policies, the platform further stated that, "The present day economy cannot manage without the centre operating at the macro level. The centre has no interests of its own distinct from the fundamental interests of the republics and people of the federation. But the jurisdiction of the union and the republics must be clearly defined in such areas as planning, budget formation, taxes and credit, and pricing. Direct contract links between enterprises in all republics and regions, and a developing union-wide market, must be from the economic foundation for integration processes and the renewal and strengthening of the federation"³⁰.

REFEDERALIZATION AND DEFEDERALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, 1990-1991

The pace of events accelerated rapidly in the year 1990³¹. The law laid in fairly broad terms the areas of responsibility in economic matters

that were to be reserved for the national government, prescribed general procedures for forming the all-union budget, and stressed the primacy of federal laws and regulations over those adopted at lower levels. A major section of the law dealt with the "all-union market". The republics were forbidden to discriminate against one another in economic matters and to erect barriers to interrepublic commerce. Republics could enter into treaties with the federal government and with one another on economic matters, and general procedures were set forth for resolving disputes. Cast in legalistic language, the new law provided ample leeway for resolution of disputes between the federal and republican governments over its interest in individual cases.

But the pace of events that had taken place one after another prevented the implementation of this law. One after another, the republics declared their sovereignty and signed treaties and economic cooperation agreements with one another, a movement that gathered pace in the second half of the 1990 with the overall economic situation deteriorating markedly. By the end of May 1991, the RSFSU and Ukraine had bilateral agreements with all other republics, and all the rest, except Georgia, had such agreements with at least half of the republics. Most of these agreements contained a pledge to maintain existing economic ties atleast at the 1990 level during 1991.

While adoption of economic reform legislation and consideration of ever more radical reform programs proceeded at the national level during 1990, republican legislatures acted to draft and enact their own laws on economic matter that were the exclusively subject of federal legislation.

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CENTRE AND PERIPHERY

The Baltic republics were the most active in this regard. Some of these laws conflicted with federal legislation, creating administrative and legislative dead-lock in their implementation. Some of the republics also drafted their own blueprints for economic reforms. This chaotic process of implementation of the legislations and drafting and redrafting of the reform programmes represented what is called aptly as the "war of laws".

Connected with this "war" and the declaration of the republic

sovereignty were the conflicts that had erupted between the centre and the republics over the control of the individual enterprises. The Baltics in particular, fought battles with Moscow over this issue, so did the RSFSR and the Ukraine regarding the coal industry thus giving rise to the "war of jurisdictions". Towards the end of the year 1990 and the beginning of 1991, the conflict took place over the issue of formation of budgets for 1991, in particular over the size of the republic's "contribution" for the funding of the federal budget. Gorbachev finally managed to forge some kind of an accord with the republics in regard to the budgetary and related matter and the coordination of price, wage and social policies, which was endorsed by the Federation Council in 'principle'. The failure of some of the republics to observe it led to the decline in production and budgetary crisis, giving rise to the "battle of the budgets". This pandemonium compelled Gorbachev to introduce "anti-crisis program" in April³². Centre-republic confrontation over this program culminated in the historic accord signed by Gorbachev and nine republics on April 23, 1991³³. The accord was supplemented by a new "anti-crisis" plan and was to be implemented through negotiations of a new Union treaty and constitution.

As the year proceeded, events on the nationalities front flared up at a fast pace in a general context of the accelerating political upheaval and a deteriorating economic environment. Gorbachev's ill-conceived economic policies and flawed economic reforms implemented over the preceding five years had moved the economy from a "pre-crisis" state to one of the "full-blooded" crisis", to use Gorbachev's own words. Even worse, *perestroika* also brought near disintegration of the consumer market through out the country, chaos in the investment process, massive fiscal disarray, rapid inflation, and a pervasive breakdown of government administrative services. Regional conflicts contributed to this situation and were further exacerbated by it, as regional autarky spread when republics and local bodies acted to protect their own populations and economies at the expense of the other localities and the country as a whole.

THE CREATION OF THE CIS

The "9+1 accord" (nine republics plus one centre) proved ephemeral. In a climate of growing separatism during the spring and early

summer, negotiations over the drafts of a union treaty needed to be implemented, but was stalled over the fundamental issue of federation versus confederation. The failure in late August of the coup that was launched to halt the perceived disintegration of the Soviet state only hastened its demise. The independence of the three Baltic republics was recognised by an enfeeble central government.

While the talks on the Union treaty continued, its futility was made clear when Ukraine declared its independence on 1 December 1991. A week later, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus agreed to form a "Commonwealth of Independent States" and were later joined by all the others except Georgia. On the eve of Christmas, Mikhail Gorbachev the initiator of the policies of *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *democratization*, resigned, and the once mighty soviet state formally ceased to exist.

Meanwhile, negotiations to establish an economic union of some kind had been proceeding and had produced a draft treaty on the Economic community signed by eight republics in early October; with most of the rest subsequently signaling their intention to participate. Although this document provided for coordination of economic policies among members, Russia soon announced its intention to launch its own radical economic programme for reform, beginning with the price liberalization in mid-December. This action, coupled with formation of the CIS, ended the treaty-process, and the new structure i.e., the CIS became the mechanism for coordination of economic policies among the eleven member states. In its first nine months of existence, the CIS structure provided the vehicle for many meetings and policy issuances³⁴. Overall, however, the member states made little progress setting up the coordinated trade and currency arrangements that their inherited economic interdependencies would seem to require in the short-to-medium-term.

CONCLUSION

The much-touted Leninist nationalities policies of the Soviet state failed in the most sensational and breathtaking way. Intended to create a melting pot via multinational Sovietized state, they instead facilitated its destruction. These policies called both for the "flourishing" of each of the many nationalities and for their gradual "convergence".

Ultimately, these two processes carried out under Socialism would lead to the merging of all peoples, that is, to the creation of a "Homo-Sovietecus". in practice, these general policies were executed through a regional administrative structure - the Union republics - each of which could be regarded as the historical homeland of its dominant population group. Both policies unintentionally nurtured the seeds of nationhood. Their swift ripening in 1991 not only destroyed the Soviet state, but established fifteen new nation-states on the basis of the former republics.

In the political and economic realm, policy was made centrally but executed administratively through the republic structures. Extreme disparities were reduced, but by no means were levels of development and living standards equalized among the republics. Despite the obvious economic progress made everywhere, Moscow's failure to tailor its policies more carefully to the needs of region became a source of many pent-up grievances. when Gorbachev sought to revitalize the Soviet state through his policies of *glasnost*, *perestroika* and *democratization*, these long standing grievances provided the basis for an explosion of rage against the centre voiced through republic's spokespersons, who now demanded control over their own economic affairs and finally their political independence. Gorbachev could not control the centrifugal forces he had unleashed, which led to change in the power relations, struggle for power at the centre and corrupt practices, inadvertently hastening the Union's demise and leaving terrible legacies for its successor states.

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APPENDIX

TABLE-1
INDICATORS OF LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET
REPUBLICS IN THE 1980s.

Region and Republic	GNP per Capita 1989	Urban populations as Percentage of Total 1 Jan 1987	Percentage of Labour force in Agriculture 1985	Infant Mortality per 1000 Births, 1988
European Russia				
RSFSR	100	73.5	17.5	18.9
Ukraine	71	66.7	24.8	14.2
Belarus	89	64.2	28.6	13.1
Moldova	66	46.4	34.4	23.0
Baltics				
Estonia	103	71.8	20.1	12.4
Latvia	103	70.9	23.1	11.0
Lithuania	88	67.0	29.3	11.5
Transcaucasia				
Georgia	63	54.6	29.1	21.9
Armenia	64	68.1	17.6	25.3
Azerbaijan	52	54.0	32.2	27.0
Central Asia				
Kazakhstan	64	58.1	28.5	29.2
Uzbekistan	34	41.9	35.1	43.3
Kyrgyzstan	45	39.7	33.0	36.8
Tadzhikistan	32	33.3	37.7	48.9
Turkmenistan	50	47.6	35.7	53.3

Source :

- (a) GNP per capita : *USSR : Measures of Economic Growth and Development, 1950-80* (U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, 1982), pp. 137-40.
- (b) Percentage of Urban Population and Percentage of Labour force in Agriculture : Based on estimates of population and employment in purely agricultural activities, Ann Goodman, Margaret Herghes and Gertrude E. Shroeder, "Rising the Efficiency of Soviet Farm Labour", in *Gorbachev's Economic Plans*, (U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, 1987), vol.2, pp. 116-118.
- (c) Infant Mortality : *Narodnoe Khoziaistvo SSSR*, (Henceforth *Narkhoz SSSR*) 1988, p. 29.

APPENDIX

TABLE-2
REPUBLIC SHARES OF TOTAL INVESTMENT AND INVESTMENT
PER CAPITA AND PER WORKER
1981-1990

Region and Republic	Shares of Total Gross Fixed Investment USSR = 100.0		Levels of Gross Fixed Investment			
			Per Capita		Per Worker	
	1981-85	1986-90	1981-85	1986-90	1981-85	1986-90
European Russia	80.6	81.2				
RSFSR	62.2	62.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.9
Ukraine	13.0	13.7	62.5	62.0	65.2	64.0
Belarus	3.4	3.7	77.6	84.9	78.3	83.4
Moldova	1.1	1.1	62.5	58.8	66.9	65.1
Baltics	2.0	2.9				
Estonia	0.6	0.6	88.9	87.1	89.1	89.3
Latvia	1.0	0.9	87.3	80.4	84.6	77.2
Lithuania	1.3	1.4	84.4	87.98	5.9	86.1
Transcaucasia	4.1	4.1				
Georgia	1.5	1.3	64.6	57.5	70.1	59.7
Armenia	0.9	1.2	60.7	83.1	73.0	93.0
Azerbaijan	1.7	1.6	60.4	50.8	86.9	70.6
Central Asia	12.4	11.8				
Kazakhstan	5.9	5.8	85.9	82.7	101.9	95.9
Uzbekistan	4.1	3.5	54.5	41.7	82.9	65.1
Kyrgyzstan	0.7	0.7	43.9	41.0	61.7	58.5
Tadzhikistan	0.7	0.8	37.8	36.7	64.1	62.8
Turkmenistan	1.0	1.0	74.2	64.3	104.4	90.6

Source :

- Investment - *Narkhoz SSSR*, 1990, p. 553.
- Population - Mid-year population in 1983 and in 1988 calculated from data in various *Narkhozy*.
- Employment - *Narkhoz SSSR*, 1983, pp. 280, 358 *Narkhoz SSSR*, 1990, P. 102.

APPENDIX

TABLE-3
RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN TRADE BY REPUBLIC
IN 1988-1989

Region and Republic	Total Imports as shares of Republican consumption, 1989	Total Exports as Share of Republican Production, 1989	Share of Interrepublican Trade in Total Trade, 1988	
			Imports	Exports
European Russia				
RSFSR	15.7	10.7	51	68
Ukraine	17.6	14.9	73	85
Belarus	25.1	26.0	79	91
Moldova	28.0	24.3	82	95
Baltics				
Estonia	28.1	24.2	81	90
Latvia	26.9	24.9	82	92
Lithuania	27.0	22.0	83	91
Transcaucasia				
Georgia	26.2	25.1	80	93
Armenia	31.0	26.0	82	98
Azerbaijan	21.3	27.1	75	94
Central Asia				
Kazakhstan	19.2	11.0	84	91
Uzbekistan	23.6	18.2	86	85
Kyrgyzstan	26.5	17.9	80	98
Tadzhikistan	29.5	21.2	87	86
Turkmenistan	25.7	21.6	86	92

Source :

- (a) Figures are compiled from various editions of the Europe World Year Book, 1989, 1990, 1991 (Europa Publications, London, 1989, 1990 and 1991).

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