

**In Search of a Socialist Alternative**  
**MANKIND DID FLY**

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One of the most famous writings in the history of socialism is the *Junius Pamphlet*, written by Rosa Luxemburg in 1915, when she was in prison opposing the First World War. Rosa Luxemburg argued that the choice facing humanity was one of 'socialism or barbarism'.

More than 90 years have passed and many things have changed in the world but the question still looms large before human civilisation. The continued deep crisis in global capitalism and the barbaric solutions that the imperialist powers have resorted to, demand that the search for a socialist alternative becomes the central agenda. When the Berlin wall fell, Soviet Union disintegrated and China took a U-turn to market economy, Fidel Castro was asked in an interview by Saeed Naqwi, 'Will Cuba still follow the path of Socialism when it has failed everywhere else?' Fidel answered, 'The correctness of a path is not decided by its success or failure.' Fidel said to his countrymen, 'History has given us this honour that we stand firm by the socialist alternative in this difficult period and preserve the extraordinary achievements of socialist revolution for the future generation.' A decade later, the politics in Latin America has radically altered and Hugo Chavez has brought on centre-stage the agenda of the *socialism of the 21st century*.

We, in India, must join force in this project. If it gathers momentum in India, it will radically alter the political scene in Asia and in the world. If we do not do it now, history will not absolve us.

For an economy, which is organically linked to the world capitalist production process, transition to a socialist alternative requires a revolutionary break in the production processes. Building up a socialist society requires transforming the production relations,

where the individual ownership of means of production is converted into socialised ownership.

In the orthodox Marxian scheme, the process of industrialisation and consequently proletarianisation is already complete before the transition to socialism takes place. Agriculture itself has become another industry where small peasants and artisan producers have been reduced to the status of wage labour, and rich peasants have emerged as capitalist farmers. Socialist appropriation of capitalist property is then a relatively simple matter.

As Marx said, 'The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labour, into capitalist private property is naturally a process incomparably more protracted, violent and difficult than the transformation of capitalist private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of mass of people by a few usurpers; in the latter we have expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of people.'<sup>1</sup>

History, however, did not conform to what was expected of it. The revolutionary breaks in the production and accumulation processes, and the transition to socialism invariably took place in societies, where industrialisation and proletarianisation were far from complete. The socialist revolutions have unfailingly occurred in predominantly peasant societies and the revolutionary regimes have acquired state power on the basis of worker-peasant alliance. Naturally creating a socialist base in agriculture turned out to be an extremely complex and turbulent process.

To understand the complexities involved, we enumerate the experiences of transforming production relations in agriculture from the past and from the contemporary world. The countries covered are Soviet Union, China, Cuba and Venezuela.

We hope that such an overview will enable us to concretise the contours of the project of socialist alternative.

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1. Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 1954, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 713.

## **Transformation of Production Relations in the Soviet Agriculture**

As already mentioned, the pre-revolutionary agrarian structure in the Soviet Union (similarly in other socialist regimes) was not capitalist. A large section of the population was engaged in peasant agriculture, the revolutionary regime itself had acquired state power on the basis of worker-peasant alliance. Creating a socialist base in agriculture turned out to be an extremely complex process. Stalin's collectivisation programme raised a controversy which is alive till date. We discuss the agrarian transition in the Soviet Union under three heads:

1. Background: Pre-revolutionary agrarian structure, post-revolutionary agrarian reforms, and the recurrent grain crises.
2. Soviet industrialisation debate: The position of the two eminent scholars Bukharin and Preobrazhensky.
3. Stalin's collectivisation programme: the controversies it generated and Soviet agriculture after collectivisation.

### ***Background***

On the eve of Bolshevik Revolution, Russia was described by Lenin as a country 'where modern capitalist imperialism is enmeshed, so to speak, in a particularly close network of pre-capitalist relations.'<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of 19th century, industrialisation in Russia proceeded at a rapid rate. By the end of 1890s, Russia had become world's sixth largest industrial power with 6000 industrial plants. In the 1890s, the rate of industrialisation accelerated enormously. The number of industrial workers was doubling every ten years and by the year 1900, it had reached 2.8 millions. Almost 60 per cent of these workers were employed in large factories employing more than 500 workers. Lenin was clear that this newly emergent working class constituted the vanguard of the revolutionary project. Lenin was also aware that Russia

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2. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, LeftWord Books, 2000, p. 107.

was still largely an agrarian economy where the peasant masses were around 100 million strong.<sup>3</sup>

The peasants were restive since the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Their main demand was exemption from redemption payments to the landlords and allocation of land to the tiller. Lenin talked of worker- peasant alliance and promised peace, bread and land as the immediate gains of the revolution.

First thing after the revolution, in November 1917, the socialist government confiscated the land belonging to the landlords and church, and divided it among the local peasantry to fulfil their main demand. Before the revolution, peasants controlled 2,100,000 sq km in 16 million holdings. After the revolution peasants controlled 3,140,000 sq Km of land in 25 million holdings.<sup>4</sup> The November decree gave rise to a peasantry quite out of step with the proletarian revolution. Peasants had petty bourgeois consciousness and no allegiance to the idea of socialised ownership of means of production (i.e. land). It was impossible to build a new socialist society without developing socialist consciousness among peasantry. Lenin thought it would be done through formation of cooperatives and would be a long term project.

However, the socialist regime in power had a more immediate concern, which was to obtain food grain for the urban population and raw material for the industry which had been nationalised. This immediate concern over shadowed the long term objective of building a socialist society in agriculture. Obtaining marketable surplus turned out to be a Herculean task for the new regime.

Agricultural production had become atomistic and production decisions came to reside in the hands of small peasants with limited resources. The capacity of peasants to supply marketable surplus was limited. Before the revolution, most of the marketed surplus was

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3. Doug Lorimer, 'The 1905 revolution and its lessons,' <http://www.dsp.org.au/links/node/5>

4. Peter Kenez, *A History of Soviet Union from Beginning to End*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

provided by big estates which were dismantled after the revolution. Further, in the absence of industrial goods, peasants refused to part with whatever surplus they had. Ultimately, market relations broke down, and grain surplus had to be forcibly requisitioned from the farmers, under war communism. The peasantry responded by limiting their production to their immediate subsistence requirements. The net area sown declined drastically. Adverse weather aggravated the situation, and 1921 witnessed widespread famine in Soviet Union. Agriculture and industry, both were immensely disrupted.

In 1921, the New Economic Policy was introduced by Lenin. NEP restored market relations in the economy. Forcible requisitioning was replaced by tax in kind, and then by a monetary tax. The market relations however were no panacea. The grain crisis emerged once again in 1923 through these very market relations.

With the advent of the NEP, agriculture and industry both made a recovery, but agriculture recovered faster and soon restored a respectable output level. The agricultural prices fell sharply. Industry took time to recover, and the supply shortage led to a rise in the prices of manufactured goods. The adverse terms of trade for farmers increased progressively. In 1923, the farmers again stopped supplying grain to the market and the situation assumed crisis proportions (the famous scissors crisis). The government acted fast to restore balance. It intervened to lower the prices of manufactured goods, and raise the prices of agricultural products. The grain started coming to the market, but at the given prices, there was not much surplus that was being extracted from agriculture, for the industry. The Soviet industrialisation debate in 1925 took place against this backdrop.

### ***The debate***

With the closing of the scissors crisis, stability returned. By 1925, both industrial and agricultural outputs reached the pre-war levels. The year was declared as marking the end of the period of restoration (from the ravages of war and revolution), and ushering in a period of

socialist construction. The Party Congress in December 1925 declared industrialisation as the main task in the years ahead. About the ultimate objective, there were no two opinions. Controversy in the industrialisation debate was centred on the *modus operandi* of obtaining surplus for industrialisation.

The starting point for launching the socialist construction was the framework, defined by NEP. The NEP was based on the position of 'Smychka' with the peasants, which meant link, cooperation and harmony.

The moderates believed in continuing the NEP framework for a substantially longer period. Bukharin was the leading figure in the moderate school. He advocated relatively moderate growth of industry depending upon the peasants' willingness to part with their surplus. Bukharin also pointed out that while support for the poor peasant may be politically preferable, they could not supply the needed farm surplus. The surplus could only come from the middle and rich peasants and, therefore, they should not be antagonised. He recommended that surplus from rich peasantry should be obtained through market incentives. Any compulsive measure would lead to peasant retaliation. The logic of these arguments extended into recommending production or import of manufactured goods demanded by peasantry. Bukharin believed that given time, the rich farmers would also acquire socialist consciousness. Getting carried away by his own theory, he even gave the slogan 'get rich'.

Stalin was in alliance with Bukharin during this period. The official policy in 1925-27 accepted the middle and rich peasants as indispensable providers of surplus required for industrialisation. Some tax concessions were also given to the rich farmers. However, Stalin took strong exception to Bukharin's slogan and publicly distanced himself from it. Bukharin was forced to withdraw his slogan.

The left opposition to Bukharin's policies was led by Preobrazhensky and Trotsky. Preobrazhensky always expressed reservations about the NEP, and wanted to take the offensive against the private sector at the earliest. He introduced the concept of 'primitive socialist accumulation.' He advocated that surplus from agriculture

should be obtained through taxation, and through unequal exchange. The state should use its monopoly position as the supplier of industrial goods, to fix the prices so as to extract the maximum surplus from the farmers. According to him, a market oriented strategy to obtain surplus and leniency towards middle and rich peasantry was fraught with dangers of engendering capitalism in agriculture.

Preobrazhensky and Trotsky attacked the party for being soft on the kulaks. They also considered the industrialisation programme to be too modest.

Stalin and Bukharin took the position that the left view was adventurist and impractical.

### ***Collectivisation***

In 1925, NEP was at its nadir. While at the academic level it was being debated how long it should continue, the planners were being confronted with day-to-day management problems. The government attempted to close the scissors crisis by raising the prices of agricultural produce and lowering the prices of manufactured goods. The stability attained was, however, short lived. The benefits of the government's move hardly reached the countryside. The urban population increased its consumption of factory goods at lower prices, and a goods famine was created for the villagers. The private traders in fact charged exorbitantly high prices in rural areas.

For the agricultural produce, the procurement prices were raised in the beginning. However, after a good harvest in 1926, the procurement prices were again lowered. Particularly the grains prices were lowered substantially. Lower procurement prices together with a manufactured-goods famine, once again made the peasantry recalcitrant. Once again, the peasants refused to part with their grain surplus and once again there was shortage of grain to feed the urban population.

A very ambitious industrial plan had been worked out by the socialist regime in mid-1920s. The slow and uncertain growth of marketable surplus from agriculture and repeated interruptions became a significant hurdle in executing this industrial plan.

In 1927, Stalin declared that the solution could not be found in the framework of individual peasant production. He indicated that small farms of poor peasants should be converted into collectives, but he was still talking of attaining this by persuasion, and not through force. The government decided to promote TOZ, i.e., loose associations of farmers where farmers retained their ownership, but carried out farm work jointly.

To solve the immediate problem of procurement shortage, Stalin opted for compulsory measures. In areas where procurement was short, private trade was abolished, and the peasants were ordered to deliver grain. The reintroduction of requisitioning was resisted by the farmers. In 1928, less grain was produced; there was hoarding and illegal transfer of grain. If the farmers could not hide or otherwise dispose off their grain, they burnt it or threw it in the river. As a result, there was a massive shortfall in the grain procured by the state agencies. The Politburo adopted emergency measures to requisition grain, and in 1929 the peasant resistance became widespread with some violent incidents.

In November 1929, the Central Committee took the decision to embark on a nationwide programme of collectivisation. This marked the end of the New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin in 1921.

The actual collectivisation programme in 1929-1930 and the liquidation of kulaks as a class has generated a massive literature, both descriptive and analytical. Detailed description is available on cruelty to middle and rich peasants and millions of lives which were lost. In the history of socialist development, Stalin's collectivisation programme constitutes the darkest chapter. The alienated peasantry, being handled with force, was no one's idea of socialism.

Incidentally, the problem of Soviet agriculture was not over after collectivisation. First of all, there was a lot of destruction during 1929-30. The new state farms and cooperatives did not have the requisite experience to deal with this extraordinary situation. There were innumerable problems of coordination and cooperation. It is interesting that in his book, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR' published in 1952, Stalin still did not consider agriculture as

a socialist sector, and said categorically that the exchange between industry and agriculture was a commodity exchange where the law of value operated.

The work done on a more theoretical plane asks the central question; was it necessary to collectivise by force, or was there an alternative? Before answering this question, one must have a comparative account of what happened in other countries.

### **Attaining a Socialist Base in Agriculture: The Chinese experience**

The Chinese revolution took place 30 years after the Soviet revolution. This gave them two advantages. First, the Soviet Union provided material and technological support to China in the initial years. Second, the Chinese leadership had the benefit of Soviet experience of 30 years, while evolving their strategy for making a transition to a socialist society.

Mao Zedong was a great visionary and a leader of remarkable ingenuity. He was determined not to follow the Soviet Union blindly but to evolve an independent development paradigm suited to the Chinese conditions. In particular, the peasant question in China was handled in an entirely different manner.

At the outset, it must be made clear that while both China and the Soviet Union were predominantly agrarian societies, the structure of land ownership and use pattern in the two cases was different. Most of the peasants in China were either tenants or semi-tenants on feudal land-holdings. The proportion of rich or middle-level peasants employing hired labour was small. Russian agriculture, on the other hand, was made up of relatively large sections of well-to-do peasantry, who employed wage labour. The extent of commercialisation was greater and the extent of proletarianisation was also greater in Russian agriculture.

Similarly, industry in China before the revolution was less developed, and smaller in size than in Russia. Thus, while both Chinese and Russian revolutions were based on peasant-worker alliance, the essential characteristic of the alliance was different in two cases.

The October revolution in 1917 was fundamentally urban-based. Although there were numerous peasant revolts across the heartland, these revolts were spontaneous and not led by the Bolshevik party. In fact, the party was poorly organised in the country-side.

As against this, the seat of Chinese revolution was the countryside. Mass participation of peasantry in the liberation war was the very foundation of the revolutionary movement. The mainstay of the revolution was, thus, the struggle of the peasantry against feudal exploitation.

In the same way, the revolutionary regimes in the two societies had different support base and different strategic priorities. The Soviet regime first nationalised all industrial units. Restoration and management of newly acquired industry, which was disrupted because of the civil war and revolution, was its prime responsibility. At the same time, acquiring marketable surplus from agriculture became an overriding concern because feeding the urban working class, and provisioning raw material for the industry was the direct responsibility of the government.

In the countryside, the first step taken by the Bolshevik regime was redistribution of land. The feudal land holdings were redistributed among the landless and poor peasantry. Unfortunately, the land reforms were not accompanied by strengthening the party's social base among poor peasants. The poor peasant committees were few in number and often politically ineffective. In addition to the feudal lords the Bolshevik regime also alienated the rich and middle peasants. Under War Communism, surplus was compulsorily requisitioned from them. Later, Lenin realised that it was a mistake to alienate the middle-level peasants, and tried to rectify the situation under the New Economic Policy. But, on the whole, the middle peasantry remained estranged from the socialist regime. Stalin's collectivisation programme itself was a desperate response to the peasants' recalcitrant attitude towards providing marketable surplus. In any case there existed no social base in the countryside that would support the collectivisation programme.

Having learnt his lesson from Stalin's forcible collectivisation, Mao was very clear that the approach towards the existing capitalist

class had to be that of moderation. Also, preparing a social base in the countryside must become the revolutionary party's first priority.

The Chinese revolutionary government did not immediately acquire control over the industry in urban areas. Mao's policy was one of moderation and preservation of the urban capitalist base. Industrial production was organised by joint committees of workers and patriotic capitalist, so that labour and capital both would benefit. This step of not disturbing the production structure in urban areas absolved the government from direct responsibility of provisioning agricultural surplus for the industry. It allowed the revolutionary party to concentrate on the agrarian transition.

As in Soviet Union, so in China, the peasantry joined the revolutionary movement with the hope that the revolution would help them acquire control over the land, which they were cultivating. Land reforms, therefore, had to be given first priority. In fact, land reforms, in the form of redistributing feudal land-holdings to poor tenant farmers had begun even prior to completion of the war of liberation.

The land reforms in China mainly concentrated on abolishing the tenancy system. The Agricultural Reform law in June 1950 called for confiscation of landlord holdings and their redistribution to the landless peasants and tenant farmers. At first, both rich peasants and feudal landlords were to be treated on the same footing, but soon the party's attitude towards rich peasants changed. It was decided to confiscate only that part of the rich farmer's land, which was rented out. If the farmer cultivated the land himself or cultivated it with the help of hired labour, it was left untouched. Thus, initial Chinese land reforms abolished tenancy but left untouched individual farming practice. Mao's attitude towards feudal lords, too, was far from harsh, and they were not thrown out of the system. Mao was constantly aware of the dangers of counter-revolutionary tendencies, encouraged by his moderate attitude towards the capitalist class. He was clear that collectivisation of farm operations of these small holdings was necessary to prevent the development of capitalist agriculture.

Land distribution to former tenants had created many small holdings of uneconomical size. The revolutionary programme of

agrarian transition to socialism had to be spearheaded by poor peasantry. They would perceive the gains of co-operative farming at once. Mao expected the middle peasantry will be drawn into this programme following the example of poor peasantry. The alliance between poor and middle peasants was actively encouraged by the communist party.

In December 1952, the second phase of the agrarian reform was initiated with the formation of mutual aid teams, and subsequently with the development of semi-socialist producer cooperatives. In elementary cooperatives of mutual aid teams, peasants retained individual private ownerships of their land, but pooled their land holdings together for common use and management. Draught animals and farm implements also remained under private ownership but were used jointly by cooperative members. The income was distributed according to work as well as investments in the form of land, draught animals and farm implements. As these cooperatives developed further, more and more public assets were accumulated and the proportion of income distributed according to work was increased. Gradually, the dividends given on land and other means of production were abolished. The elementary cooperatives then changed over to more advanced type of cooperatives, where land, draught animals and farm implements were transferred to public ownership with compensation to owners. The collectivisation process from mutual aid teams to advanced socialist producer cooperatives continued for 5 to 6 years. By 1957, there were 800,000 cooperatives, each with an average of 160 families or 600 to 700 persons.

In February 1958, the National People's Congress initiated the Great Leap Forward movement. This initiated the formation of People's Communes, involving a higher stage of socialisation of rural production. Initially, the mass movement to create People's Communes consisted of amalgamating the existing advanced producer-cooperatives into larger integrated units. In one year's time (by the end of 1958), there were 26,000 communes covering 98 per cent of the rural population. The system was to consist of three levels of organisation: commune, brigade, and production teams.

The production team, constituting the basic production unit, was responsible for specialised agricultural work. Members of the team were paid in terms of work points.

The brigade was responsible for minor irrigation, flood control, water conservation work, small-scale industry and primary health care units. Brigades were also responsible for making farm machinery available to production teams. They were managed by a revolutionary committee elected by membership.

As the land-man ratio in Chinese agriculture was high, surplus labour could be withdrawn from direct farm activities. The formation of advanced cooperatives and communes made it possible to mobilise the surplus labour into capital formation, in the form of meso-level irrigation work, land reclamation and afforestation. Surplus labour was also diverted to agro-processing units and rural manufacturing enterprises. Construction of buildings for schools and clinics also became a major programme.

Communes which grouped together several production brigades were viewed as decentralised and self-reliant units of state power, run and administered by peasants. The commune was responsible for large-scale machinery, investment projects, large factories, for running secondary and technical schools, health clinics, cultural activities, security, trade and commerce, banking, and marketing of agricultural output. The commune was also responsible for agricultural procurement, fulfilling state quotas and assigning work and production quotas. The revolutionary committee of the commune was elected democratically by commune members.

This phase of collectivisation, i.e. commune formation, was completed in only a year's time. Naturally, it was necessary to follow up this rapid phase of collectivisation by formulating policies to consolidate the gains and rectify the mistakes during the year. This did not happen. In 1960-61 the agricultural output dropped substantially. Reorganisation of the production structure could have been one of the factors affecting the output. However, there were other factors for the poor harvest: like bad weather and the withdrawal of Soviet aid. The famine in China has been talked about by many scholars including Amartya Sen.

The initial setback after the formation of people's communes was used by Mao's opponents in the Communist party to restore features of individual household farming. The right wing in the communist party represented by Lin Shaoqui (who became the head of the state, after Mao gave up the Chairmanship of the People's republic in 1959) and Deng Xiaoping advocated three freedoms, and one responsibility for newly formed communes: (1) the freedom to develop free markets, (2) the freedom to develop small enterprises, and (3) the freedom to increase the size of private household plots. The one responsibility was the fulfilment of state quotas.

Between 1960 and 1963, many of the essential features of the communes were reversed, and undone. Its average size was reduced. Free market sales were restored. Although modified, the communes remained. China had good harvest from 1961-67, and the economic performance of agriculture was good. Joan Robinson attributed the increase in agricultural production to collectivisation of agriculture.

Mao was isolated in the Party during the 1960s. He went back to the people, and launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966. However, the main impact of Cultural Revolution remained confined to urban areas. The impact on the rural areas was mostly seen in improved health care system, with the introduction of barefoot doctors. The Cultural Revolution did not meet with much success in revitalising class struggle in rural areas.

In 1978 and 1979 the Chinese Communist Party (under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping) dismantled the commune system and introduced a system of household responsibility. Subsequently, capitalist production relations have been restored. Large increases in administered prices together with the deregulation and the withdrawal of government investment in the rural sector resulted in widespread unemployment and food insecurity in rural China.

This post-Mao restoration of capitalist production relations in agriculture was so quick and so smooth that it puts a big question mark on the socialist transition carried out in the 1950s and 1960s. Against the background of Stalin's forcible collectivisation, Mao's moderation while implementing the socialist transition, and his

tolerance towards the rural and urban capitalists, was seen as a very wise and pragmatic approach. But the fact remains that the initial land reform process left the social class structure intact. The second phase of collectivisation was carried out without first destroying the base of big peasantry. One can understand that the poor peasants appreciated the benefits of collectivisation, and were enthusiastic about it. But it is difficult to understand why the big peasantry cooperated in the formation of advanced cooperatives and communes. The answer perhaps lies in the fact that, like Mao, they too adopted a pragmatic attitude (pragmatism is characteristic of Chinese culture.) Thus, instead of open non-cooperation, they preserved their base by entrenching themselves in the party and rural administrative hierarchy. That explains the opposition to communes and other modifications introduced in the early 1960's. And that also explains why, at the first opportune moment, the pre-collectivisation base was restored.

No one will blame Mao for not appreciating that the collective agricultural system could revert back, and that the capitalist forces would strengthen themselves given the slightest chance. To guard against this development, he particularly emphasised the politicisation of poor peasants through the revolutionary peasant committees. However, the process of commune formation was not strengthened in the subsequent years, despite Mao's Cultural Revolution initiative. And the politicisation proved to be very inadequate to effectively resist the restoration of capitalist agriculture in the post-Mao era.

The question remains. Does the collectivisation process in China really provide an example of sustainable transition to a socialist base?

### **A Journey from Latifundia to Production Co-operatives in Cuba**

In the pre 1959 era, Cuban agriculture was characterised by large tracts of cattle ranches, sugar plantation and tobacco farms (latifundia), where slave labour from Africa had been imported by the Spanish colonisers. The US business either had direct control over these latifundia or indirect control through input and output linkages. Naturally,

land was distributed in a highly skewed manner with 1.4 per cent of the farms having control over 47 per cent of the total area. At the lower end 39 per cent of farms holdings cultivated only 3.2 per cent of the land.<sup>5</sup> The majority of farmers in rural areas lacked education, health-care, running water, and electricity. According to Cuban government's 1953 census, 90.5 per cent of rural dwellings had neither tub nor shower, and 85 per cent had no inside or outside water piping.<sup>6</sup>

The agrarian revolution in Cuba originated in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. Even before the revolutionary government came to power, the Rebel Army promulgated the Law No. 3 in October 1958. The Law declared that land must belong to the tiller. It was implemented in the territories occupied by the Rebel Army. Free land was distributed among farmers, who tilled up to 28 hectares.

This laid the basis for the First Agrarian Reform Law enacted on 17 May, 1959, by the revolutionary government. The reform law of 1959 proscribed foreign ownership of rural property and it proscribed latifundia. Each person's land rights were limited to 405 hectares. To implement the agrarian reform, the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA) was set up by the government.

As the land ownership was concentrated in few hands, the land expropriation did not hurt a large number. In contrast, those who gained from the implementation of the reform law were many more. In all 12000 farmers were expropriated. They were compensated with bonds payable in 20 years earning interest at 4.5 per cent annually. The arable and grazing land obtained by the government was partly distributed to individual farmers. The number of small farmers tripled from 45,000 to 160,000.

The revolutionary government decided not to break up most of the large plantation farms and ranches. There was an attempt to convert some of them as cooperatives without breaking them, which did not succeed. Ultimately they were retained as state farms. These state farms mostly produced sugar in a highly mechanised manner.

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5. IBRD, 1951, *Report on Cuba*. Washington, DC.

6. *International Socialist Review*, Spring 1960.

Initially, due consideration was given to the option of giving up monoculture and diversification of crop produce. But the Soviet Block offered favourable terms for sugar exports and provided petrol and petroleum products, agriculture machinery and necessary food items in return. So it was decided to continue producing sugar on the large tracts belonging to the state.

The labour employed earlier in latifundia was given infinitely better working and living conditions in the state farms. The seasonal part-time labour was hired full time thus eliminating the livelihoods uncertainty. The workers in the state farm were given the benefits of social security, sick leave, free schools, medical care, and day care centres.

In October 1963, the Second Agrarian Reform was introduced. It brought down the limit to private land ownership to 67 hectares per person. By 1965, the land ownership pattern in Cuba had transformed significantly. Only 20 per cent of arable land was privately owned and managed. The rest was either held as a cooperative production unit or as a state farm.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Voluntary collectivisation in Cuba***

The government was keen that the privately owned land was transformed into agricultural production cooperatives. However, the cooperatives were to be formed through persuasion and not through compulsion. The state already controlled sufficiently large proportion of land. Integration into Counter for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) international division of labour enabled Cuban government to export sugar at advantageous terms. The basic requirements related to food, and other raw materials were fulfilled through imports. Unlike Soviet Union and China, the revolutionary government in Cuba was under no compulsion to expedite the socialisation of the private land.

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7. José Alvarez, 'Transformations in Cuban Agriculture After 1959', <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE481>

The government formed the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) which initiated an enduring effort at agricultural co-operative formation. On the National Broadcasting Corporation the government announced, 'wherever a cooperative is established a school springs up. There are people moving into homes with plumbing. They have to be taught how to use a flush toilet ...etc... etc.' The ANAP organised more than 500 agrarian societies (SA). These agrarian societies were small cooperatives where small farmers pooled their land and shared draft animals and implements. The members elected their managers and other executive authorities. These cooperatives, however did not last for long. The government allowed the farmers to dissolve them and revert back to individual farming.

In 1975, the Cuban government made a fresh attempt to persuade farmers to enter into cooperative production. The agricultural production cooperatives organised during this period (CPA) were based on the same principles as the agrarian societies (SA) formed earlier. This time ANAP consulted the farmers' families far more widely and offered a greater deal of support from the State for the newly formed cooperatives. Right from the early 1960s, the members of ANAP had formed mutual aid groups and 'Credit and Service Cooperatives' (CCS). These enabled the farmers to share irrigation and other productive installations and services. Collective arrangements were made to fulfil the credit needs of the CCS members. At the same time, land tools and production of each farm remained private. The mutual aid groups and the CCS provided the base for the creation of more integrated production cooperatives (CPA).

In a CPA, when farmers pooled their lands, and worked collectively, they immediately experienced an improvement in working and living conditions. Cooperative production enabled greater use of machinery, reduced drudgery and increased the labour productivity. Cooperatives also brought members and their families together, often closer to towns and villages and permitted access to electricity, improved housing, schools and medical care. Cooperatives provided for paid vacations, retirement and pensions benefits, which farmers

had never known. As a final incentive, those who entered the cooperatives with their land were gradually paid off by the cooperative for the land contributed. It is said that voluntary collectivisation into CPAs actually constituted a profound cultural revolution in the countryside. The average membership in a CPA increased to 50. Although small farmers with land formed the core group; CPAs also invited landless labourers, technicians and professionals to join in.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Surviving the crisis***

When trade relations with the Soviet Bloc crumbled in late 1989 and 1990, and the US tightened the trade embargo, Cuba was plunged into an economic crisis. In 1991 the government declared the 'Special Period in Peacetime,' which basically put the country on a wartime economy-style austerity program. Cuban agriculture was faced with an initial drop of more than 80 per cent in the availability of fertilisers and pesticides, and more than 50 per cent in fuel and other energy sources produced by petroleum. When the crisis began, yields fell drastically throughout the country. There was a 50 per cent drop in seed production and sugar harvest. The food availability reduced so much that calorie and protein intake of the population went down by 30 per cent.

In response to this crisis Cubans and their government rushed to develop and implement alternatives. Fortunately, Cuba was not totally unprepared to face the critical situation. It had, over the years, emphasised the development of human resources, and therefore had a cadre of scientists and researchers who could come forward with innovative ideas to confront the crisis. Because of the drastically reduced availability of chemical inputs, the state hurried to replace them with locally produced, and in most cases biological, substitutes. Scarce synthetic fertilisers were supplemented by bio-fertilisers, earthworms, compost, other organic fertilisers,

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8. Frederick S. Royce, 'Agricultural Production Cooperatives in Cuba,' <http://www.uiowa.edu/ifdebook/conferences/cuba/TLCP/Volume%201/Royce.pdf>

animal and green manures and so on. Similarly a shift was made to biopesticides (microbial products) and natural enemies to combat insects and pests. In place of tractors, for which fuel, tyres, and spare parts were often unavailable, there was a sweeping return to animal traction.

The production levels for domestically-consumed food crops began to rise shortly thereafter, especially on Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPAs) and on the farms of individual small holders. It really was not all that difficult for the small farm sector to effectively produce with fewer inputs. They basically did two things: remembered the old techniques — like intercropping and manuring which their parents and grandparents had used before the advent of modern chemicals, and simultaneously incorporated new bio-pesticides and bio-fertilisers into their production practices.

The state sector, on the other hand, faced the incompatibility of large monoculture tracts with low-input technology. Scale effects are very different for conventional chemical management and for low external input alternatives. Under conventional systems, a single technician can manage several thousand hectares on a 'recipe' basis by simply writing out instructions for a particular fertiliser formula or pesticide to be applied with machinery on the entire area. This is not possible in agro-ecological farming. Whoever manages the farm must be intimately familiar with the ecological heterogeneity of each individual patch of soil. The farmer must know, for example, where organic matter needs to be added, and where pest and natural enemy refuges and entry points are. This partially explains the difficulty of the state sector to raise yields with alternative inputs.

In September 1993 Cuba began radically reorganizing the state sector in order to create the small-scale management units that seemed most effective in the Special Period. The government issued a decree terminating the existence of the majority of state farms, turning them into Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPCs), a form of worker-owned enterprise or cooperative. Much of the 80 per cent of all farmland that was once held by the state, including sugar-

cane plantations, was essentially turned over to the workers. The UBPCs allow collectives of workers to lease state farmlands rent free, in perpetuity. Property rights remain in the hands of the state, and the UBPCs must still meet production quotas for their key crops, but the collectives are owners of what they produce. What food crops they produce in excess of their quotas could be freely sold at newly opened farmers markets. This last reform, made in 1994, offered a price incentive to farmers to make effective use of agro-ecological farming technologies.

The pace of consolidation of the UBPCs has varied greatly. The process of turning farm workers into farmers naturally took time. Some cooperatives made little change from their earlier management practice. Only change was that the old manager became the representative of the cooperative members. The farms are still committed to state production contracts of export crops like sugar and citrus. At the other extreme, the workers have parcelled off the farms into small plots, where groups of friends work together.

Cuba successfully got out of the crisis period soon enough. The food shortage was overcome by mid 1995. In the 1996-97 growing season, Cuba recorded its highest ever production levels for 10 of the basic 13 food items in the Cuban diet. The small farms, booming backyard production and urban farmers producing fresh food played an important role in overcoming the food shortage. The food shortages in the crisis period and the governments move to open up market for agricultural produce in 1994 induced urban population to take to fresh food production in their gardens. The government gave full support to nascent urban gardening movement and it exploded to near epic proportions. Formerly vacant backyards started sporting food crops and farm animals throughout urban areas in the country.

The nationwide food security and overall economic recovery achieved in Cuba without any external help is no less than a miracle. Thirty two years after the revolution, it is extremely difficult to instil revolutionary zeal in populace once again. The political leadership was ambitious enough to demand it and people's response was

overwhelming. History will honour Cuban people for holding forth the agenda of socialist revolution in most difficult times.<sup>9</sup>

## **21st Century Socialism in Venezuela**

Hugo Chavez was elected as the President of Venezuela in 1998 and took office in February 1999. The social, economic and political scene in Venezuela was very different from any other post revolutionary case. Hugo Chavez did not come to power heading a revolutionary movement. Clearly, Venezuela at the turn of the century was not a post-revolutionary society. At the end of 2007, the transformed Venezuelan scene, the Latin American scene and the world socialist scene is indeed extraordinary.

### ***Historical Background***

Early in the 19th century, Venezuela was a fairly typical Latin American country. As Spaniards did not think that Venezuela had much mineral wealth, agriculture became the main economic activity of the country with the production of cocoa, coffee, sugar, cotton and tobacco. At least 70 per cent of the population lived in the countryside. Almost the entire land tenancy during 19th century was divided up between handfuls of caudillos (strong men). This unjust land distribution was much resented by the people. Shortly after independence, the peasant leader Ezequiel Zamora fought against the unjust distribution of land. His famous slogan was “Land and Freemen, respect for the peasant, and the disappearance of the Godos (Spanish Colonialists).” There were numerous popular uprisings against the oligarchy under his leadership. He is one of the President Chavez’s main historical reference points with regard to agrarian issues.

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9. Peter M. Rosset, ‘Cuba: A successful case study of sustainable agriculture,’ Chapter 12, pp. 203-213, in: *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food and the Environment*, edited by Fred Magdoff, John Bellamy Foster and Frederick H. Buttel (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

In early 20th century, oil was discovered in Venezuela. That caused a major shift in the production pattern. From a predominantly agricultural economy, Venezuela became an economy based primarily on mineral exploitation. The dominance of oil production increased over the years and the oil boom in 1970s resulted in a complete turnabout in the rural-urban equilibrium. The country became flush with petro-dollars and became heavily dependent on imports. Agriculture and domestic manufacturing was completely neglected by the rulers and all the resources were ploughed into building urban infrastructure for the benefit of the elite. The agricultural base shrunk greatly. A large proportion of land was left unused. Rural population migrated to urban areas where there were no job opportunities.

This was followed by a steady 20 year decline in the oil revenue during 1980s and 1990s. When President Carlos Andrés Pérez proposed a package of neoliberal reforms in February 1989, a popular explosion occurred. The poor came down from the hills and attacked supermarkets. The armed forces restored order by firing on the people, killing thousands. The neoliberal reforms brought unmitigated misery for the people.

In just three years 600,000 people migrated to the cities. The rural labour force of peasants and farmers shrank by 90 per cent. During 1990s, only 10 to 12 per cent of population remained in rural areas. Those who remained in agriculture faced extreme inequality in land ownership. According to 1997 agricultural census, 5 per cent of largest land owners controlled 75 per cent of the land and 75 per cent of the smallest land owners controlled only 6 per cent of the land. Those who had the land did not always cultivate it and the food requirements were fulfilled through imports.

In urban areas, the neoliberal policies engendered a massive retrenchment of industrial labour. Economic inequality and unemployment grew. Unemployment levels reached 15.4 per cent. Real wages fell substantially, and social fragmentation worsened. The proportion of workers in the informal sector rose from 34.5 per cent in 1980 to 53 per cent in 1999.

The economic crisis brought with it a political crisis. Corruption reigned as skepticism about politics and politicians grew. Apathy was everywhere.<sup>10</sup>

It is in this background that Hugo Chavez became the president of Venezuela promising Bolivarian Revolution to the poor and oppressed working class. The people, tired of corruption and increasingly skeptical about traditional politics, bet on a candidate who represented something new.

The urgent task before the president was to harness the productive forces into agriculture and industry and offer immediate respite to the population. He launched an emergency social welfare plan to assist the most destitute sectors (Project Bolívar 2000). At the same time, he was creating the institutional conditions that would allow him to advance the necessary socioeconomic transformation. Chavez got a new constitution approved through a referendum in December 1999. The new constitution explicitly stated that the predominance of large idle estates was contrary to the interests of the society.

Chavez first articulated his land reform plan, or what he calls 'Return to the Countryside,' under the Law on Land and Agricultural Development in November 2001. The legislation was meant to increase productive activity in agriculture. It envisioned impoverished peasants and families from city slums coming back to the countryside to engage themselves in farm activities. Primarily, the unused government owned land was to be redistributed to the peasant families and cooperatives. Any Venezuelan citizen who is either the head of the family household or is single, and between 18 to 25 years old, may apply for a parcel of land. Once the land has been productively cultivated for three years, the applicant may acquire full ownership title to it. However, even the full title wouldn't allow the owner to sell the land. It can only be passed on to his or her descendant.

Three new institutes were created to facilitate the land reforms: the National Land Institute (INTI), the National Institute for Rural

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10. Marta Harnecker, 'After the Referendum: Venezuela Faces New Challenges,' <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1104harnecker.htm>

Development (INDER) and the Venezuelan Agrarian Corporation (CVA). The INTI was to establish the criteria for determining what land could be redistributed, and the eligibility of those applying for new land deeds. The government took cognisance of the fact that redistributing land is not sufficient. The new peasant landowners needed further support. Under the Plan Zamora of 2003, INDER and CVA were given the task of providing technical expertise and assured markets to the new peasant owners.

After a slow start, the Chavez government redistributed about 2.2 million hectares of state owned land to more than 130,000 peasant families and cooperatives till 2005. The government plans to distribute additional 2 million hectares of land in near future.

The 2001 legislation was really not very radical. It clearly stated that large land owners were entitled to their land (Latifundias). Only if the land was idle and over a certain size, a portion of it could be expropriated depending on its quality. For low quality land, the limit was 5000 hectares. In case of such expropriations the government would compensate the landowners at the going market rate. A change in land reform law was enacted in 2005. Accordingly, the permissible sizes for idle agricultural land would be decided by the National Land Institute (INTI). The size of idle high quality land was limited to 50 hectares as compared to earlier 100 hectares and that of low quality land was limited to 3000 hectares as compared to earlier 5000 hectares. Further, the new land law specified that such estates which remained idle, would be taxed and the rate of taxation would depend on the quality of land. Till 2005, no private land was expropriated by the government.

Right from 2005, the rightwing media all over the world made big noise about expropriation of private land in Venezuela. A news item flashed in March 2007 was something like this 'A 32,000-acre cattle ranch owned by Britain's Vestey Group is to be confiscated without compensation, by the Venezuelan authorities.'

However, the details were as follows:

Investigations into the ownership and use made of the property, 180 miles south-west of the capital, Caracas, started on January 8, when armed troops and police escorted government officials on to Vestey's El

Charcote estate. The Venezuelan National Land Institute announced in a “revolutionary decision” that Vestey’s title deeds were “not in order”. In a statement, it said that “they [the Vestey Group] claim that they have owned the land since 1840, but they do not have any documents to prove it. In all, the institute delivered rulings against five large estates on Saturday, and many more are expected.”<sup>11</sup>

In February 2005, Chavez announced, ‘It is impossible for capitalism to achieve our goals, nor is it possible to search for an intermediate way. I invite all Venezuelans to march together on the path of socialism of the new century.’ Naturally, the ‘path to socialism’ is not a populist slogan. It requires deep rooted changes in the production relations. Before it marches on the path of 21st century socialism, Venezuela will learn its lessons from the 20th century socialist history. President Chavez has been categorical that democratic participation of the people will be the pivot around which socialism will be built.

At the present conjuncture, and being situated in backyard of imperialist power, direct and instantaneous expropriation of private property, as was done by the earlier post revolutionary regimes, is next to impossible. Venezuelan government till now has only targeted idle productive forces for expropriation, whether farms or factories. Currently, at least four production plants, which produce paper, valves, and agricultural products, have been expropriated and turned over to workers’ control. The government has identified 700 other idle production facilities that could also be expropriated and turned over to former workers of these plants.

To execute the transformation of production relations in a democratic manner, Chavez government has chosen to expand non-private forms of ownership and control, such as cooperatives, co-management, and expanded state management/ownership. The number of cooperatives in Venezuela has increased from about 800 in 1998 to over 100,000 in 2005 — an over 100 fold increase in seven years. Over

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11. Nick Foster in Caracas; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2005/03/18/cnvest18.xml>

1.5 million Venezuelans are thus now involved in cooperatives, which represents about 10 per cent of the country's adult population. The government has been actively supporting the creation of cooperatives in all sectors, mostly via credit, preferential purchasing from cooperatives, and training programmes.

With regard to co-management, the government has been experimenting with several state-owned enterprises, such as the electricity company CADAPE and the aluminium production plant Alcasa. Depending on how these experiments go, the government is considering turning over more state-owned enterprises to co-management. With regard to expanding state management, the Chavez government has created several new state-owned enterprises, such as in the areas of telecommunications, air travel, and petrochemicals. Also, it reined-in the previously semi-autonomous state oil company PDVSA and brought it under direct government control.

Further, creating a sphere of non-privately owned or controlled means of production by itself is not much of a change, if such ownership and control follows the same principles as private ownership does, of maximizing profit above all. Thus, so as to ensure that the cooperative, co-managed, and state managed enterprises follow a new set of principles, the Chavez government has created a new type of economic production unit, which is known as social production enterprise (EPS). In order to qualify as an EPS and thus get preferential treatment for low-interest credits and state contracts, companies must fulfil a list of requirements, such as to, 'privilege the values of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, reciprocity, equity, and sustainability, ahead of the value of profitability.'

It is too early to tell whether such forms of non-capitalist ownership will become predominant and private capital will become marginal in the Venezuelan economy. There is, however, a definite movement in this direction. Its success will depend on how deeply the democratic and socialist values are entrenched in the society.

To give power to the people, a new law on communal councils was enacted in April 2006. The communal councils were created two years ago as the building blocks of Venezuela's 'participatory

democracy,' in charge of a range of local issues, from education and healthcare to sanitation and road repair. There are around 15,000 councils in the country based on 200 to 400 families in urban areas and 20 families in rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

On 2 December, 2007 Chavez called for a referendum on far-reaching constitutional reforms, which would strengthen the social and economic democratic base and lay down the foundations for socialist production relations. Apart from other things, the reform in the constitution was to make it easier for the President to take over private means of production and devolve financial and decision making power in the hands of communal councils. Chavez lost the referendum by a thin margin. He accepted his defeat with grace saying 'It is for now only'. He had said it 1992, when his attempt to dislodge the government through an army coup had failed.

We can be sure that Venezuela's march towards 21st century socialism may get slowed down for a while but it will move ahead with renewed strength in due course.

## **In Conclusion: We in India**

India launched the globalisation programme in 1991. Fifteen years later our Prime Minister has announced that by the final year of the 11th Plan (2012), India would attain 10 per cent growth rate. Our savings rate is 34 per cent of GDP and investment rate is higher than 35 per cent of GDP. Stock market is booming. Courtesy stock market, people like Mukesh Ambani are getting included in the list of world's richest men. Foreign investments are pouring in and Indian rupee has appreciated by 12 per cent. Indian economy will naturally be classified as the emerging high growth economy in the world.

However, there are other stories about the one billion population in this country. Of the 400 million workforce, less than 7 per cent

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12. Federico Fuentes, 'Power to the People: Communal Councils in Venezuela,' April 26th 2006, *Green Left Weekly*, <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/1715>

belongs to the organised sector and more than 93 per cent to the unorganised sector. The Chairman of National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) tells us that 80 per cent of this country's population lives on less than Rs. 20 per day. Despite the government's claim that poverty has got reduced to 27 per cent, around 70 per cent of rural population lives on less than 2400 K Calorie per day (the Planning Commission's norm for defining the 'poverty line').

Sixty years after independence and after having completed 10 five-year plans, we have not succeeded in generating sufficient employment in the manufacturing sector. As a result, 59 per cent of the workforce remains confined to agriculture and allied sectors. And in agriculture, over one lakh farmers have committed suicide in past 15 years – unprecedented in civilised human history.

According to the National Sample Survey statistics, 43 per cent of the rural households are landless in the year 2004-5. Among those, who cultivate their own or leased in land, 36 per cent cultivate less than 1 hectare of land, and 11 per cent cultivate between 1 to 2 hectares of land. Only 3 per cent of the households have operational holdings bigger than 4 hectares.

Globalisation has allowed agribusiness to make deep inroads in the agrarian structure. Apart from exposing the domestic produce to global price fluctuations in the primary commodity markets, the domestic seed market and the domestic agricultural produce market has been largely captured by the corporate sector. The big farmers may know how to cope with the corporate governed new environment, but the small and marginal farmers and the landless agricultural labour households are being dislodged from their low productivity and low earning equilibrium at a rapid rate. Those who have not committed suicide are giving up their land and are migrating from one village to another in search of employment.

When the corporate sector further consolidates its position and succeeds in modernizing Indian agriculture, the agricultural sector will lose its sponge capacity and will not be able to hold 60 per cent

of the workforce. The employment growth rate in agriculture has collapsed in the past one decade. When debouched out of agriculture, where will the workforce go? There isn't place available in Urban India. Space is not available in employment domain and space is not available to live in overcrowded towns.

There is a third set of stories, which needs to be added.

The government of India announced the Special Economic Zones policy in April 2000. The SEZs were described as engines of industrial growth supported by quality infrastructure and complemented by an attractive fiscal package. The government invited private parties to develop the SEZs. An Act on SEZ came into operation in the year 2005. In the name of SEZ, agricultural land is being appropriated by the corporate houses and respective state governments have been assisting them in expropriating land from the farmers.

Farmers have fiercely opposed expropriation of their land all across the country.

In Kalinganagar, tribals cultivating small pieces of land resisted Tata's taking away their land without adequate compensation. There was police firing after which farmers converged from the entire surrounding area and staged a year-long blockade of all roads approaching Kalinganagar.

In Nandigram, farmers resisted the Left Front government setting up an SEZ (Chemical hub) and inviting the much maligned Salim Group from Indonesia. Many people lost their lives but Left Front government had to withdraw the plan of setting up SEZ in Nandigram.

Protesting against the Korean steelmaker POSCO in Orissa, the tribal villagers were attacked with bombs and other weapons. About 13 platoons of armed forces have been deployed in the three gram panchayats (Village Councils) under Ersama block in Jagatsinghpur. Earlier, people erected as many as nine wooden gates to prevent entry of the government or company officials in the area. They were beaten, threatened; still, thousands of the people are struggling against the 12 million-tonne, and 12 billion dollar steel plant of Posco which will displace about 4000 families of indigenous/ tribal people.

Similar resistance stories can be narrated for Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Haryana etc.

When the agency that is displacing the farmers is visible, it is easy for them to confront it. But the invisible hands of the market cannot be seen and resistance is that much more difficult to organise. There is no doubt that the peasantry is restive. Even then, to hope that these localised resistance movements will acquire a momentous form ... capable of reverting the SEZ act, capable of disrupting the neo-liberal policies of the ruling class, capable of forging a robust anti imperialist struggle and finally capable of bringing the agenda of socialism on the centre stage may seem like a wild dream.

But aren't revolutions all about making wild dreams come true? Let us all work towards this end and strive for an honourable place in the history of humankind.

## Epilogue

### Tailor of Ulm

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Said the Tailor to the Bishop:  
Believe me, I can fly.  
Watch me while I try.  
And he stood with things  
That looked like wings  
On the great church roof-  
That is quite absurd  
A wicked, foolish lie,  
For man will never fly,  
A man is not a bird,  
Said the Bishop to the Tailor.

Said the People to the Bishop:  
The Tailor is quite dead,  
He was a stupid head.  
His wings are rumpled  
And he lies all crumpled  
On the hard church square.

The bells ring out in praise  
That man is not a bird  
It was a wicked, foolish lie,  
Mankind will never fly,  
Said the Bishop to the People.

— Bertolt Brecht

*But mankind did fly.....*

## **Joshi-Adhikari Institute of Social Studies**

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Joshi-Adhikari Institute of Social Studies (JAISS) was established in 1985 in the name of veteran communist leaders and social scientists P.C. Joshi and Dr. Gangadhar Adhikari. It conducts field research, brings out a journal *Social Science Probings*, holds seminars and workshops and publishes books and booklets on various important issues of socio-economic and political importance.

## About the Author

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Dr. Jaya Mehta is a senior economist and an activist. She is presently associated with Joshi-Adhikari Institute of Social Studies. She was the principal coordinator for the study of marginal farmers across eight states in India. She has been a senior fellow at the Institute of Human Development, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi and Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. Before that she worked as a Reader at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.

Dr. Jaya Mehta is a founder member of Alternative Economic Survey Group and Sandarbh Kendra (Indore). She has written a number of articles on poverty measurements, agrarian relations, women's issues and the working of socialist economies. She is closely associated with left and democratic movements in the country.