

# China May Lead Socialism as CPSU Crumbles

by Daya Kishan Thussu

*In the euphoria generated in the West at the demise of Communism in the Soviet Union it has been overlooked that one fourth of humanity still lives under socialist rule. The writing of obituaries for socialism might be premature when, in the Third World, many socialist ideas retain their following. Yet, in the "new age," the remaining bastions of socialism will find it increasingly difficult to survive.*

## The 'Poors' of Asia

If Asia is being discussed in positive terms one is sure that it is Japan, or the 'Four Tigers' or the NICs (now called NIEs) etc. are being talked about. If, on the contrary, Asia is being referred to in the negative, one can be sure that it is South Asia which is the subject. This is not to say that those who are discussing Asia have a negative bias about South Asian region but to drive home the point that it is our region that has fallen behind most other Asian countries. Wednesday's issue of this paper contained three articles dealing with the above issues. One referred to the rising gap between the rich and the poor in Asia, with 800 million or 72 per cent of the world's total poor of 1,118 million living in the Asia-Pacific region. Of this total more than 60 per cent live in our neighbourhood. The phenomenon of absolute poverty engulfs entire communities and social groups and may be transmitted from one generation to the next. An ESCAP report says on Social Development in Asia-Pacific. The report recommends that 25 to 30 per cent of total financial resources of a nation must be diverted to social development in order to restore a balance between economic and social development. Recently the World Bank in its Annual Report also talked about "Two Asias", one rich and the other poor — and of course we know who they are talking about when they say 'poor'.

The question that we need to ask ourselves is that how long are we going to stay in this ignominy. If we look around there are plenty of examples that show that a poor country of today could be a rich one tomorrow. There are even more examples of countries like ours who may not have been able to become rich, but at least solved some of their basic problems such as that of food and clothing. Known as a 'basket case' in the early sixties, India overcame its food shortage and became a net exporter by revolutionising rice production through the use of HYVs.

The real question is that of political will, followed by pragmatic policies, which in its turn is backed by a hard working and educated labour force and a committed bureaucracy willing and able to implement the judicious policies adopted by the political leadership. We, from the developing world, must have the courage to admit that quite often it is our own governments that frustrate our development process through wrong priorities. Ershad regime of the last nine years can be cited as a typical example of a Third World government given to self-aggrandisement at the cost of the people.

Time has come to change all that. Bangladesh has democracy after many years. Nepal has established an elected government after 30 years. Pakistan is also under a democratic system. Sri Lanka, though suffering from an internecine war will hopefully come out of it soon. India appears to be stabilizing after the turmoil of Rajiv's murder.

South Asia must break away from the shackles of poverty, disease and ignorance. Given the end of superpower rivalry, which took its toll in our region, we must now be able to look forward to a more co-operative approach to solving the region's problems.

## A Torrent of National Records

Not everything is amiss with Bangladesh. A band of hundred and odd young girls proved the point in a four-day concourse of woman swimmers. Contending for 37 events they set 24 new national records. This surely means either that the girls of yesteryears didn't know how to swim or that we are indeed on the threshold of a golden era in swimming. We hope that the latter is the case and we are doubly happy that it is the girls that are leading the way to the realization of what should have been Bangladesh's forte for centuries—a supremacy in competitive swimming.

We must first take our hats off to those that created this riot of record-making. Topping them all comes Munira Rahman in the 15-17 girls section who set as many as four new national records. Four others followed her with three new national records each — veterans Mahmuda Sharif and Laila Noor, the schoolgirl prodigy Mita Rani Shome and Mahfuz Rahman in senior girls section. Rehana Zaman, Nibedita Das and Sufia Khatun set up two national records each. Six girls shared 16 new records as well as 21 golds. The meet's uproarious success came overwhelmingly from them. Specially glorious was the performance of Rehana Zaman who upset Laila Noor in the free-style sprint thus dethroning the reigning champion. The new finds Mita and Nibedita of Rajbari and Ting Ting Mya of Rajshahi literally stole the show.

The most heartwarming performance was given by little Rajbari who gave the giants Ansar and BTMC their fright of life. Although they closely trailed second-placed BTMC with 21 medals to 25-8 golds to 12 — and were way behind the new champion Ansars, they have literally swept the 13-14 year girls section clinching seven of the nine items. Here are the champions of the next years.

The meet also proved so much rewarding in a completely new and unexpected area. Prudery got a very bad drubbing that is going to prove very good for women's sport in the country. If sport is anything indispensable needed for the promotion of the health of our citizens' body and mind, the cry of impropriety which is the work of dirty minds and is a matter more of pervert eyes must be curbed with evermore emphasis on women's sport.

Now for the not-so-bright aspects of the remarkable sporting event. Why should there be only thirteen teams? What has happened to the big big sporting clubs of the nation? And what about the districts other than Rajbari and Bandarban and Munshiganj? Why isn't Biman there or for that matter a lot other corporations? If Ansars, not particularly known for their woman power, can be there and as a champion team, what's holding police from sending in a formidable team?

In so many ways this high-achieving meet was but a very small and limited thing. Eleven girls carried away all but six of the 37 golds. The meet's record shows it plainly enough that it is still too early for us to go for specialisation. All said and done, the girls have done wonders. It will be very hard for our boys in the pools to match it — or for that matter by men in athletics in general. Bravo, we say to them with all our hearts.

While the West is celebrating the demise of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and with it the death of communism as an idea, many in developing countries lament the loss of a valued ally. In their enthusiasm to tar the communists as villains, the Western media seem to have ignored how the developing world views the Soviet Union (now the Union of Sovereign States, or USSR).

From its very inception, the Soviet Union had a definite anti-colonial stance which won it many adherents in the anti-imperial struggles of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Among many Third World democrats it was seen as the country on the frontline in fighting Hitler's fascism. During the Cold War, Soviet foreign policy actively stood for the support of national liberation movements in developing countries.

At the United Nations, the Soviet Union acted as a check on the US drive for domination and the Soviet veto was often used in favour of developing countries. Soviet support to the Third World was crucial during decolonisation. It also supported Third World demands for reforming unequal international economic and information orders.

Third World leaders appreciated active Soviet support to the African National Congress (ANC) in its fight against apartheid and Moscow's advocacy for dispossessed Palestinians in their search for a homeland.

In addition, the Soviet Union provided socialist countries with economic and technological support. It subsidised food and provided military support to many nationalist movements, notably in Cuba.

Vietnam and Angola. In many developing countries, the Soviet model of centralised socialist planning was seen as essential for post-colonial nation building.

Even liberal democratic countries like India followed this path of giving the 'public sector the commanding heights of the economy.' In intellectual terms, socialism was a profound influence among many Third World leaders. Marxist thinkers such as Trotsky, Antonio Gramsci, Che Guevara and Mao Zedong influenced generations of Third World intellectuals and

made a substantial difference in political debates in the Third World.

Notwithstanding the changes in the Soviet Union, many socialist ideas concerning feminism, ecology and culture are well entrenched among intellectual circles in the Third World. Not only left-wing politicians but many artists, writers and academics swore by socialism.

However, many in the Third World perceived the Soviet Union as a European power which used ideology to acquire influence in the bi-polar world. Soviet military action

against Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979 alarmed even its friends in the developing world.

With the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War ideology, the Third World can no longer look to Moscow for political and economic support.

This leaves China as the leader of the socialist world and champion of the Third World. China showed that during the Gulf crisis, when it abstained from voting on the crucial UN resolution authoris-

ing use of force.

China called the Soviet changes "an internal affair." The official newspaper, the People's Daily, asserted that socialism would replace the capitalist system and eventually "unite the world." The Chinese leadership is convinced that socialism will survive the collapse of the CPSU.

Many communist parties in the Third World find closer affinity with the Chinese model of development. Like China, most people in developing countries live in rural areas.

North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Mongolia still have communist systems. Countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Yemen and Afghanistan pursue socialist policies. With the crumbling of Soviet Communism, these countries will have to adapt.

Already, Cuba's Fidel Castro has been following the slogan of "Socialism or death." Despite concerted US propaganda against him, he is firmly in command.

However, the signs of change are evident in many other cases. Kim Il-Sung of North Korea has been negotiating with South Korea for Korean unification.

In Mongolia, the ruling Communist party has rechristened itself as the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and decided to bring in market reforms.

While the Afghan President Mohammed Najibullah is managing to keep the Mojaheddin rebels under control, it is debatable how far his regime can be called Marxist.

Vietnam and Cambodia have started talking about reforming their economies. And Angola's ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has removed the term socialism from its constitution.

In the changed situation, the post-Communist USSR role at the UN Security Council may also be of concern to the countries of the Third World.

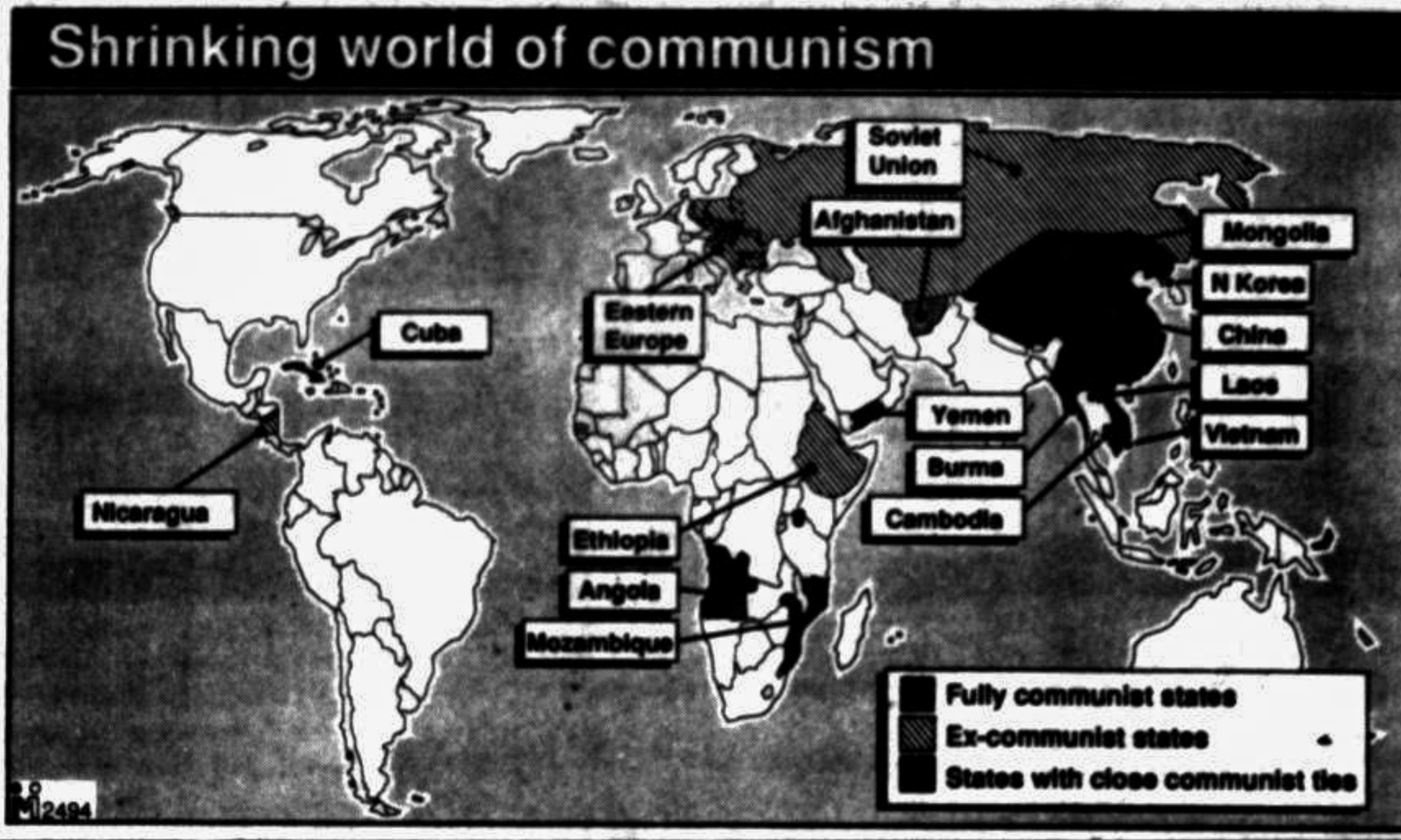
Once the USSR joins the IMF and becomes part of the Western-dominated global economy, its erstwhile friends in the Third World will lose economic and technological support.

The worrying thought for the Third World is what happens if many progressive ideas are buried with the defeat of Soviet socialism. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in many parts of the Muslim world and Hindu revivalism in India are seen merely as the beginning of a dangerous trend.

The regional conflict in Yugoslavia may only be a forerunner of the instability of the post-communist world. The West may have pronounced the death of communism as an idea, but it has too easily equated Stalinism with socialism.

In the Third World, socialism is still a powerful inspiration for those struggling for a more just world order and cannot be dismissed while a quarter of the world's population still lives under socialist rule.

— GEMINI NEWS  
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# The World Bank's Green Fund Runs into Criticism

Maria Elena Hurtado writes from London

A US\$1.4 billion, interest-free fund for environmental protection should have conservationists jumping with glee. Instead, many are saying that the recently launched Global Environment Facility (GEF) should never have seen the light of day.

They argue that their cause would be better served by the integration of environmental issues into all existing aid projects. And they are worried about the involvement of the World Bank, with its past record of social and environmental disruption, secrecy and unwillingness to work with local people.

These same vices are already evident in the GEF. Bruce Ritch, of the Environmental Defense Fund, a US conservation organisation, claims the new fund will be little more than a "green" coating on a largely unformed. Bank lending programme of about US\$22 billion a year.

The quarrel is not only with the slow greening of the World Bank, but with the undue haste with which the new fund has been put together. Indeed, by the standards of the slow-grinding international bureaucracies, the speed is nothing short of miraculous.

Proposed by the French government at the Bank's annual meeting in 1989, the idea of a special fund for global environmental issues was seized by the Bank's financial department, always on the lookout for new ways of getting money. The fund was launched in November 1990 and by May this year 26 projects were in

the pipeline. According to Jeffrey McNeely, chief conservation officer of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), "the GEF is laying a huge egg in an already skippy nest, which harried Third World government officials must adopt, ready or not." Reasons for haste in getting GEF off the ground are not hard to find. Heavily criticised for its environmentally-insensitive projects, the Bank needed a dramatic gesture. Industrialised countries also wanted a "green fund" in place by the time of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992. The hope was that such a fund would forestall Third World calls for new funds for areas such as forests, biodiversity and global warming.

The GEF is a three-year pilot project. Some industrialised countries hope it will be "the" global environment fund responsible for the funding arrangements of all new environmental treaties, including conventions on climate change and biodiversity.

Two other agencies — the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) — are involved in the new fund, but the Bank plays the major role. The money can be spent only on projects related to global warming, biological diversity, the pollution of international waters and the protection of the ozone layer.

The British government has promised that its contributions to the fund will not come from its regular aid budget because, in the words of an official, "it would not be fair to divert development funds to pay for global problems." This is an important principle for Third World countries that have always said that "green" aid should be additional. But it is not yet clear whether other countries will follow the British example.

In April, Ritch presented a bruising indictment of the Bank's environmental record to the Sub-Committee on Foreign Operations of the US Congress on behalf of four US environment organisations. The committee is now threatening to withdraw 25% of the US contribution to the Bank if it fails to improve its act. In the rush to get the fund operational, 26 projects have been selected even before UNEP's Scientific and Technical Panel, a junior partner in the fund, has formulated the selection criteria.

Says McNeely: "The Bank seems determined to commit as much money as it can without waiting for such guidance. The resulting scramble has been likened to a shark-feeding frenzy, as developing countries, scientists, conservation NGOs, World Bank staffers and everybody else jockey for a place at the bleeding carcass." Ritch contends that the 26 projects materialised without any formal assessment, and that even the Bank's environment department was not consulted. The Bank admits that further work and comments may be needed for some projects. Others — such as a solar power project in the Philippines — have been

approved without further consideration. There is also a question mark over the link between some GEF investments and larger World Bank projects. The Bank says that only by tagging on elements to projects already being processed can the investments be made in time to show results at the end of the three-year pilot phase.

Conservationists point to that these easily-processed projects may fail to address more urgent priorities. They also argue that if the Bank is serious about the environment, the add-ons should have been there in the first place. Worse, says Ritch, the projects may serve as "fig leaves for loans which cannot be regarded as environmentally sound".

Only GEF investments that are part of a larger project are approved by the Board of Executive Directors of the Bank, adding to the criticism of lack of accountability. The free-standing projects — a majority in the first batch of 26 — are approved exclusively by Bank or UNDP officials.

Ian Johnston, who administers the GEF at the Bank, claims that most donors do not see the need to approve projects. They are content to discuss them at twice-yearly meetings of countries that have contributed at least US\$4 million to the fund. Currently, 25 countries are participating, because only seven developing countries — China, India, Egypt, Mexico, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey — have

paid up so far. There is no representative from sub-Saharan Africa, one of the world's most environmentally-fragile regions, so the Bank is considering paying half the contributions of the least developed countries.

Some of the smaller free-standing projects could break new ground, however. A Trust Fund for Bhutan which could provide perpetual income to meet the local costs of conservation projects is a case in point. Another innovative project will support work in China to collect and recycle methane from deep-shaft mining operations. A third will fund a campaign in Chile to promote energy-efficient light bulbs.

To deflect the pressure from NGOs, the Bank will be organising get-togethers between the GEF countries and NGOs. A small portion of the fund — probably around US\$10 million in the first year — has been set aside for NGO projects.

In view of the strong reservations about the green fund, the NGO community is divided over the wisdom of accepting Bank funds. But some are prepared to have their cake and eat it. / PANOS

MARIA ELENA HURTADO is a Chilean journalist who has just given up the editorship of Panoscope magazine to become director of the World Development Movement, a British pressure group.

## OPINION

### Hartal and Democratic Rights

The referendum on constitutional amendment for parliamentary form of government has been held and voted obviously in favour of the parliamentary form of government by the people of the country. The country's democracy is finally institutionalised.

The people, beside their strive for democracy, have always demonstrated the democratic rights in the form of rallies, processions etc. specially by calling hartal or strike. The political parties usually give call for hartal to press home the demands of a section of the people. Whoever calls for a hartal we normally see the people stop plying rickshaws/bus; shops, offices and educational institutions remain closed, culminating in immense economic loss to the government and destruction of private and public properties.

Evidently, people become restive and subversive; indiscipline and disorder becomes the order of the day. This is the people's right to exercise their right to fulfil their demands! This sort of affairs though democratically logical turn out to be a bitter pill to swallow for the general toiling mass.

However, I believe the people have to right to question the things take place in support of the hartal even after hartal hours. It is clear that a group of political activists of a certain political party is always out to create a favourable atmosphere for observance of hartal. Interestingly enough, these activities are still on when the hartal hours are over. They appear from nowhere and begin to smash and slash rickshaws and other vehicles. So even after the hartal is over, one is still scared and panicked. The roads are not yet safe, the shop keepers are scared to open their shops. It seems there is none to stop this chaotic situation.

In the backdrop of the above, I wish to put forth some points for the countrymen to think about.  
(1) The Law enforcing agencies appear to be indiffer-

ent in such situations. I trust that if they resolve to do so they can check such disorderly behaviour of a handful so-called political activists who take undue advantages of a loose order even after hartal hours, provided that their authority is not ceased during such lawlessness and disorder, the law enforcing agencies should protect the interests of the people at any cost.

(2) The unruly activists certainly belong to a political party. So, that political party should be made responsible for the damages done by their lankies. They must be identified and brought to book. It is the moral duty of the striking party too, to look after the public and private properties.

(3) Such a call for hartal should be justified because this causes a huge economic and social damage to the country as a whole and obviously more sufferings to the daily wage earners. Whoever feels like giving a hartal call never cares about the majority of the people who live on hand to mouth.

(4) We are all now aware of our democratic rights and take every opportunity to exercise it. We should also try to be responsible. Our approach should be positive and constructive not to suppress the opposition when in the government or protesting the government actions while in the opposition. This is two way traffic — give and take. If either the government or the opposition do anything benevolent for the people, the people will return the same in a magnified quantity.

(5) The low percentage of participation of voters in the recently held referendum reflects our reluctance as a nation to fulfill our commitments whereas we are ever eager to grab the fruits of happenings.  
I, therefore, would like to remember and request others to note Mahatma Gandhi who explained DEMOCRACY as MUTUAL REGARDS and RESPONSIBILITIES.  
Jerome Sarkar  
Singtola, Dhaka -1100

## To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

**BTV's 'Ujibon'**  
Sir, We were greatly disappointed in the evening of Sept. 21 (Miladunnabi night) when we were told that Mr. Syed Ashraf Ali, the eminent orator on religion and morality, would not appear on TV because the number of letters were few.

The next day there was quite a large gathering for Miladunnabi. Most of those present including a great number of intellectuals expressed surprise at the non-appearance of Syed Ashraf Ali the previous evening in BTV for a reason so flimsy as that of scanty number of letters. Whatever be the cause perhaps all the elder and intellectual viewers in Bangladesh are of opinion that his discussions are informative, his discourse appealing and his arguments sound and interesting and that personalities like him should be brought more frequently and given more time and thus BTV utilize him to educate the people in general and younger

generation in particular to imbue in them the proclivity to practice Muslim manners, ethics and culture according to the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet.  
At a time when the country (or should we say the whole world), is riddled with immorality, corruption, crime — incidence of mob going on rampage, extorting monies, hijacking in streets, gun battling in educational institutions, sabre rattling in industrial concerns, political assaults, sex assaults, wine and drug addiction — the very powerful medium of television can do a great lot by such serious programmes to build up character, morality and manners.

The responsibility to promote good manners and character and preserve peace primarily rests not only with administration and law enforcing agencies but also with powerful media like television, radio, press etc. and of course parents who must themselves

**Communism**  
Sir, Four centuries ago, the French astrologer Nostradamus described the Communist doctrine and predicted its eventual decline in his book, "The Centuries". Having foreseen the advent of Napoleon, Hitler, the Kennedys, and Khomeini, Nostradamus predicted that there would be a Third World War sometime between 1986 and 1999, beginning in the East, and centering on the Middle East, which would be preceded by several major earthquakes, the termination of the Papacy, the assassination of Edward Kennedy, and a world-wide famine.  
Andrei Amalrik, a Soviet dissident who emigrated to the West in 1976, wrote his essay "Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?" in 1969. It was first published in English in 1970. In this essay, he predicted the collapse of Soviet Communism and the disintegration of the Russian Empire: "... the collapse of the

regime will occur sometime between 1980 and 1985 ..... I have no doubt that this great Eastern Slav empire ... has entered the last decades of its existence. Just as the adoption of Christianity postponed the fall of the Roman Empire but did not prevent its inevitable end, so Marxist doctrine has delayed the break-up of the Russian Empire — the Third Rome — but it does not possess the power to prevent it".

Writing on "Detente and Democracy" in 1976, Amalrik stated his belief that various developments would delay disintegration several years beyond 1984.  
A few years ago, Imam Khomeini of the Islamic Republic of Iran wisely advised President Mikhail Gorbachev to abandon Marxism-Leninism, and to put Communism in the museum of history, where it rightly belongs.  
Marxism has proven to be the biggest scientific hoax of the twentieth century.

I look forward to the fading away of Communist intellectuals, along with their Marxist garbage, particularly the species haunting the corridors of Dhaka University.  
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