

THE BIG STORY

Thomas, the revolution of Burkina Faso (1983), the land of the honest and upright. Each of these revolutions offered a promise: the world need not be organized in the image of the bourgeoisie, when it can as easily be developed around the needs of humanity. Why should the majority of the world's people spend their lives working to build up the wealth of the few, when the purpose of life is so much richer and bolder than that? If the people from China to Cuba were able to overthrow the institutions of humiliation, then anyone could do so. That was the promise of revolutionary change.

Programmes for the benefit of humanity followed these revolutions – projects to enhance the lives of people through universal education and universal health-care, projects to make work co-operative and enriching rather than debilitating. Each of these revolutions experimented in different ways with the palette of human emotions – refusing to allow state institutions and social life to be governed by a narrow interpretation of human instinct (greed, for example, which is the emotion around which capitalism is developed). Could 'care' and 'solidarity'

be part of the emotional landscape? Could 'greed' and 'hate' be overcome?

Out of these struggles came a broad programme for the organization of planetary affairs – the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which was proposed by the Third World in the 1970s under the auspices of the UN. Trade and development policy could be subordinated to the values of solidarity and care, to the values of human development and not profit maximization. Social wealth could be harnessed to build up the best of human potential rather than be sequestered into the hands of the few to fester in bank accounts. The NIEO shone a light of promise.

None of this was allowed. The NIEO was destroyed by the imperialist core, the triad of Europe, Japan and the United States. It was not permitted to flourish. They used the debt crisis as a way to demand 'structural adjustment' of the economies of the formerly colonized states, to demand that they accept the rules set by the triad rather than form their own. Any threat to the order established by property and privilege could not be allowed.

And so, that's where we are, 35 years since your speech to the United Nations. Any threat to the order is to be destroyed, even if it means the emergence of strongmen to do the destruction. There is blood on the tracks. Death to those who dream is more acceptable than death to the order that favours property and privilege.

Yet the present is intolerable. And so, we turn again to our hopes and to the necessity of our struggles. We want the guns to be silent, as silent as the cries of hungry children. We want to reach out to the stars and pull them down closer to us, to give us confidence as we destroy the old order that destroys the world, to give us confidence to build institutions of humanity and for nature. We want.

■ Thiruvananthapuram, India, January 2019

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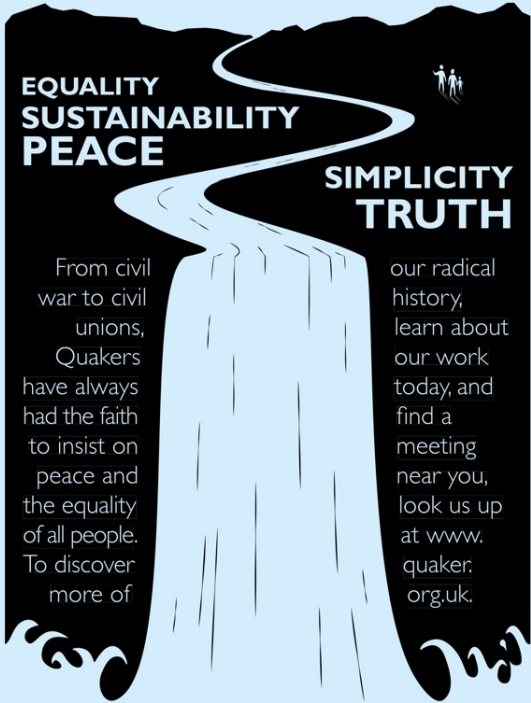
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