1984 AND BEYOND: HOPE TODAY

Is there reason to hope today?

I first asked this—rhetorically, I thought—in 1975 in the aftermath of two watershed events, one personal with its political side, the other world-historical but profoundly felt personally. Unemployed for 7 months, battling for 18 months to save my academic career, I was awarded tenure at Wayne State University in a politically fought reversal of what had been determined in arbitration to be a political rejection. Four months later the NLF and North Vietnamese army entered Saigon, finally and fully liberating Vietnam from foreigners after 50 years of anticolonial struggle, defeating the barely restrained intervention of the world's greatest imperial power.

Paradoxically, one result of such personal and political victory was to leave me puzzled when speaking with fellow antiwar activists who seemed unprepared to absorb the full impact of the fact that we had won our battle: the Vietnamese had won and the Americans had withdrawn. I was puzzled too when speaking with colleagues and comrades who thought the history of labor struggles—which deserved credit in large ways and small for the very fact that I had retained my university position—had produced no real improvement in people's lives in Detroit. And I was puzzled by blacks and whites who argued that the civil-rights and black movements had produced no significant changes.

I first wrote about hope, then, in order to combat cynicism, asking about reason to hope as a device to shock and awaken. I had hope—Marxist intellectual, new left political activist flush with personal victory—and my project was to convey it to those without it. Hope, in the fullest sense, I was sure, was not an island of personal hope in a sea of despair for the rest of the world, which, deeply, is no hope at all; hope depends rather on the prospects for achieving a liveable world. Hope is always social and political at root, always dependent on collective projects.

Socialism, in this sense, is the foremost "philosophy of hope" of the last two centuries, its Marxist form the best analyst of its chances. But socialism has certainly not been the only hopeful modern outlook—rather it is one offspring of the Enlightenment sense of Progress. A chorus of Cassandras appeared in the 1970s and quickly multiplied into the largest and most influential swarm of pessimists since before the Enlightenment itself had begun, their intellectual recession mirroring the economic recession into which the West fell after 1973. From left to right, faith in the future seemed to lose rational anchoring, as no party or movement in society encouraged the sense of intelligible, humane, possible alternative, as the unthinkable, nuclear escalation, became state policy, as regressive, brutal simplifications increasingly dominated British and American politics. I personally like...
A vote was registered by “118-year-old William Bradley”, who died back in 1984. Presumably, he came back from the grave to vote for Joe Biden. Most of them show discrepancies that are beyond the statistical mistake interval. Seventy years ago, Eric Blair, writing under a pseudonym George Orwell, published “1984,” now generally considered a classic of dystopian fiction. The novel tells the story of Winston Smith, a hapless middle-aged bureaucrat who lives in Oceania, where he is governed by constant surveillance. Even though there are no laws, there is a police force, the “Thought Police,” and the constant reminders, on posters, that “Big Brother Is Watching You.”. Smith works at the Ministry of Truth, and his job is to rewrite the reports in newspapers of the past to conform with the present reality. Smith lives i