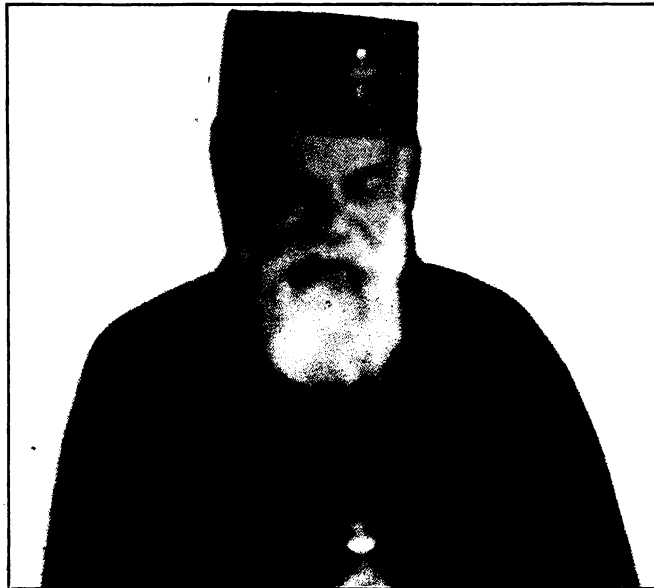


# Long live history!

**Bishop Paulos Mar Gregorios makes a critical analysis of Francis Fukuyama's *End of History*, originally published in *National Interest*, a Washington quarterly, and serialised in *Express Weekend*, in the issues dated October 14, 21, 28 and November 4.**

WASHINGTON intellectual circles seldom discuss philosophy — especially 19th century Hegelian political philosophy about the end of history. The Japanese-American Francis Fukuyama's exciting thesis brought Hegel back into the discussion, though briefly. Top western "intellectuals" were invited to comment on the thesis that we are now at the end of history — not merely at the *fin de siecle*, the last decade of the 20th century.

Chicago University's Allan Bloom, Pierre Hassner of the French National Foundation for Political Sciences, New York University's Grande Dame Gertrude Himmelfarb, American Enterprise Institute's Irving Kristol, New York Senator Patrick Moynihan, and Washington's Kremlin-watcher Stephen Sestanovich (Director of Soviet



**Bishop Paulos Mar Gregorios**

Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies) were the six liberal intellectuals invited to hail the Fukuyama thesis with some fanfare in *The National Interest* of Summer 1989.

Francis Fukuyama, aged 36, is Deputy Director of the US State Department's policy planning staff, a sort of all-American super-think-tank. The thesis presented in an erudite essay entitled "The End of History?" is bold indeed.

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the cold war or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such, that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of human development." (emphasis added).

Whether we agree with the thesis or not, we need to come to terms with it. What he calls history is the growth and development of socio-economic systems, as the main process through which humanity becomes human. History in this sense, he now claims, has come to an end. One system which has come to full flower in the last couple of centuries has now vanquished its main contenders and has triumphed as final for it has no more rivals. This end product of history is western liberal democracy with the market economy.

It had only two main rivals — fascism and communism. The first came to an end with the

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defeat of Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Hirohito's Japan in 1945. Liberalism and Marxism remained on the arena as the two finalists in the tournament of socio-economic systems. Now in the finals communism has been defeated. Under Gorbachev's leadership, Marxism-Leninism has admitted defeat and is capitulating to liberal democracy as the triumphant victor. This is the main substance of Fukuyama's thesis, in my own words, of course.

He admits there are two possible contenders still challenging liberal democracy/market economy capitalism. These are "religion" and "nationalism". But religion hardly qualifies as a political rival of secular liberal humanism. The latter was born out of Christianity's failure to do justice to the legitimate political, economic and social aspirations of human beings. The religious state (example Islamic state) has tried to reinstate itself. But it has not proved viable, and has no future. Theocratic states are an anachronism, and history has already rejected the idea.

Neither has nationalism much of a future. It is dead in the developed world; it spawned two world wars in this century. The advanced countries are moving beyond to internationalism and trans-nationalism (the European Community, for example). Nationalism survives in developing countries, mostly as a negative animus against foreign domination in culture, politics and economics. As a positive programme, however, it has nothing very attractive to offer; it belongs to the backyard of history.

Nationalism is neither a product of liberalism nor an essential contradiction within it. It may cause some conflicts inside the framework of liberalism.

# Does history end?

But on its own it cannot survive. The judgment of history is patently against nationalism.

The triumph of western liberal democracy is thus fairly final. It has no contenders left on the arena. It has proved itself in history. Of course, one does not rule out the rise of new ideologies. For the moment there is no such contender on the horizon. Events will happen, conflicts will continue. In that sense history will continue, but not history as evolution of new social systems. The basic contours are unlikely to change very much. Since competition is now the acknowledged principle, conflict becomes unavoidable. But the great conflict between contending ideologies is over.

All are now free to join the victor's team. Non-Europeans can learn the values of liberal democracy and play the game according to its rules. Liberalism is no longer one of the teams playing. It has been promoted as umpire and now calls the shots. Of course the umpire is not any single nation as such; it is the system that lays down the rules of the game, umpires the play and awards the trophies. World politics will be "common-marketized". Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, Russians, Amerindians, whoever they are, can either join the game or be confined to the dustbin of history.

History has ended, and we are already entering the post-historical era, says Fukuyama. Alas that is already a sad era. Not much room for philosophy or culture or for any great heroism except in the game of satisfying consumer demands.

"In the post-historical period

there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history ... Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once again".

Wow, what a glorious prospect this end of history! I wish only to make four brief comments on the essay.

1) The analysis is superb, brimful of scintillating insights. And it should have helped to start an intelligent discussion. The fact that it has not done so is itself an indictment on this claim of a triumphant liberalism. Zbigniew Brzezinski's book (*The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century*) and the Fukuyama essay have led to a number of editorials in journals and newspapers run by the market economy establishment. The London *Times* for example, has already chronicled the death of communism, and proceeded to erect grave-stones to Marxism. It all smacks of wishful thinking.

The wishful thinkers of course want their wishes to come true. Communism has collapsed in Poland and Hungary, and is in the process of collapse in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania and Bulgaria. Little socialist countries like Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea and Ethiopia cannot hold on much longer. And if things develop on schedule USSR and China will also revert to market economy capitalism, by stages or suddenly. Fukuyama has not gone into the details of the schedule, his optimism is tempered by the pessimistic vision about the

drabness and dullness of the end-of-history era.

2) Fukuyama is not the first to make predictions about the end of history. Kant, in the 18th century talked about peace through the growth of democratic or republican governments and the substitution of trade for war as a way of making oneself wealthy. Hegel saw the end of history already in 1806 when Napoleon's troops were marching into Jena, where Hegel lived. Nietzsche conjured up the "last man" as the crazy, unhappy and self-assertive man of power. Spengler predicted the decline of the West. Alexandre Kojeve predicted the triumph of reason in the rational state which for him, had already emerged as the end of history. Both the French Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution as also the American Revolution thought they had ushered in the end of history. It seems history has proved all of them to have been sadly (or gladly) mistaken. Little reason to think that Brzezinski and Fukuyama are more right.

3) If we must cite Hegel, let us do so a little more carefully. His 1806 (when he was 36) outburst about the end of history having arrived with Napoleon as History on Horseback was proved to be fairly foolish, as he himself came to realise later. For the mature Hegel, history is The Absolute Idea (God, if you prefer) working out its potentialities into the actuality of history through the principles of dialectical reason — the Ultimate Spirit (Geist) under the conditions of finitude. If he were living today, he would have seen capitalism and communism as

dialectical thesis and anti-thesis moving towards a synthesis at a higher level — only to begin another cycle, where the new synthesis becomes a new thesis to generate its own anti-thesis and to move on further up in the spiral of progress.

4) Socialism is not quite dead. What has died is a historical manifestation of it. Marxist socialism, under Gorbachev's leadership is revising itself in eight different ways which I can only list. (a) Global humanism replacing the class struggle as basic framework for thinking and acting; (b) the necessary role of capitalism and the market economy in developing the technological and organisational structure of future communism; (c) the necessity therefore of the two systems co-existing not only internationally, but also within each nation for some time; (d) the need for checks and balances like a Congress of People's Deputies to offset the danger of arbitrariness in party power, the party's role being to lead, not to command or manage a command economy, (e) the necessity for a plurality of property relations over against state monopoly of productive property; (f) necessary role of the market mechanism even in a socialist system of production and distribution, (g) the centrality of human creativity which can flourish only in an atmosphere of freedom, democracy and participation and (h) a humanist attitude towards religion, seeing religious people not as enemies but as human beings with whom secular people can cooperate for the good of humanity.

The reading of these eight fundamental changes in the forms and norms of socialism as the end of socialism or as the end of history can be judged only by history itself.