

Notes

Autumn of discontent

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Arab Spring of rejoicing for the West has suddenly turned into autumn of discontent. In most of the famous cities of the world, practicing liberal economies, people are protesting against capitalism. There is a general wave of disappointment with the system. Wall Street, considered to be the pinnacle of capitalist hegemony, is thronged with people from every walk of life to exhibit there resentment. Some of the members of the ruling Democratic party from Capitol Hill are also participating in the protest rallies.

The general mood in Zuccoti Park in New York to Phoenix and Sydney Australia vibrate with demands. Demands and demands are everywhere but not a single unanimous manifesto to present. They want forests would not be mowed down, the air won't be polluted, banks won't be double crossing their clients and citizens should be totally engaged in running of public life. They say that power concedes nothing without demand. They are also dissatisfied with employment, education, taxation system, corporate personhood, bailing out of banking executives and property tycoons, state of human rights and what not. A protestor says, 'If we do not make demands political parties will make them for us. We have to get it right this time'. Each gathering bubbles up from its own particular city's stew of circumstances and grievances. Protestors bring along their pantheon of saints and villains. But there is one common threat; anger, some have looked for jobs for months, others have lost their homes to foreclosure, angry they all are. The reasons behind the mass unrest are mostly related to economy. Protesters on Wall Street argue that financially powerful are rarely held accountable for their mismanagements of the U.S economy, while the masses must suffer the consequences of those failed policies.

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What does it entail? Is this movement progressing towards some revolution or it is merely a rudderless rebuke. Its spontaneity only reflects a general dissatisfaction which for the time being does not present any alternative. Perhaps it is all half baked.

Since its birth capitalism has absorbed many shocks. Not only that but as they claim, it has the capacity to neutralize rather devour communism. When I am discussing it, I am not saying that it is not infallible or it represents the end of history or this meta narrative will live forever but it has sustained the test of time. It has passed through many critical periods since 1848 when Marx wrote *Communist Manifesto*. The change was on the agenda and Paris commune was an objectification. Any how capitalism survived. The great October Revolution of 1917 was the greatest shock it confronted, when the dream, hidden somewhere in Marx's writings; was realized by the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin. The October revolution, though apparently ditching capitalism gave it a new life. Like a cunning and vigilant adversary, it started two-pronged action i.e. will to survive and destabilizing the enemy. Ultimately it succeeded with the fall of Soviet Union. During this period it also felt minor tremors of 1930's recession and Second World War. It lived with bipolarism in the arena of power politics.

The leftist were always jubilant to see capitalism being dislodged, one way or the other. You may name it as their optimism. They have gone through this mood of optimism many times after 1848, but there dream was never realized in the total defeat of capitalism.

In the recent past a new hope came which was demonstrated in the slogan 'Another world is possible' popularized by World Social Forum. In May 2000, the city of Algere in Brazil saw the birth of World Social Forum exposing the bankruptcy of globalization at philosophical, political, ecological and economic level. This truth was repeatedly paraphrased in various cities of the World after Algere. In those times I summed it as gatherings of Bohemians who had no substantial and positive agenda in their bags which they carried on their shoulders. My ideological friends were not happy with me. They were under the spell of this new wave of anti-capitalism. The euphoric mood gradually fizzled out. Nobody can deny, another world is not possible. Yes, it is possible but it does not come riding on fantasy. It does come along with all its material conditions.

Orthodox socialists, all over the world, still believe inevitability of revolution and proletariat changing guards with capitalists. As Terry Eagleton says, 'Marx appears to regard the advent of socialism as inevitable. He says so more than once...in *Communist Manifesto* the fall of capitalist class and the victory of working class are described as

equally inevitable. But he is also apprehensive when he says that the class struggle may result in the common ruination of the contending classes’.

Here intervention of Eduard Bernstein seems to be quite appropriate. This founder of Social Democracy differs with orthodox Marxism on various theoretical issues and demise of capitalism was one of them. Though he was pilloried as revisionist but whatever he said was supported by historical evidence. In his reformist mood he was of the opinion that the prospects of socialism did not depend on a major crises bringing about the collapse of capitalism. Such crises were less and less possible as capitalism grew more capable of adopting itself to market difficulties.

How far this would go, nobody can predict. No system is inevitable. History does not have very kind words for prediction nor do I have. However, euphoria has no accommodation in the annals of history.