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Trump: a Vote to be Decried or a Revolt to be Extended?

By Bernard Marszalek
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1.

The first thing that needs to be cleared from the decks is all the bullshit about the motives of the white working class (WWC). Beyond the fact that it is a dubious term, I have no idea why people voted the way they did, beyond the most obvious assumptions. Next, I don't care in the least about campaign tactics and their successes or failures. And lastly, all analyses about the so-called politics of the two major parties should be composted along with those who assume senatorial seriousness as they expound on the subject.

The take away from this liberal debacle is simply the fact that millions refused to vote. The WWC revolution is not Our Revolution.

The issue that I want to address goes directly to the failure of political vision in the US – a failure that the US shares with the rest of the world. A failure of politics in general, everywhere.

That is to say, Capital faces, worldwide, a superfluous population. Tens of millions of the “useless” in Europe could easily be absorbed, the but for the obstacle of profit. In Asia and Africa, without the wealth of the industrialized world to benefit, but only to extract, millions flee, starve or die in wars. For Capital to continue its regime, many more millions must be sacrificed, everywhere.

Nothing so clearly defines the present era than that capital expansion has run its course. Or to be more precise, it can continue to expand, hesitantly, under specific circumstances and in select areas, just enough to give the illusion that it is fulfilling its historic role – the quest for Progress. It does so over dead bodies. In this modern capitalism resembles the world that gave it birth. Some progress.

2.

To move beyond the desperate reality of this system in collapse means breaking some glass first. And I do not mean to allude to HRC’s failure. The glass I mean is more like the glass in a shop window. The window of the political resale shop. What’s for sale? Old crap electoral furniture consisting of two overstuffed chairs, moldy paeans to the market place, the cracked vessels of full employment and, ultimately, all the frayed lace of lies about what makes us human.

The electoral furniture needs discarding for a large new set sufficient to provide seating around a large table. The market place brings us glyphosate for breakfast in a delirious variety of choices. It functions on quantitative measures whereas we live life for enrichment beyond measures. The vessels they hope to fill with jobs leak and best to be replaced with the exquisite ceramics of ludic activities. And the lace of lies steels our culture making from us. No longer should we accept conformity to the demands of the powerful, in fact, recent discoveries of our evolutionary heritage reveal that we are fully ourselves as a species when we are free to be creative, free of restraints that limit our potential.

3.

As you see, I inhabit the island of Utopia. But for me this is not only a refuge, as important as that is for one’s wellbeing, but also a staging area for a joyous assault on the mainland, not unlike the Orange Alternative in Poland during the last days of the Communist regime.

What are our choices here? Do we attempt to resurrect a facsimile of social democracy from another era (FDR in the US or Beveridge in the UK) or do we contend with today’s reality as disruptive and fraught with dangers as that may be? The former defines the path proposed by the Left-Liberals in the Democratic and Green parties (and elements of left-populism) to retrace our steps in search of a lost fork in the road. The latter takes us down an uncertain path, but one with a destination.

4.

Trumpism = the Spectacle Accomplished. Trumpism, as populism, gains greater solidity the more it is raged against and exploited for fundraising purposes. Trump's ascension resembles more a Reality Show that eclipsed the screen to become a show of reality than it is the rise of an American brand of fascism. And as a show of reality, that is, as a manipulation of partial truths, frustrations and outrage it can be exposed, but only if a popular fight back introduces the kind of politics that transcends the professional activists to reach a wider audience. The southern sphere of European countries has attained this level of popular political involvement.

Mass politics will be the most positive outcome of Trump's ascension. But it won't come from the "Loyal Opposition" seeking accommodation, it must come from those who have legitimacy at the grassroots and it must take the form of confrontation. Street protests have their specific, though diminished, place, but the confrontation that matters takes the form of achievable transformations of local power, coupled with practical forms of organization to achieve economic goals.

Local manifestations, allied together in a region and then eventually on a state level will demonstrate that political action can result in real, immediate benefits to those disillusioned with status quo politics – the only kind that has been on offer. This is not the place to offer a blueprint, and furthermore to do so would be foolish. However, there are efforts across the country where a politics as outlined here are tentatively developing. At present, they are hesitant efforts to enlist popular support along traditional routes. These now need to confront Trumpism and radicalize their modus operandi.

Forget the sole focus on market approaches and solicitations from foundations and wealthy benefactors. Better to seize empty and abandoned properties for community access; these to be rebuilt as housing and workshops by local skilled (and unemployed) workers. Boycott! Recall the solidarity of the black communities during the civil rights movement. Collectivize purchases and avoid the rip-off big box stores. Focus on securing government funds, locally administered, to develop a local economic policy that aligns with regional and state needs.

In communities across the nation, many people voted for Trump as their finger to the Establishment. This was their desperate reaction to decades of misery and abandonment. To look upon them and their vote as only a sign of their powerlessness and misdirection is to acquiesce to a future of further despoliation, depression and defeat. The vote for Trump was a revolt that needs to be nurtured and amplified. What other choice do we have?