

Occupy The World! To the Barricades Comrades?

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Four years ago in a Ministry of Defence Review, the Whitehall Mandarins, more astutely than any so-called Lefty, determined the following:

“The Middle Class Proletariat — The middle classes could become a revolutionary class, taking the role envisaged for the proletariat by Marx. The globalization of labour markets and reducing levels of national welfare provision and employment could reduce peoples’ attachment to particular states. The growing gap between themselves and a small number of highly visible super-rich individuals might fuel disillusion with meritocracy, while the growing urban under-classes are likely to pose an increasing threat to social order and stability, as the burden of acquired debt and the failure of pension provision begins to bite. Faced by these twin challenges, the world’s middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest.” — [‘UK Ministry of Defence report, The DCDC Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007-2036’](#) (Third Edition) p.96, March 2007

Yeah, I know, I’m always using this quote (I first used it four years ago) but it illustrates the great intellectual divide between the political class and the citizens they rule, including our Left, now made so apparent by what the pundits are now calling the ‘Occupy The World’ (OTW) movement. It seems that only our very own ruling class foresaw OTW.

Dig a little deeper into OTW and we find that with a few exceptions, there are no challenges to capitalism, mostly it’s a ‘clean up your act’ kinda thing. Throw a few billionaires in jail, add some regulation and things will eventually turn out just fine. Dream on...

But we’ve been here before. This is what attempts at ‘reforming’ capitalism in the past have looked like. We lived under such a system from 1945 until the late 1970s, before the Empire reasserted itself, proving once again, that concepts like ‘democracy’ under capitalism, are at best, mere conveniences and so vague a concept that it can be made to resemble almost anything.

And once the so-called Good Life that capitalism allegedly had offered us started to wear thin and capitalism once more plunged us into war and poverty, so too the ‘Good Life’ had to be dumped. Belt-tightening time again.

But unlike 1968, or even the ‘Anti-Globalization Movement’ that some are comparing OTW to, socialism is barely mentioned, let alone the central motif. Yes, there are increasing anti-capitalist references but in 1968, politics was at the very heart of the situation. It wasn’t about money but about posing a real alternative to capitalism. The concept of belonging to

a class still existed in the public's consciousness, even if it lacked the collective will to do anything about it.

Am I being altogether too cruel to OTW? It is after all, early days in the development of OTW. It might all fizzle out or if it doesn't, the political class might have to use the logical response to the MoD's quote above: suppress it. Something for which, no doubt in another (secret) report, the Whitehall Mandarins have laid out the strategy and tactics to be employed in suppressing a burgeoning (socialist?) revolution.

After all, when "[f]aced by th[o]se twin challenges, the world's middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest", says it all.

You have to take this stuff seriously! It's not a game and the state is very adept at employing whatever tactics it chooses to suppress serious dissent including the use of agents provocateurs (a long-standing 'tradition') to infiltrate and provoke pointless confrontations with the state, in order not only to justify suppression but more importantly, as part of a propaganda war waged through the media, where we have no counter-voice.

Repression of course carries its own risks and far from being a solution could only further exacerbate the problem. Timing is all. This is not a game. The political class is fighting for its life and that of its masters, the corporations. That's why they write those reports. Just as with the insurrections earlier this year in the UK, the state had a clear response to it and the role of the media was central to its effectiveness in spreading the state's message.

Let it 'burn baby, burn' and turn the world's cameras onto the conflagration, followed by a good dose of Victorian 'rough justice' (pity they've abolished hard labour and deportation to Australia). Make an example of them should anyone else have ideas about following in their footsteps.

The key here is the observation made by the Whitehall Mandarins about "class interests". Now if well-paid and no doubt loyal members of the political class' intelligentsia have gotten it figured out (and so far, their prediction is right on the money), how come the 'Left' hasn't?

Currently class is something almost entirely absent from the OTW movement. Without it eventually taking centre stage, OTW is bound to be stillborn. But there are some positive signs that some kind of 'consensus' mechanism is emerging from the chaos akin to some kind of 'self-organizing' principle. After all, we have what the MoD report called "access to knowledge, resources and skills" necessary to produce workable alternatives not only to capitalism but to fashion a new kind of inclusive democracy, one that hasn't existed before.

The aim is to create a venue for democratic deliberation and open debate in a place normally associated with secretive privilege. People working in the City of London have played a starring role in creating the global economic crisis. Since our representative institutions have thus far failed to address this crisis in a way that is both sensible and just, it is only fitting that we should use the City as a place in which [to] work on solutions ourselves. — [Talk Amongst Yourselves](#) By Dan Hind

It's not a 'peasants revolt' kinda thing, though of course inevitably those hit the worst by the crisis will revolt first. But the crisis of capital has now hit those who make up the very

bedrock of capitalist society's justification for existing, its so-called middle classes. These are the major consumers in our economy, not only is their consumption a major chunk of our GDP (as well its debt), they are also the managers and technicians of capitalism and the state machine. Piss them off and things could get out of hand just as the MoD has predicted.

Some on the Left in the UK are still calling for revitalizing the Labour Party as a potential force for socialism but if so, then it means that it would have to come from its decimated grassroots membership, a tall if not impossible order to carry out. At the first signs of revolt in the Labour Party's constituency membership, the Party Machine will intervene and purge its ranks just as it has done so many times in the past.

For a Left largely pinning its hopes on a working class that no longer exists, it will have to broaden and deepen its knowledge of how capitalism has evolved and transformed the nature of the working class and learn to seek connections to a much more diverse and complex alliance of forces if we are to defeat the Empire.

What an irony that the Left—led largely by middle class intellectuals—fails to see what has happened, trapped as it is in its own patronizing and nostalgic vision of the working class aka George Orwell's 'middle class' Orwell's '[Road to Wigan Pier](#)'. And this is the problem: it's always middle class intellectuals on the Left who have set the agenda, not for their own 'class' mind but for an idea that emerged in the middle of the 19th century; that the organized industrial working class would undertake the Revolution, led of course by middle class intellectuals.

OTW is nevertheless a transcendent moment, one to cherish and sustain and no doubt just the first shot across the bows of Global Capital but for it to have a chance of success it will have challenge corporate capitalism's right to exist.

To do this we will first have to dispel the 'bad apple' theory as the cause of the current crisis. That it's just a question of regulating capitalism, smoothing out the rough edges, eliminating the extremes and above all, restoring 'competition', so-called real capitalism.

But this could only be done by breaking up the giant corporations and abolishing the financial sector in its entirety as it currently exists. Is it likely that advocates of 'real' capitalism aka [Max Keisser](#) could undertake such a mission? The way I understand it, a 'real' capitalist economy would consist only of small competing private businesses, cooperatives, public utilities and the self-employed, and one assumes massive state intervention in order to make it all happen.

Sounds a bit like my favourite kind of socialism, William Morris's version and not an overly ambitious objective given the political will to carry it out.

But who will break up Shell or Goldman Sachs? Who will smash the military-industrial-media complex? Only a state owned and managed by the working class can undertake such a momentous task. OTY OTW...

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