

The Night Arisen [Nuit Debout] Movement

Thousands of people discussing the need to go beyond the present social organization (political, economic), in the center of a major Western capital, is obviously in itself something eminently positive.

The fact that in the initiative of the occupation movement of Republic Square there have been members of organizations such as Attac, the Left Front or “real democracy now” does not mean that it is a simple manipulation by the most "radical" elements of the ruling political apparatus (1). Whatever the views and projects of these political forces does not change the depth of discontent, disgust and revolt that are expressed in the general meetings or in discussion groups in the occupied places.

The success of the movement, its duration, its extension to dozens of cities in France and the manifestations of solidarity at the international level shows that it expresses a real and deep need for meeting, reflection, action against a system that leads to disaster. If the starting point of the mobilization was the bill on labor, it is significant that most interventions in general assemblies and discussion groups are at a deeper level, more general, often questioning the capitalist system itself and its political forms.

Although discussions sometimes seem to get lost in "democratic" formalism, there is the more generalized conviction that society can no longer be governed as before, from top to bottom, and that it is a question of learning in practice to do otherwise. The practices of the new communication technologies there is for something. We find the same spirit as in the “Squares” movements, the "Arab Spring," the Indignados in Spain, Occupy in the US, Syntagma Square in Athens, or the mobilization in Turkey in 2013.

But just as the Occupy movements of the past, it comes up against the limits of its inability to extend to the world of production and so-called "popular" neighborhoods. It confronts the wall of the reality of the dictatorship of capital over labor, paralyzed, and divided, by the threat of unemployment and the pressure of insecurity [precarity]. Adding to this are the trade union machines that do everything to maintain control over "their troops" and take a very dim view of the state of mind of these "autonomous" movements.

The Indignados in Spain in 2011, after having successively put forward and in part carried out the slogans "Toma [Take over] las plazas" and "Toma los barrios", proclaimed "Toma las fábricas" [factories]. But it came to nothing. It was the same for Occupy Oakland on the West Coast of the United States (October 2011) which tried to intervene in the fight of the port workers.

As long as the extension of the movement to the real world of production and the [working class] "neighborhoods" is not achieved, the assemblies are sooner or later doomed to talk in terms of complaints and abstract projects, which is though not useless, on the contrary, but which is insufficient to maintain the vitality of the movement. Sometimes the assemblies are lost in the reports of commissions and the details of democratic functioning, which resemble a squirrel on a tread mill in its cage Fortunately the awareness of the need for this [process of] extension onto the structures of the material life of capitalism", to use an expression of Maxime, is generally present in the assemblies, and those of Nuit Debout are no exception.

But it must still be realized in practice

Whatever its weaknesses, its stammering, the attempts at its manipulation, the current social mobilization in France is important and deserves not only our interest but our participation.

Raoul Victor, April 12, 2016