

From Wall Street to Dalal Street

IDEAS ALWAYS COME FROM AMERICA! NO MATTER WHETHER THEY ARE revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. Since the days of Hay Market episode American people have inspired the progressives around the world in a number of ways. Encouraged by the 'Occupy Wall Street' action programme, the Communist Party of India (CPI) has launched 'Occupy Dalal Street' agitation as Dalal Street is the symbol of Indian corporate power and greed. It is refreshing that communists in this part of the globe no longer look towards Moscow for guidance and inspiration. Nor do the majority of them subscribe to Chinese ideological authority anymore, albeit a few naxalite groups continue to repose faith in China's ideological infallibility. But China's basic state policy of opening up is unlikely to change even in the distant future. They are working hard to get more actively involved in economic globalisation and make their presence felt, ironically though, in the 'Wall Street' club.

In short the 'Wall Street' message is how 99 percent of the population is being oppressed by 1 percent. Those who are joining 'Occupy Wall Street' protest march while refusing to tolerate the greed and corruption of 1 percent, belong to the deprived 99 percent.

For young Americans who face wholesale criminalisation, mass incarceration and legalised discrimination 'Occupy Wall Street' was a Tahrir moment in Cairo symbolising the protest movement in Egypt this spring that led to the ousting of the long time US-backed strongman Hosni Mubarak. There was no Anna Hazare in America—it all started with the anti-consumerist organisation *Adbusters* giving call for people to 'descend on Wall Street' to carry out 'full spectrum, absolutely non-violent civil disobedience the likes of which the country has not seen since the freedom marchers of the 1960s'. Violent or non-violent, the persons in power will always react if they are threatened by any form of dissent. True, it was a fresh wind of popular upsurge that blew into the Wall Street area of lower Manhattan in New York City on September 17 when 3000 people, mostly young angry people in their 20s and 30s, who have no future in the land of abundance and opportunity, marched through the financial centre of the evil empire. Not quite unexpectedly the police resorted to action quickly as they immediately arrested over 700 demonstrators—people from the 'Occupy Wall Street' action and supporters—during a march on Brooklyn Bridge on Saturday afternoon, October 1. By allowing the marchers to walk without being halted for some time the police actually entrapped them and finally started mass arrests to crush the anti-corporate agitation in the bud. As the movement was totally non-violent, they were just peacefully shouting some slogans, police action was simply outrageous even by third world standards. Then the role of police is not to serve and protect the people anywhere in the world. They strip themselves of their human clothing and consciousness when they willingly attack unarmed peaceful protesters and repress the helpless and downtrodden.

No doubt this 'Occupy Wall Street' movement by a handful of determined Americans caught the imagination of the radicals throughout the world as it spread like wildfire to 1500 cities in 82

countries in no time and it is still going on. The movement can be aptly summed up as the '99% vs 1%'. Beyond the theme of '99% vs 1%' there arose a wide range of views on the urgent problems to be addressed as no specific demands for the occupation were put forward.

If anything the spontaneous outburst reflects the rebellious mood of young America, right in the heart of global corporate citadel and it is likely to influence democrats and liberals of divergent hues around the world who want to see a radically different and liberated world from the clutches of multinational corporations who barely represent 1 percent of the population everywhere, be it America or India.

The point at issue is whether such a spontaneous movement without any proper leadership can sustain itself for long. A few years back anti-WTO agitation in Seattle—again in America—succeeded in creating a chain of anti-globalisation networks across the globe, but it failed to move beyond Seattle and galvanise the generation that is being forced to live in the conditions of poverty, misery and degradation. Without a concrete charter of demands and a definite goal to reach, mere spontaneity coupled with emotional fire, cannot deliver.

It remains to be seen whether CPI can stick to its gun of anti-Dalal Street agitation for some time in a situation of suffocating atmosphere where corporate plunder and unlimited loot being reflected almost daily in this scam or that scam, has created intolerable living conditions for ordinary people. It is really the question of '1% vs 99%'. Nowhere are high food prices, poverty and insecurity combining to produce tragic sufferings more than in some eastern and central states where farmers are committing suicides in thousands at a regular interval. □□□