

## Calcutta Notebook

F C

UPRISINGS, REVOLTS AND occupation keep their undeniable marks on 2011. In recent times, a year with so much and so wide protests from periphery to world metropolis are rare. In this crises-ridden period, the competition-charged, tumultuous year saw status quo questioned and challenged. In recent times, capitalism with its fundamental contradictions of capital accumulation has never encountered so vigorous and wide social criticism and rejection.

The globe eclipsing status quo has created conditions for protest and uprising, and also trammled these. With these contradictory acts, status quo has illegitimated itself, and has provided legitimacy to protest and uprising against institutions for coercion and ideological hegemony that capital builds up to dominate public life. As captive of income- and opportunity-inequalities, people in countries are giving tongue to their dissatisfaction with the status quo, its philosophy, policies, politics and economy. As democratic practice, people are dissenting, disapproving and denouncing dominating power's contempt of life and liberty. People are declining to acquiesce to the destruction of peace on the earth.

People in countries were passing days while corporate personhood was taking control of people's life and bare minimum spaces essential for people's existence. It was capital's indifferent campaign to destruct all life on the earth.

The prevailing system with its all its brutality-poverty, unemployment, wars, intervention, and indifferent elites indulging in luxury and speculation-has provided logic to protest in countries. Working people are being deprived of their rights. Narrowed down space for dissent and curtailed rights have ignited revolts. People began resisting mainly through nonviolent protest marches and occupation. Internet based social networking turned a tool to communicate. With industrial action, by striking valiantly, labor in scores of countries heroically stood in front of capital. In Third, Second and First Worlds, student activism, their protests and marches, occupations of educational institutions and media centers unmasked the dominating system that does not hide its profit motive in the area of public instruction. Riot and anarchic acts, only a few in numbers and only in a few countries, reflect dire living condition, and encroached democratic space. These are initiatives by an impatient section to ensure jobs, homes, security and freedom from the tyranny of capital.

In 2011, the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement are two key moments in the worldwide protest process. These are junctures. In terms of magnitude and force, these two surpassed the Seattle Uprising in 1999, the Prague Anti-globalization Protests in 2000 and the Iraq War Protest in 2003. In terms of significance, these two influenced and will influence societies and politics at regional and world levels.

Tyrants, Empire-allies, caricature characters in politics, financial and political institutions, coercive apparatus, all had to face protests by people from Australia to Middle East, from North Africa to North America, from Wukan, a China village, to the US cities, from a mining giant headquarter to ports and auction house. Tunisia, Italy, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Bahrain, Greece, France, the UK, backward, conservative societies and advanced capitalist countries, all came under questioning by its citizens. Madrid, Athens, San Francisco, Paris, Philadelphia, London, Leeds, Los Angeles, and hundreds of cities and towns saw protest marches. Election thievery sparked protests, sometimes violent. In 2011, tens of thousands of “mass incidents”, huge demonstrations and protests, reflected undercurrents in today’s Chinese society. Striking oil workers occupied the main square in Zhanaozen, a Kazakhstan town, for more than *six* months. In the last days in 2011, police firing on the protesting Kazakh oil workers killed at least 10 people. In Egypt, protesting people continue making supreme sacrifices. In Lens Creek Mountain, West Virginia, people marched more than 50 miles to save ecology and a glorious history.

Occupy Wall Street, the Occupy Movement that began on September 17 with a few thousand protesters in New York to condemn greed and capitalism has become a political expression in the US, and broadly, a worldwide approach with broad coalitions. In France, Marseille Chamber of Commerce was occupied. In Kerala, India, a soft drink plant was occupied. And, 2011 saw similar many more.

“No nation”, as James Madison said in *Political Observations* in 1795, “can preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” But, the world is experiencing continual war. The year 2011 with pain and tears is going through this war. It is war for resources and cheap labor being waged in lands around the globe, it is war for thievery, it is wars declared and undeclared, and it is age-old war waged by a minority class against the majority, unaware, unorganized. Under the endless sky, it is being waged in politics, in diplomacy, in economy, in propaganda, in ideology and education. It is being waged in the squares of the cities, in slums, on waste dumping grounds, with public properties being sold in market, in factories and workshops, in ports and offices, in degraded educational institutions and hospitals without any ribbon of hope, in all public spaces. □□□