**Pandora: A Pandemic of Capitalism**

[Dr Saulat Nagi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-saulat-nagi/)

October 15, 2021

When Prometheus stole the fire from the heavens and gave it to mankind, Zeus decided to punish both. For his transgression, Prometheus was tied to a rock and had his ever-repairing liver devoured by the eagle day after day before finally rescued by Heracles. To punish men, Zeus instructed Hephaestus to create the first woman and he crafted a perfect beauty that stunned the gods and men alike. She was Pandora, the gift giver, but her beauty was not without its dialectical opposite. She carried a jar, the proverbial Pandora’s Box, containing ugliness in shape of evils, which men could do and live after them. The misogynist myth heralded the beginning of the patriarchal era when matriarchy was receding in fifth-century Athens.

”Beauty” Camus confesses ”is unbearable, it drives us to despair, offering us for a minute a glimpse of an eternity that we would like to stretch across the length of time”. The confession conditions beauty to be eternal to become bearable, but in an exchange society that deals in commodity, is it possible for the beauty to attain eternity and to become a permanent reality? Perhaps not for ”the institutions which serve for the struggle of existence”, Marcuse says, ”cannot serve for the pacification of existence”. Hence humanity has to live with the tragic duality, with Pandora’s beauty and the ugliness of the evils till it becomes the master and crafter of its destiny. The sly leaks of Panama and Pandora are the hideous but common presentations of the evils that have sneaked out of the Box but are mere tips of many icebergs.

One can argue about the novelty of these leaks or the lack thereof. What is new in neo-liberal era comes forth as exclusion of the new. Not long ago in 2008, the capitalist anarchy played havoc with the people, turning millions homeless overnight. But for the handful of billionaires, bankers, and hedge fund owners the calamity was an opportunity. They bought the empty houses at a dime a dozen and sold them at premium prices with no leak for the public to view. Whereas ordinary people lost their lifetime savings, their money bailed out the bankers, the manna that fell from the Fed grew the wealth of the top 1pc miraculously. The worst part of tragedy was the indifference of the victims to those responsible for their plight. It was a tragedy and a farce acting in unison, for this fiasco, a daytime robbery, the victims blamed themselves. Following the logic of their oppressors blindly they accepted the plunder, quietly believing it as the sacred law of market.

Those who advocate market economy as a necessity for creating jobs forget that bourgeoisie only creates jobs when it is profitable for it.

”World crises” Marx says ”have always been the real concentration and forceable adjustment of all the contradictions of bourgeois economy” and ”the ideology of today’s local elites” Igor Stiks adds, ”is neither nationalism nor religious fanaticism but a home-grown combination of Social Darwinism and neoliberalism”, the latter is not an economic system but a political ideology at war with the people. Despite the domination of technological rationality nothing has changed for the ordinary people. The process of accumulation through dispossession is rampant, colonialism has metamorphosed into imperialism and expropriation has spread from the ordinary citizen in the centre to the countries of the periphery- the global south. Dick Cheney, Rockefeller, George Soros, Bill Gates, and Jeff Bezos build their corporations, turn them into cartels, control the world while flouting brazenly the so-called laws of equilibrium of the market – the inherently imbalanced structure based on stylized barbarity.

History of capitalism is the history of anarchy and the class war. Overproduction and loss of rate of profit lead to recessions. The onset of the latter does not herald a deluge for the capitalists at the expense of the workers, it is merely a decline in the average of their profits that they compensate with reducing wages and by enforcing unemployment. Despite these measures, when recession sets in, they take their money to offshore heavens, secure it in banks, and it ceases to be part of the productive process and hence loses its quality as capital. Marx had forewarned about the catastrophic character of capitalism when he stated that for the capitalists, “the process of production appears merely as an unavoidable intermediate link, as a necessary evil for the sake of moneymaking. All nations with capitalist mode of production are therefore seized periodically by a feverish attempt to make money without the intervention of the process of production.”

Those who advocate market economy as a necessity for creating jobs forget that bourgeoisie only creates jobs when it is profitable for it else it either ‘warehouses’ its wealth as happened in Panama and Pandora or plays what Harvey describes a ‘casino game’ with unstable financial instruments or invests in procuring technologies to get rid of the workers. When capitalists as a class act and behave identically, who leaks the inner information? Bourgeoisie, as a class, acts in its interests but it isn’t monolithic, even when it has divided the world in its areas of domination, the struggle to subdue the competitor(s) continues. Such leaks, as mentioned above, are the outcomes of intra-capitalist rivalry.

Despite this rivalry, it is amusing to note that the leaked content has not even flirted with the names of American capitalists, weeding them out meticulously to save them from embarrassment. Barring Tony Blair, an executioner running amuck, no significant European name could be seen in the creepy light. And Putin, not implicated by the leak, has been shamelessly alluded to as the culprit. In one of its headings ”Pandora Papers: biggest ever leak of offshore data” (4 Oct, 21), The Guardian, the liberal face of western capitalism, brazenly captured the face of Putin alongside some others involved in the leak. It is the same newspaper that published Julian Assange’s WikiLeaks, pocketed profit, but stayed quiet when over the same leaks, Julian was left alone to die in Belmarsh prison by the imperialist power. So much for independent journalism.

”The Washington-based ICIJ,” Ben Norton states,?”is known?to be funded by George Soros’ Open Society Foundation, which is famous for organizing coup attempts and domestic strife in different countries. The CIA-backed Ford Foundation, one of the world’s largest foundations, finances ICIJ as well as eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. The same organization, the ICIJ”, Ben adds ”also published so-called documents targeting the Beijing administration under the name of China Cables in 2019. It was revealed that the documents published by ICIJ, claiming to contain confidential information about the ‘Vocational Training Camps’ in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, were distorted and interpreted”.

This information makes the puzzle less puzzling. The motive of the exercise is not to harm the bourgeoisie itself but to inflict the terror of capital in the hearts of people. The message is loud and clear, capitalists can have their cake and eat it too and people as onlookers can live in penury, with their elusive dreams of seeking compensation in the hereafter or in their fetishized democratic freedom which despite all twists and turns remains the same; the unfreedom.

“What is to be done?” RD Laing inquires. ”We who are still half alive, living in the often-fibrillating heartland of a senescent capitalism – can we do more than reflect the decay around and within us?” The question becomes more intriguing for humanity living under the existing reality, irrational to the core, coercing it to impotence. Under the malignant gaze of the corporate world possibility of change for now appears slim. Those who wish any change ”can only do so by turning that very impotence into an active ingredient in their own thinking and maybe in their action as well” (Adorno). In the meanwhile. Pandora continues to cast her negative spell.

*The writer is an Australian-based academic and has authored books on socialism and history. He can be reached at saulatnagi@hotmail.com*