

Michael Burawoy responds to the questions of Dimitris Givisis member of SYRIZA (www.syriza.gr) and a journalist for the left winged newspaper "Epohi" (www.epohi.gr).

- 1. In a few days, we reach Trump's end. But how easy will it be for Trumpism to end, as well as its ideology (bigotry, nationalism, sense of white supremacy, etc.) in American society?**

Trumpism has been nurtured by Trump to be sure, but it worked on a fertile soil. There's been a long history of right wing movements in the US inseparable from the history of slavery, of Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the reaction against the Civil Rights movement. But Trump is the first President to deliberately and brazenly galvanize these movements, encourage their proliferation, bringing them on to the stage of national politics. These movements have their own phantasmic theories, firmly believed by their members. They were/are quite convinced that the election was stolen from Trump and that he would/will be re-annointed President. What percentage of the 74 million people who voted for Trump are followers of Trumpism is unclear, but they are certainly not going to disappear. It is possible that they will create their own party, and develop their own intellectuals, such as Steve Bannon. That could lead to a real splintering of party politics.

- 2. What are your thoughts on the crisis of liberal democracy in the US? How can this volatile situation be encountered?**

To be sure Trump has deepened the crisis of liberal democracy by his flagrant violation of inherited norms, his contempt for inherited practices, his abuse of office. But I'm impressed how resilient liberal democracy has been in the face of his assault. Replacing top officials who run the different apparatuses of the state has not been sufficient to make the state his instrument, notwithstanding his appointment of a large number of rightist judges. Just as elected socialist leaders have been hamstrung by recalcitrant bureaucracies, rule of law, etc. so the same is true on the right. Trump calls it the deep state, but it's simply institutional power. On the other hand, there is no doubt that liberal democracy is a fragile species of government. In the end it depends on having something to offer its subjects, and what we have seen over the last decade is the intensification and spread of social movements, extra-parliamentary politics that express dissatisfaction with what congress has to offer. To so many it looks like Lenin's talking shop! This disgust is also present on the left as well as on the right. Social media has also played its role in the polarization of politics, so that Trump became his own political party.

- 3. What do you think will be Biden's answers to the crisis that American capitalism is facing? Can workers hope for something, or will there be more neoliberalism?**

I don't think Biden will have any answer. The crisis of capitalism gets deeper and deeper – with circulating and spiraling crises – an economic crisis in which the chasm between finance capital represented in a buoyant stock market dominated by such corporations as Google, Amazon, Walmart, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, Twitter and the like that don't produce anything and the reality of some 10 million people without jobs. The crisis of capitalism also manifests itself in the incapacity to deal with the pandemic – privatized health care can deliver a vaccine but it

can't distribute the vaccine effectively. There's the same ineptitude in the UK, but also in the rest of Europe. 50 years of neoliberalism have made it impossible for the state to deal with any long term global threats, whether it be future pandemics or climate change. I can't see Biden doing anything different than Obama, continuing to fuel Wall Street and all that it represents, deepening class polarization.

4. What changes do you think Biden will make in foreign policy, at a time when USA hegemony has weakened globally?

Again I expect Biden to follow Obama and Clinton before him, trying to shore up US hegemony by brokering deals with China, Iran, Israel and of course with Europe. It will be interesting to see how Biden deals with such authoritarians as Erdogan, Sisi, Duterte, Bolsonaro, Orban, Putin. He might keep them at arms length but I've no doubt he will deal with them, claiming that engagement is the only way to curb their dictatorial tendencies. He might bring the US back into climate negotiations, but they will have little concrete effect, more a symbolic gesture.

5. Finally, how easy will it be for Biden to tackle police violence, state / institutional racism, and racial discrimination effectively?

Even if we assume that Biden understands institutional racism, and assuming that he would want to tackle it, I don't think he has the imagination or the radical credentials to accomplish much. Another stimulus package might give him some breathing space, but his power in Congress, despite having a majority in both houses, is still very weak. The left caucus is still quite weak and the Democratic Party has lots of pro-business representatives. The only way Biden will make real reforms is if he is pushed hard by social movements from the left. Certainly one has to be impressed by the anti-racism movements over the summer, but whether they will be sustained is an open question. We may be rid of Trump but Biden is no Sanders, and even if he were there's no clear path to a Green New Deal or something of that character. Capitalism is a very different beast today than it was in the 1930s.

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