



'To the Finland Station'¹ – Trump as a tool of history

Description

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Almost never are witnesses to historical events aware they are observing or participating in a history-changing event. Often, the very protagonists of the historical events are unaware of them too. But on January 20, 2025, we shall watch one of such events while most of the people, including the main actors, will not know what they are doing, unconscious they are fundamentally the tools of history.

January 20, 2025, marks a symbolic end to global neoliberalism. Both of its components are gone. Globalism had now been converted into nationalism, neoliberalism has been made to apply to the economic sphere only. Its social parts—racial and gender equality, free movement of labor, multiculturalism—are dead. Only low tax rates, deregulation and worship of profit remain.

I wrote about what I think Donald J. Trump's view of the world is: profits, neo-mercantilism, non-imperialist US nationalism. Each of these individual elements can be easily defined and none of them is new or unknown. But as is often the case with historical turning points, only when put together do such views of the world define a new ideology. Its name we do not yet know. What is known however is that it represents a break with the ideology that ruled from the 1980s, and surely from the early 1990s, to today.

Trump himself was a beneficiary of global neoliberalism. By his preferences, age, and

nationality, he fully participated and profited from it. For the reasons that probably have more to do with vanity than ideology, he decided to challenge it. He did not expect to succeed.

Yet eight years later, after the first wholly unexpected presidential victory, and four years spent in the desert besieged by the locusts of courts trials, permanent media molestation, two assassination attempts, “tell-all” book revelations, judges, inquiries, false friends, “golden showers” and allegations of treason, he is back with 77 million votes and both a popular and electoral college victory.

Nobody, himself included, knows where this amalgam of ideas that he has put together will take the United States, the political West, and the world. Years from now, we shall see their logic. Elon Musk might represent them the best. He calls for the creation of a global elite, unmoored to nationalism ideologically, sentimentally and psychologically, yet using it for political purposes to assuage the lower classes. It is global Caesarism: it pays tribute to lower classes, collects their votes, pays for their outstanding credit card bills, but gives them low paying jobs and ignores them as active participants in politics except at four-year intervals. It does the same thing as the traditional middle-of-the-road Democrats and Republicans do but because its cynicism is new, it is less obvious, less resented and more believed.

By its bareness and freshness, it is a break from the ideology that reigned supreme for forty years: the threadbare rule of plutocrats that pretended to be poverty-fighters. Neoliberalism was not an ideology of blood and soil, but it managed to kill many. It leaves the scene with a scent of falsehood and dishonesty. Not often has an ideology been so mendacious: it called for equality while generating historically unprecedented increases in inequality; it called for democracy while sowing anarchy, discord and chaos; it spoke against ruling classes while creating a new aristocracy of wealth and power; it called for rules while breaking them all; it funded a system of schooled mendacity that tried to erect half-lies as truths.

It ends on January 20.

¹*The reference “To the Finland Station” alludes to Lenin’s arrival in 1917 in St Petersburg, symbolizing a pivotal historical and ideological shift.*

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