



Beware the Demons of Revolution

Elections matter. While both Republicans and Democrats fought for every vote they could muster on November 3, Americans saw other political forces at work: leftist revolutionaries rioting in our cities and gathering their forces. The election returns will receive widespread analysis and the full result of the election deserves commentary. But let's step back to examine the larger revolutionary forces that took shape before the election. Many of today's youth are finding themselves mesmerized by the call for revolution without much historical knowledge of the results of revolutions that occurred in the 20th century.

The revolutionary message has found apologists in the mainstream media. The trick has been to link current mob violence in our cities with the American revolutionary tradition.

While the Minneapolis riots were at their height this summer, along came CNN's Chris Cuomo and Don Lemon, who told their listeners not to be alarmed by riots in their cities, because riots were part of America's revolutionary origins. On June 1, they came on the air to reassure Americans that the violence they were witnessing was progress in action.¹

Cuomo began by declaring that the protesters had cause for ignoring the curfew that Minneapolis city authorities tried to impose to quell the violence. "Why would you listen to the message to go home and observe a curfew as someone who respects the law when you don't believe the law is being respected when it comes to you?" he asked. "People will judge it, that's fine, you should also judge the Boston Tea Party" (a 1773 protest against a British tax on tea sold in the American colonies). "You should also judge what happened in the '60s that led to the civil rights," he continued. "Most of the major movements in American history have started at the grassroots level and at some point have turned into direct conflict with the American government. . . . Remember your history before you judge your present."

Don Lemon took up the same message: "Our country was started because, the Boston Tea Party. Rioting." Lemon

went on, "So do not get it twisted and think this is something that has never happened before and this is so terrible and these savages and all of that." He summed up: "This is how this country was started."

The Revolutionary Left Advances

While Cuomo and Lemon were giving their fractured history lessons, the radical left was organizing.

The revolutionary left is more active today than it has been since the late 1960s and is in many respects more successful than in the 1960s. The Antifa movement has organized violent protests across the country. These protests appeared well-organized and well-funded. Fox News made a major contribution in revealing the growth of the revolutionary left by producing Lara Logan's show "The Socialist Invasion." Unfortunately, this series, first shown on regular Fox News, is now available only to subscribers. Logan's detailed reporting shows how far the revolutionary left has reached into the heartland, through use of social media and community centers including anarchist bookstores.

In August, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) convention voted to align itself with Antifa.² The proposal called for joining Antifa in its fight against fascism, which DSA believes is alive and well in America. The resolution declared, "We can't fight exploitation, white supremacy, or patriarchy without antifascist work. Let's form a National Working Group to help drive collaboration and resource sharing to support our antifascist organizing, because we must fight exploitation, white supremacy, and patriarchy." The motion passed in a 521-493 vote at the convention.

The proposal institutionalizes the fight against "fascism" in America as an official DSA initiative through formal collaboration with Antifa, an avowed revolutionary movement. DSA claims to want to bring socialism to America through the ballot box, but members apparently concluded

in August that fascism is such a great threat to the nation that violent resistance is necessary.

Why care what happens at a Democratic Socialists of America convention? DSA claims more than 70,000 dues-paying members. Club chapters are found on every major university campus. DSA has proved effective in electing candidates and is becoming a force in big cities by winning local council elections in Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle and New York City.

Before the August convention, DSA and Antifa members often overlapped in so-called “affinity groups”—small collectives of radicals. Journalist Andy Ngo reported that Antifa functions in effect as the paramilitary wing of DSA. This is probably an overstatement in that Antifa has its own organizational structure and mobilization agenda. Nonetheless, the formalized alliance between DSA and Antifa brings something new to the revolutionary agenda.

Antifa Is More Than an ‘Idea’

Conservative commentators have focused primarily on Antifa. They have shown that Antifa is more than an “idea,” contrary to Democratic candidate Joe Biden’s assertion in his September 29 debate with President Trump. Antifa is a concrete reality.³ By forming a united front, DSA and Antifa have furthered both organizations’ radical goals.

Antifa has won the endorsement, in effect, of Keith Ellison, the Minnesota attorney general and former chair of the Democratic National Committee. The tweet of Ellison holding up a copy of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook* with a personal note, “I just found the book that will strike fear in the heart of @realDonaldTrump,” went viral. The book had just been published by activist/scholar Donald Bray. Ellison’s tweet appeared on June 20, 2018 and then regained attention when the deputy director of the Trump 2020 campaign, Max Wolking, posted a screenshot of Ellison’s tweet and the photo of him holding up the book. Snopes, the fact-checking internet source, confirmed that the tweet was authentic and not a photoshopped image.⁴

The importance of the tweet is not what it says about Ellison—although it says much—but its illustration of a troubling alliance that has sprung up between the Democratic Party and the revolutionary left. Democrats have used urban chaos as a pretext to attack President Trump as having poured fuel on the flames of rioting. Such accusations ignore that the notorious Ferguson, Missouri riots in 2014 took place well before Trump took office. But the relationship between Democrats and the revolutionary left goes beyond Democrats blaming Trump for social

tensions and rioting. Democrats also incorporate Antifa and Black Lives Matters demands to defund the police.

In May 2020, Ellison’s son Jeremiah, a member of the Minneapolis City Council, tweeted, “I hereby declare, officially, my support for ANTIFA. Unless someone can prove to me ANTIFA is behind the burning of black and immigrant owned businesses in my ward, I’ll keep focusing on stopping the white power terrorists THAT ARE ACTUALLY ATTACKING US!”⁵

Jeremiah is one of the leading voices on the Minneapolis City Council for the effort to “defund the police.” He is not the only city council member in the country to align himself with both Antifa and DSA. The Seattle City Council, too, has endorsed “defunding the police.” Its council member Kshama Sawant, an avowed Trotskyite and a member of the Socialist Alternative party, has received the most national attention for her efforts to defund the police, but her board voted 9-1 with her to defund the police. In Portland, Oregon, Antifa supporter and mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone condemned violence but declared herself an “anti-fascist” activist, opposed to “masculine toxicity,” Trump and “Proud Boys.” Her YouTube interview reveals much about her apologies for Antifa.⁶

The Allure of Revolution

Revolution holds an allure for many of today’s youth. There is little history of communism or past revolutionary movements being taught in high school or college. The widespread ignorance of history makes it easier for the revolutionary left to sell its message of the need for revolutionary activism.

A poll conducted by National Public Radio at the height of the socialist Bernie Sanders’s presidential campaign found that overall, only 28 percent of U.S. respondents favored socialism, while 58 percent opposed it. Yet, when broken down by generation, 38 percent of the millennial generation favored socialism.⁷

The history of revolution since the French Revolution in the late 18th century, and more especially during the 20th century, has been one of capturing the masses and the mobs, only to end in terrorism, political repression and dictatorship.

Revolutions begin when the elites refuse to undertake necessary reform and lose confidence in their own ability to govern. Instead, these elites become interested only in their own aggrandizement at the expense of the common good. While the elites line their own pockets through privilege and corruption, revolutionaries proceed first with

an intellectual strategy of undermining the regime; then they gain control of social, political and educational institutions. The final step comes when spontaneous protests and mass mobilization are transformed into revolution. Revolutionaries exploit the call for freedom, liberty, social justice and equality to assume control of the revolutionary movement and eventually acquire total political power. Power is maintained through terror.

The American Revolution Was Different

What is most remarkable about the American Revolution in 1776 is that it did not lead to a dictatorship. Historians debate the extent of the social consequences of the American Revolution, but clearly the social upheaval was modest compared to what occurred in the 1789 French Revolution, the 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia under Lenin, or Mao Zedong's late-1940s communist revolution in China. The American Revolution brought war, and after the revolution elites came under attack by urban youth and back-country farmers. The wearing of wigs, silk stockings and fancy gowns became unfashionable. Yet there were no guillotines, mass executions or courts controlled by revolutionary councils.

While CNN commentators like to point to the violence of the American Revolution and mob activity, the reality is that the American Revolution occurred within the context of a people that respected government. Indeed, at the outset, Americans formed the continental congress with elected representatives to protest "taxation without representation." The Declaration of Independence was issued by a representative congress. The Articles of Confederation established a government during the war for independence. American revolutionaries sought not to create a new social order or overturn tradition and custom, but to fulfill what they saw as their rights as Englishmen based on "first principles" derived from longstanding British custom and experience.

The French Revolution began with the call for a representative government and a constitutional monarchy. This sentiment soon gave way to mob rule, led by mobs in the Paris and other urban communes. These communes, open assemblies which anyone could attend, created an opportunity for organized factions to seize control. Terrorism followed, led first by the Jacobins and then by their revolutionary opponents. The end was a coup d'état with Napoleon Bonaparte coming to power and eventually declaring himself emperor.

Much of the same course was followed in the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. The same pattern emerged in

many of the post-colonial African revolutions.

The human cost of these revolutions is evident in the staggering number of deaths. In the 20th century, millions of people have died at the hands of revolutionary demons who came into power calling for the liberation of people against their oppressors—capitalists, foreign imperialists or dictators. Mass murder within these revolutionary regimes was not a coincidence. Terror is instrumental to the modern revolutionary. Mass murder follows without apology. Terror is employed to maintain power within the regime and is used against external enemies. These revolutionaries rallied the masses in the name of freedom, only to become worse than the rulers they replaced.

Most Revolutions Are Blood-Soaked

Most revolutionary regimes are washed in the blood of the very people they called to freedom. Friends and foes of the revolution find themselves declared enemies of the state and become targets of massive police apparatuses created by the revolutionary regime. Yet, even in the many revelations of starvation, gulags, mass arrests and Orwellian thought police, cults of personality are created around revolutionary leaders. Young revolutionaries in America and Western Europe continue to make these tyrants into folk heroes.

A revolutionary mentality that willingly accepts the execution, torture, starvation and imprisonment of tens of thousands of people—often early supporters—is unfathomable to most people. Evil is difficult to understand in itself. Revolutionaries such as Lenin, Mao, Castro, Mugabe and Khomeini are willing to destroy institutions built over centuries and sacrifice entire generations in their dreams to fashion a perfect society and fulfill the destiny of humankind. They are zealots either in their secular or their religious faith. They combine with this faith a will to power, anointing themselves as instruments to fulfill history's promise.

In this way, they are able to conflate ideology and personal power so that the two become inseparable. The destiny of history weighs on their shoulders; they believe that without them all will be lost. The magnitude of this arrogance should not be underestimated. These revolutionaries create a reality within their own minds and a demand for power which sets its own morality. The world is divided in their eyes between the enlightened and the unenlightened; revolutionaries and reactionaries; the state and the enemies of the state. Theirs is a Manichean world with no in-betweens.

The modern revolutionary mind manifests a terrorist mentality enraptured by millenarian visions of a society perfected by overturning history. The revolutionary mind assumes the role of a prophet acting in a corrupt world that cannot be reformed or bettered gradually; heaven on earth arrives only through destroying the existing world order. The modern revolutionary believes with fanatical conviction that the old order needs to be destroyed. Violence is necessary to fulfill the prophecy. Terror is an instrument for achieving and maintaining power. This apocalyptic vision in which the new world order springs out of the old reduces individuals to abstract entities that stand either on the side of revolution or on the side of reaction.

Prophets with messianic messages are not new in world history. Tyranny is not new to history either. What makes the modern revolutionary mind unique is that it is a result of the age of enlightenment in which reason replaced faith. For all their pretense of “scientific socialism,” these modern-day revolutionaries held a deep and baseless faith in the perfectibility of men. Only Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the Iranian revolution, declared himself a man of faith and not reason, although he was a modern-day student of Plato.

The others—Lenin, Mao, Castro and Mugabe—purported to follow the dictates of science and reason, as interpreted by Karl Marx. As Marxists, they were products of the 18th-century Enlightenment who rejected what they saw as religious superstitions of the past. Despite their claim to be men of Reason they held a faith that they could establish a new world order and create “the new man.” In this respect, they were as devout in their faith as any pre-Enlightenment religious zealot who

sought to create a perfected world—fanatics such as Girolamo Savonarola, who named 1484 Florence, Italy the “New Jerusalem,” which led to persecution of the “unsaintly”; or Jan of Leiden, who moved to the German city of Munster in 1533 and declared himself king of the New Jerusalem, a heaven on earth complete with common property and common wives.

The romance of revolution is belied by actual history. The pressing question of our day in the United States is whether history will be remembered or tragically repeated. The usual conditions for revolution are absent today; but too many Americans have shown their willingness to commit violence or support acts of violence in the name of social justice. Demons lurk among us.

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- 1 For quotations from Cuomo and Lemon, see <https://theunionjournal.com/cnns-chris-cuomo-don-lemon-compare-rioters-to-american-revolutionaries/>; and <https://www.reporter.am/cnns-chris-cuomo-don-lemon-compare-rioters-to-american-revolutionaries/>.
 - 2 <https://dsabuild.org/r9-establishing-a-national-antifascist-and-direct-action-working-group/>; <https://reason.com/2019/08/07/antifa-democratic-socialists-america-dsa/>.
 - 3 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-and-trump-are-both-right-on-antifa-11601570464>.
 - 4 <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/ellison-antifa-book/>.
 - 5 <https://twitter.com/jeremiah4north/status/1267152043313172482?lang=en>.
 - 6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6kk3P-clM8>.
 - 7 <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/19/807047941/poll-sanders-rises-but-socialism-isnt-popular-with-most-americans>.
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A Thanksgiving Blessing

With gratitude for God’s grace and our readers’ support, we wish our readers a happy and blessed Thanksgiving this month and a long continuation of the great American experiment in self-government.

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