

[Originally this was intended as an appendix to re-emphasize Hass's points about the problems with revolution as opposed to reform. - Robert Von Stricker Beresford]

“Revolutions produce other men, not new men. Halfway “between truth and endless error” the mold of the species is permanent. That is the earth's burden.” - Barbara Tuchman

A revolution is not the same thing as a revolt or a rebellion. Rebellions and revolts are conflicts for independence of one group over another (they have a strong ethnic character). Or they are conflicts to end one particular kind of oppression. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 was not a revolution but a bloodless coup. The various slave revolts that occurred before the end of slavery were just that; revolts. A revolution is different. A revolution intends to totally change society. A revolution is far more about ideas than the average rebellion or revolt. In that sense, the “first” revolution is usually considered to be the French Revolution. Due to problems of communication, logistics and the like, a total revolution in a society was not really possible until that time. The confusion seems to arise from the American fondness for using the word “revolution” when it is not appropriate, for example the Texan “Revolution.” Just like their desecration of the word “liberal,” Americans have set back our learning by hundreds of years.

Revolutions are cycles. First, someone articulates a vague dream. Others build it up with pseudo-scientific “proofs” of its inevitability. It becomes popular when conditions are really bad for a given section of society. The group – or groups – adopts it and tries to implement the changes, but they have no power. Since they deal in impossibilities, two camps form: the moderates who try to compromise with reality and “the man;”¹ and the extremists, who disown the moderates and take an even more rigid approach to the doctrine of the original formulators. The followers and the extremists get frustrated and resort to violence (even when – especially when – they advocate a violence-free utopia). The extremists completely abandon their principles in deed, if not in act, in order to seize power and approximate their impossible goals. Then, when that fails, they change the words too. They eventually try to wipe out all resistance and, finally, all independent thought. And we get

¹ Why not have new food while they're at it? How can radicals truly eat spaghetti and meat sauce? How can radicals east goulash? They are the foods of The Man. I need to hire me a Marxist Chef.

totalitarianism. “One thing could not be achieved, even in Cambodia,² because the appropriate mechanism has not yet been developed: it was not possible to unteach people their language...The perfect revolution presupposes a perfect cultural desert; a method should thus be found of making people revert to a prelinguistic state” (Kolakowski 1990, 224). As the graffiti in *Oh Lucky Man* says, “Revolution is the opium of intellectuals.” We should think about that. Better to make music that expresses our anger than to join the secret, underground organization of Dr. X that will use any means necessary to topple the government. Queensryche were evidently very unhappy with the 80s. Yet they understood that a revolution would not save them. Instead they made an album. The album suggests that the revolutionaries are prone to the same shit the elites are prone to, which is true. Politically, we should listen to Queensryche and not the Clash, even if the Clash were the better band.

Most if not all “revolutions” that came before the French Revolution can be classified as rebellions or revolts (and this is usually obvious, given that most events of this kind before the French Revolution are called “rebellions,” “revolts,” “wars” or the like) with the possible exception of the American War of Independence, which had revolutionary aspects, though it does not fully qualify as a revolution. With these things in mind, here is a list of “successful” revolutions: Revolutions as distinct from rebellions, revolts, coups and civil wars and so-called “bloodless revolutions” which are usually very successful public protests. Just because its called a revolution in the history books, or by the rebels themselves, doesn’t mean it was actually a revolution in the sense of attempting to totally transform a society. What follows is a table of proper successful revolutions and their results.

2 Editor's Note: “Orwell even goes so far as to suggest that the only way to make tyranny permanent and unshakable, the only way in other words to create a literal hell on earth, is to deliberately to debase our language by turning our speech into an automatic gabble. The fear of being reduced to such a life is a genuine fear, but of course as soon as we express it in hysterical cliches we are in the same state ourselves: (Frye 1963, 91-92).

Revolution	Result
Pre-1789	
The English Civil Wars	Not really a revolution, but with some similarities: regicide, a dictator emerging
The American War of Independence	A rebellion with aspects of a revolution, given that the rebels intended to create their own society. However, the vast majority of texts associated with the “revolution” were written after the rebellion ended. It appears as a revolution in retrospect, but the rebels hadn't quite worked out what they were fighting for until after it ended.
1789-Present	
French Revolutions	Numerous wars and dictatorship of Napoleon until 1815.
The Glorious Revolution (Spain)	A liberal revolution that led to a new King for two years, then First Spanish Republic for two years, then Bourbon Restoration
The Mexican Revolution	Followed by civil war, a new constitution, the Cristero War, PRI oligarchy until 2000
The Xinhai Revolution	Created the Republic of China, but followed by the Second Revolution, the Warlord Era, the Chinese Civil War (see below)
The February Revolution	The October Revolution
The October Revolution	Russian Civil War and the Soviet Union; second worst democide in history
The Bolivian National Revolution	Who cares about Bolivia?
The Chinese Revolution aka the Chinese Civil War	Dictatorship/oligarchy until the present and the worst democide in history
The Cuban Revolution	Dictatorship until the present day
The Zanzibar Revolution	Small-scale genocide, oligarchy and union with Tanganyika
The Cambodian Civil War	Genocide, Vietnamese invasion and rule of Cambodia; though a civil war, the victorious side sought to revolutionize Cambodian society like few other revolutionary movements have
New Jewel Movement in Grenada	Oligarchy and US Invasion of Grenada
The Nicaraguan Revolution	Who cares about Nicaragua?
The Iranian Revolution	Oligarchy/dictatorship, Iran-Iraq War, rise of Islamic Fundamentalism

“See! If it worked there it could work over and over again everywhere!” What's that called, kids?

“Induction!!” That's right!

The more a revolution intends to change a society, the more dangerous and deadly it will be. The more people believe in their ability to change society the more likely they are to be disgusted, annoyed, angry, despondent, miserable (and on and on) when their utopia fails to materialize. The more likely they'll be to take those feelings out on *You*!