

A Revolting World

The Forces of Reaction never rest

By [John Kozy](#)

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Many in many lands are demonstrating against their governments. Some claim that people everywhere are revolting and that a worldwide revolution is imminent. Even both the orthodox and heterodox presses are all atwitter. But it is far easier to bring about a successful revolution than it is to build and preserve a humane, functioning government. The forces of reaction never rest, and they have managed to undo most of history's people's revolutions. Revolutionaries must recognize that their first task is to defend their newly formed governments from reactionaries, for once reactionaries get their feet in the door, they will not stop until the revolution is undone.

Yes, the double entendre is intentional.

Any humane, sensitive, and intellectually honest person cannot help but be revolted after taking note of the inhumane condition of the people in most countries and the declining condition of most people in the so-called developed world. It is a world in which a very few prosper spectacularly while most suffer and perish without ever being noticed. And we call ourselves "human"! But is an inhumane person human at all? How does one attempt to answer such a question?

Of course, there are people everywhere who are genuinely revolted by what a few persons have done to the many. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill would surely wonder what ever happened to the principle they both advocated—the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Their Utilitarianism has been pulled inside out. Now it seems that the principle is the greatest happiness for the fewest people. They would indeed wonder what have human beings become.

This revulsion is now leading many in many lands into demonstrating against their governments. Some claim that people everywhere are revolting and that a worldwide revolution is imminent. Revolution is everywhere in the air. Even the orthodox and heterodox presses are all atwitter. Is a new world awakening? Is the eternal spring of hope to be actualized? Would that it were so. If history is any guide, not likely!

There are, of course, a few voices urging caution. No, not the president who claims to be advocating peaceful governmental transitions. I mean people such as Mohamed, an Egyptian, living in the United States, who [says](#), "Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak must go," but he fears that regardless of the promises, Mubarak will figure out a way to keep his henchmen in power and the brutal legacy of cruelty and torture will continue. There is also Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, who has just published an interesting [piece](#), *Revolution: Is 1848 Repeating Itself in the Arab World?*, which warns that the forces of reaction might negate

current revolutions just as they negated the revolutions of 1848.

In fact, given the revolting condition that most people endure, it should be evident that revolutions, no matter how sincere at their inception, never produce the reforms desired by the revolutionaries. Although everything Nazemroaya says about the aftermath of 1848 is true, he doesn't go back nearly far enough.

Ever heard of the French revolution? What ever happened to it?

It took place between 1789 and 1799 during which radical social and political changes took place. The absolute monarchy collapsed, and French society underwent an epic transformation. Feudal, aristocratic, and religious privileges were abandoned because of pressure from liberal political groups and the masses on the streets. Old ideas succumbed to Enlightenment principles of citizenship and inalienable rights. Republican principles were the liberal songs of the day.

Then came the reaction. When the French National Convention sought to export revolution, a military coalition made up of Spain, Naples, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Austria, and Prussia was formed. The republican forces were led by Napoleon Bonaparte and when they prevailed, Napoleon became Emperor. The revolution died in the hands of the general who was entrusted to protect it. When Napoleon's army was finally defeated at Waterloo, the conservative Congress of Vienna reversed the political changes that had occurred. The monarchy was restored and Louis XVIII became king. France did not abandon monarchy until the late 1800s, a century after the revolution began. Were republican principles restored? Ask any Frenchman. *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*? Not by a long shot.

But one need not look elsewhere to expose the actions of reaction. Look at the United States of America instead.

In 1776, the *Declaration of Independence* was promulgated. It says,

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States."

Doesn't this paragraph describe the conditions that cause revolutions even today? Doesn't it

justify overthrowing governments by force? After this declaration was promulgated, didn't the American colonists fight a long and brutal war with England?

The colonists did, of course, have a regular army of sorts. But they also had what would be now considered terrorists. The Sons of Liberty formed units in many towns and threatened violence. In Boston, they burned the records of the vice-admiralty court, looted the home of the chief justice, and threatened anyone who aided the British. The United States of America was born in violence. So why is the government telling those oppressed in other lands to engage only in "peaceful" transitions? Because the American Revolution was undone as early as the Constitution was adopted. Article III, Section 3 reads, "Treason against the United States, shall consist *only* [emphasis mine] levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort." Violent revolution was fine in 1776, but not after 1789. Revolutionaries themselves become reactionaries! Is Baron Acton right? Does power corrupt? Does absolute power corrupt absolutely?

Today in America, even political parties that merely advocate violent revolution are illegal. The only political opposition permitted is non-violent opposition, which, of course, has a fat chance of ever succeeding. Americans haven't even been able to organize a third party.

Jefferson writes, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." The Constitution reads, "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Who in America today would say that all Americans are created equal? Who in America today would say that the Union has been perfected, that Justice has been established, that domestic Tranquility has been established, that the general Welfare is being promoted, and that the Blessings of Liberty have been secured for ourselves and our Posterity? The American Revolution, like all revolutions in history, has been undone. More than peaceful street demonstrations, it appears, is needed to resuscitate it.

It is far easier to bring about a successful revolution than it is to build and preserve a humane, functioning government. The forces of reaction never rest, and they have managed to undo most of history's people's revolutions. Revolutionaries must recognize that their first task is to defend their newly formed governments from reactionaries, for once reactionaries get their feet in the door, they will not stop until the revolution is undone.

John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. He has published a textbook in formal logic commercially, in academic journals and a small number of commercial magazines, and has written a number of guest editorials for newspapers. His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com/> and he can be emailed from that site's homepage.

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