Re-ordering World
Understanding

MEM. REVOLUTION Aug. 24, 1920

The theory on which men justify revolution is that things become so bad in an existing system that there is no use of trying to correct them by peaceful reforms, that the existing system must be ripped out, foundation and all, and scrapped, and that all those that support it must either agree to support the new order or else must be put out of the way.

The essence of a revolution is of course destruction--destruction by force. The old is destroyed in order that the new may be built on its ruins. This new of course is supposed to be something that is without the possibility of error, of inequality, of abuse. None of the injustices and privileges that existed under the old order can, according to the theory of those who support the new, now exist.

What the revolutionists are not able to do away with, however, even if they guillotine or shoot everybody that had anything to do with the old order or professed any sympathy with it, is to destroy in the revolutionists themselves those

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tendencies to greed, tyranny, revenge, frivolity, that are in all men and which are the real causes of the abuses of the system that they have just knocked in the head. Even as they destroy the old, these human traits assert themselves, and almost invariably in a more brutal and lawless form than under the old régime. And it is according to the law of human nature that it should be so. The evil tendencies of men are only kept down by the complicated system of controls and brakes that

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civilization has built up. These controls and brakes were all involved in the old system which the revolutionists have done away with. They run riot now and at the moment when the group of revolutionists that happens to be in power attempts to apply controls, there are large numbers that resent it. They are not ready yet to harness themselves. There are things that they have not done that they feel must be done in order to insure the revolution. Not willing to put brakes upon themselves, the only thing that is left for them to do is to cut off the heads of those that are trying to apply the brakes. And so we have in revolutions, as a rule, a succession of government, each thrown out by a group more radical than itself.

This was the story of the French Revolution. A body of people, calling itself the nobility, in alliance with the Church and the law, had succeeded in tying up all the wealth and privileges of the nation. This comparatively small group lived in luxury. There were serious and responsible people, a few of them, in this group. There was much fine cultivation, but the mass of the nobility and the clergy was pleasure-loving,

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indifferent to the needs of the people as a whole. When the cry for reform became too insistent, and insistent inside the nobility and the Church, reforms were attemped; but they failed to have the hearty backing of the majority. Let a man like Mirabeau warn as he would and he could only obtain a fraction of what he felt was just. But that fraction secured, there were those to demand more and to force it. The revolutionary tide swelled and swelled. It brought representative government in. It brought a new constituion in. But still there was misery and injustice.

The fact of fair representation and a constitution

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did not correct all the abuses and the impatient laid it only to the fact that there still lived in France the remnants of the old régime--a king and a queen. Cut their heads off and the millenium will come. And their heads came off, and still the world was not perfect;and there arose a group to cry out that those who were responsible for the destruction of the monarchy were reactionary, that still more radical measures must be taken. So off came the heads of the group that was responsible for the death of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

But their successors did not produce a perfect country. And again we have another group cutting off heads. And they in turn lose theirs--an endless procession, each convinced that if it can have its way and its revolution, the result will be the immediate happiness of all men. Group after group waded a river of blood in France, year after year, each promising a happy country. Their control was gone, it was a riot of tyranny and destruction.

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The world has never had but one way out of a revolution run amuck as in France, and that has been the dictator of genius, a military dictator back of guns. Napoleon was only able to apply the brakes in France because he was a genius, believing in force. This is the course of the revolutionist who expects further destruction to bring happiness to the world. It is not by force that the world advances.

We are seeing in Russia what happened in France. The attempt to force all men to one point of view, and if they don't accept it or if there is a suspicion that they are not entirely loyal to it, kill them off. Terror has been so universal in parts of Russia, Moscow, for instance, that it is a common saying that the

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population consists of three classes--those who have been in prison, those who are in prison and those who soon will be.

A country again and again in its onward march has to choose between revolution by violence and revolution by reform, both are episodes in the country's evolution. Nothing is more false than that a revolution in itself provides a finished something; it is nothing but an episode in development--a violent episode which may rip something out, destroy something, but, after destruction, there is always the long period of reconstruction--the picking up of the pieces. You have a forest which you want cleared--a tornado will fell every tree, but it also will destroy the trees for use and it will entail a long and complicated system of clearing away the ruins--more time taking and more destructive of value than the slow clearing off by the usual methods. This clearing of a forest by a tornado and by hand is a fair illustration of what you get by attempting to develop a government and a people by revolution and by the slow and orderly processes of reform.

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