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The True Revolutionaries

Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers

1935

The true revolutionaries have always been, in all times and all countries, those whose minds have been broad enough to grasp the most conflicting formulas, to extract from each of them the portion of truth that they contain and to attempt to reconcile them in a higher harmony. The “revolutionaries” are not always those whom we designate by that name: instead, these often deserve the epithet of “reactionaries,” as their acts entirely justify.

The revolutionary is the opposite of the sectarian. A sectarian revolutionary would only be a pseudo-revolutionary. There are far too many revolutionaries who have a sectarian spirit and thus prove that they are not revolutionary at all. A slogan is nothing: sincerity is everything; it is independence and character that count; it is generosity and courage, it is fidelity to the ideal that alone means something. Each day we see sad persons wrap themselves in a label in order to profit from it, place themselves in one party or another, from self-interest, and ultimately their conduct breeds disgust and nausea among their friends. Rejected everywhere, because they have been seen at work everywhere, they are wrecks who deserve pity rather

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than hate. To hate them would be to take them seriously; to pity them is to punish them as they deserve.

The revolutionaries are not the ones who believe they are in possession of the truth, but the ones who know that truth is everywhere and that their duty is to discover it everywhere it exists. They are not the ones who know only one means of improving humanity: violence. They are the ones who absorb a great thought, who contemplate and dream. They do not assault anyone to impose their ideas: it is on themselves that they exert their violence; they reform themselves and seek to be better. It is in their heart of hearts that they realize the great day [the revolution]. It is this bastille of prejudices that the social revolution set them to attack. It is their own will that they ask to aid them in becoming new.

That internal revolution, which is the finest effort of the individual towards truth and justice, is the integral revolution par excellence. Apart from it there is no progress. It is the prelude of the great social transformations, the crucible in which the humanity of tomorrow will be produced. Believe that it is as difficult, that it is more difficult than *revolution through violence*, and that it is much more fertile in results. To ask a man to chase passion and selfishness from his heart, to demand that he be tolerant enough to welcome every sincerity and extract their profound reality, is without doubt to demand of him an effort much greater than that of making a contribution, of listening to an orator, of insulting an adversary, of wearing a badge or defying an authority. With that internal revolution, let us begin the transformation of society. The moral revolution will give rise to more benefits than the bloody revolution of which dictatorship is the poisoned fruit.

When we speak of internal revolution, we do not intend to apologize for the ivory tower, to contemplate events with a smile, to shrug our shoulders each time the people try to shake off their chains. We simply claim that every popular movement must have a disinterested aim: it is not in order to take the place

of their masters that the people revolt, but it is in order to push on toward an ideal of justice and beauty, in order to give birth to a better humanity. The true revolutionaries have always had before their eyes, not an immediate and practical aim, but a distant goal of liberty and harmony. It is not to discourage spirits, but to affirm that society does not change in a day and that for that change it is necessary to learn, study, observe and live. We do not deny the utility of an economic revolution—far from it. We desire it and desire it with all our hearts, but we subordinate it to the revolution of heart and mind without which it is not possible. We are impatient to evolve in a more just society, where each individual will realize that the maximum of happiness, but we do not believe that this happiness resides solely in material pleasure; we believe that it must be completed and surpassed by the intellectual pleasures without which life is only a snare. While we are with the revolutionaries each time that propose to react against ignorance and selfishness, we are against them when, betraying their ideal, they appeal to ignorance and selfishness to transform society. The Revolution will be accomplished when individuals understand that it is not enough, to be a revolutionary, to obey a slogan or take up a gun to slaughter their enemy, but that they must, to be worthy of the title, possess a soul and a conscience.