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Revolution

By Herbert E. Meyer

During the last 30 years we Americans have been so politically divided that some of us have called this left-right, liberal-conservative split a "culture war" or even a "second Civil War." These descriptions are no longer accurate. The precise, technical word for what is happening in the United States today is revolution.

Because of our country's history, we tend to think of revolutions as military conflicts, and of the revolutionaries as the good guys; the image of Minutemen fighting valiantly against the British forces at Lexington and Concord lies deep within our DNA. But sometimes -- quite often, actually -- revolutions aren't military conflicts, and the good guys are the ones trying to keep the revolution from happening. In January 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany by its elected president; he would spend the next two years consolidating his power with the legislative connivance of his political allies in the *Reichstag*. In October 1917, Lenin and his Bolsheviks took control of Russia from Kerensky and his Social Democrats -- who had overthrown the Czar earlier that year -- entirely through parliamentary maneuvering in Russia's fledgling *Duma*.

What defines a revolution -- and this is the crucial point to grasp -- is that when it's over a country has changed not merely its leaders and its laws, but its operating system.

Since most of us think of computers when we hear the phrase "operating system" let me use this analogy to illuminate my point: Every computer has an operating system, and most of us are using either the Microsoft or the Apple operating system. If you want to do something with your computer -- send an email, watch a DVD, read an online essay like this one -- you must do it the way your computer's operating system is designed to work.

No operating system is perfect, which is why Microsoft and Apple send updates to their customers from time to time. And every so often these companies launch new versions of their operating systems that incorporate a lot of modifications at once. Can you change the operating system you use? Of course you can. Two years ago I threw out every Microsoft-based machine in our company's office and replaced them with Apple products. Last month I met a corporate CEO who had just done the opposite, and replaced the Apple computers in his office with ones that run on the Microsoft operating system.

Democracies and Dictatorships

Now, just as computers have operating systems so too do countries. In fact, countries have dual operating systems - one political and the other economic. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of each: Politically you can be a democracy or a dictatorship, and economically you can have either a free market or a command economy. Because countries don't buy their operating systems off the shelf, the way we buy our computer operating systems, each country develops its own versions. This is why our country's democracy is somewhat different from Canada's, which in turn is slightly different from Australia's, and so forth. These countries all have free-market economies, but again they aren't quite the same. Still, the similarities among democracies and

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free-market economies are more striking than the differences. Likewise, while no two dictatorships are the same, and no two command economies work in exactly the same way, the differences among them are comparatively trivial.

Since no country's operating systems are perfect, can they be improved? Of course they can. Every time our Congress passes a new law, or enacts a new regulation -- or whenever the Supreme Court issues an opinion -- that's the equivalent of an update to our political or economic operating system. Can you change a country's operating system? Yes, you can. And the precise, technical word for replacing one political or economic operating system with another is - revolution.

When politics in a democracy is normal, the political parties all agree to preserve the operating system while they compete to improve it. This is what is actually happening when one party in Congress introduces a new piece of healthcare or education legislation and the other party opposes it or introduces its own healthcare or education bill, or when two candidates for the Senate argue over whether or not to change our immigration laws. Honorable people often will disagree about what to do -- sometimes quite strongly, just as the software engineers at Microsoft and Apple will sometimes argue through the night about whether a proposed change in the operating system's code is an improvement or just "kludge." But in normal politics the outer limits of all these disagreements are marked by a shared commitment to preserving and improving the operating system.

In abnormal politics, the objective of one party isn't to improve the operating system, but to overthrow it.

With this analogy in mind, now we can see clearly what's been happening in the United States during the last three decades. While conservatives have been working to improve our democracy and our free-market economy, liberals have been working to replace our democracy with a dictatorship, and our free-market economy with a command economy controlled by the government. The liberals couldn't say this aloud, because if they did the American people would have tossed them out of office on their ears. So the liberals worked covertly, feigning support for democracy and for the free market while working diligently to undermine both.

This is why our politics has been so partisan, so vicious, and so deadlocked. This is why words have lost their meaning in Washington, why we can never get to the bottom of anything, why we lurch from one manufactured scandal to another. It's all been part of a decades-long effort by the liberals to throw sand in our eyes -- to keep us from seeing clearly where they really want to take us. (And this explains why, when we question their judgment on some issue, they go berserk and accuse us of questioning their patriotism. They're afraid we're on the verge of catching on. If you want to have some fun, the next time you're chatting with a liberal and he goes nuts when you call him a socialist, say to him: "I'm so sorry you're offended. Please tell me, what is there about socialism you don't like?" You won't get a coherent answer; he'll just accuse you of a hate crime.)

Obama's Two-Front Offensive

With the election of Barack Obama as president, the liberals have launched a massive, two-front offensive they believe will end in victory. They have judged that our public education system is so degraded that only a few Americans are left who even understand what a democracy is, and how the free market actually works. They are convinced that the majority of Americans are too

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frightened by the current recession to care about preserving the principles that made us the most powerful, productive and innovative country the world has ever known. In short, the liberals are reaching for victory because they believe that history now is on their side.

The speed of their offensive is breathtaking.

At the core of democracy is the rule of law, and we have already lost it. The liberals lecture us incessantly that everything is "relative," but that's not true; some things are absolutes. You cannot claim to be faithful to your spouse because you never cheat on her -- except when you're in London on business. And you cannot claim to have the rule of law if the government can set aside the rule of law when it decides that "special circumstances" have arisen that warrant illegality. When the President and his aides handed ownership of Chrysler Corp. to the United Auto Workers union, they tried to avoid sending that beleaguered company into bankruptcy by muscling its bondholders into accepting less money for their assets than the law entitled them to collect. These contracts, and the law under which they were signed, were mere obstacles to a thuggish President bent on paying off his political supporters.

It's going to get much worse, fast. President Obama has told us time and again that among his criteria for choosing Federal judges will be "empathy." Empathy is a wonderful quality in any human being, but a judge's job is to rule according to the law. Once our courts are presided over by judges who will reach verdicts based on how they feel about an issue -- such as abortion or the right of citizens to bear arms -- the law will be whatever the judges wish it to be; the rule of law will become an empty phrase rather than the architecture of our civilization.

We have lost our free-market economy as quickly as we have lost the rule of law. Money is to an economy what blood is to a body; life and death resides within the organ that controls its flow. The government already owns our country's leading banks, which means the government now controls our economy. (And in all fairness to President Obama, it was the Bush administration that started us down this ghastly road.) One indicator of the Obama administration's real objective: When some banks that had taken federal money attempted to repay their loans, the Treasury Department refused to accept repayment and step aside. This shows the government's goal isn't to prop up the banks, but rather to control them.

Here, too, things are going to get much worse, fast. The government now owns General Motors Corp., is reaching for control of insurance companies, and has launched plans to take over our country's healthcare industry. It even wants authority to set the salaries of executives in industries that, at least for now, aren't being subsidized or underwritten by the government.

Put all this together, and what we have in our country today isn't a democracy and it isn't a free-market economy. Reader, what we have now is a revolution.

This revolution won't be stopped, and our country won't be rescued, by the Republicans in Washington. This isn't because they lack the votes. It's because most of them are careerist hacks who've been playing footsie with the Democrats for too long; with very few exceptions they lack the intellectual firepower to articulate the present danger, and the political courage to stand up to this Administration and really fight. But for the absence of frock coats and pince-nez glasses, these Republicans in Washington remind me of those bumbling Weimar Republic politicians in Berlin who never grasped where Hitler and the Nazis were going until it was too late to stop them, or of those hapless Mensheviks in Moscow's *Duma* who let themselves be tossed into history's dustbin by Lenin and his Bolsheviks. (Yes, of course I realize it's explosive to keep

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bringing up the Nazis and the Bolsheviks in an essay about the Democrats. I'm not doing this to be incendiary; I'm doing this to be accurate.)

The Future's in *Our* Hands

Our country's future now lies within our own hands -- yours, mine, all of us who comprise what the Washington insiders sneeringly call the grass roots. Good, because unless I'm very much mistaken the liberals have over-estimated their strength. There still are more of us than there are of them. I mean ordinary, decent Americans from across the political spectrum who may disagree about specific issues, but who understand who we are and how we became who we are; who love our country, have a genius for self-organizing, and won't let the United States go down without a fight.

We need to launch a counter-offensive, so to speak, and the place to start is at the local level. Working with our county and state political parties when we can -- or working around them when we must -- our objective will be to elect as many people as we can to public office who understand what a democracy is and how the free market works. This will include city council members, county commissioners, school board members, judges, sheriffs and even members of the local parks commission. With the strength and political momentum their elections will provide, we can surge to the state level and then -- before it's too late -- take back the power in Washington DC.

I know this isn't the kind of battle most of us want to fight; we would rather watch the talking heads slug it out on Fox News than stand on a street corner handing out campaign flyers. And given our country's history, for a while it will be uncomfortable to find ourselves fighting *against* the revolution and *for* the status quo. But we'll get used to this as we make our case over and over again -- to our friends, our neighbors, at barbeques and PTA meetings and at public rallies like those marvelous April tea parties that drove the liberals insane. And we'll draw strength as our ranks swell with new recruits.

The alternative to launching this kind of peaceful and political counter-attack is horrific. Right now sales of guns and ammunition are rising sharply. This reflects an intuitive grasp by grass-roots Americans of what history teaches may lie ahead. It was only *after* the Nazis had secured their grip on power in Germany, and only *after* the Bolsheviks had seized control of Russia, that they set out to disarm and destroy the vast numbers of ordinary citizens who - to the astonishment and fury of the revolutionaries -- just wouldn't go along.

That's when the real shooting started, and when blood began flowing in the streets.

Herbert E. Meyer served during the Reagan Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence and Vice Chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council. He holds the U.S. National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal, which is the Intelligence Community's highest honor. He is author of [The Cure for Poverty](#) and [How to Analyze Information](#).