

Revolutions devour their own children history essay

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Revolutions eat their children; ask, Trotsky and even the so called incorruptible, Robespierre. And South Africa is definitely no exception. The craving for more money and power brings even the most self-righteous to their own demise. It refers to the fact that after the success or no success of a revolution, there comes a time when justice is done to the catalysts of the revolution. Primary this "revolutionary justice" is applied to the members of the old regime. They assume power and those who are victim to their rule are usually the ones who were their followers. Then, as the same people who started the revolution begin to fight each other for power, the same techniques that were used to justify the reason of imprisoning and killing the former rulers are now used for the killing of members of the revolution that have different ideas on how to run the country. The French and Hungarian revolutions are major revolutions that had initiators of the revolution executed and show that revolutions do at times devour their own children.

The French Revolution is an example of revolutions killing their members who began it in the first place. The reign of terror began with the execution of the nobility and the King. Not only the king and his nobles were killed but thousand of suspects against the revolution. Years of harsh rule by the monarchy finally ended with the execution of the King and the establishment of France as a republic. In the new republic the Church's authority was completely stripped from them and was to have nothing to do with the countries politics. This new state based on blasphemous principles was what would be later called the "Reign of terror". Along with the King, Marie Antoinette was also to be beheaded on the Guillotine during this time period. The Committee for Public Safety was established by the new leader of the

Jacobins, Robespierre. The people had great hopes for this new group since it had come into power after they overthrew the Girondin led regime that failed in controlling the state of affairs in France. Although they were known as the Committee for Public Safety this group had no uprightness at all as can be seen by their extremist actions. In their reign of no more than seven weeks they managed to send around 1300 people to the guillotine and eventually the architect of the reign of terror himself was guillotined by the hands of his own men. Robespierre, the man who started the reign of terror and one of the men who had a major part in the rise of the revolution was guillotined along with other famous men of the revolution like Jacques Danton. Danton and Robespierre were famous for being bitter rivals and Robespierre had him executed, but Danton foreshadowed Robespierre's own death. As he was passing by Robespierre's house on his way to his execution he said " You will follow us shortly. Your house shall be beaten down and sowed with salt (Purcell)." Danton's prophecy was proven true, first the Girondins fell then Danton and Finally Robespierre and all his followers. The revolution had eaten its children.

Imre Nagy, an ex- Hungarian head of state and symbol of the nation's uprising against Soviet rule in 1956, was hanged for treachery by his country's communist leaders. After he became premier of a communist Hungary in 1953, Nagy set a series of liberal reforms and was against Soviet intrusion in his country's affairs. He was ousted from office in 1955 and barred from the Hungarian Communist Party in 1956. On October 23, 1956, in retort to the communist reaction against Nagy and his reforms, Hungarian

workers and students piled the streets of Budapest with anti-Soviet demonstrations (Leader). Within days, the unrest increased into a full-blown public revolt, and the Hungarian government crumbled into pandemonium. Nagy united with the revolution and was again appointed as premier of Hungary, but his minister, Janos Kadar, created a counter-regime and asked for help from the USSR to intervene. On November 4, a colossal Soviet army of 2,500 tanks and 200,000 soldiers entered Hungary. Nagy took shelter in the Yugoslav embassy but was arrested by Soviet agents after he had left the embassy under a safe-conduct agreement (Leader). Around 200,000 Hungarians left the country, and thousands of the populace were killed, arrested, and executed before the Hungarian uprising was finally concealed. Nagy was later passed over to Kadar's regime, who convicted and had him executed for treason. But on June 16, 1989, as communism fell in Hungary, Nagy's body was officially reburied with full honors. Some 300,000 Hungarians attended the service (Leader). Another man to die was Pal Maleter. He at first worked for the Soviets as a soldier, but soon switched sides allying himself with his countrymen rather than Soviets. While he was part of the revolutionary army he rose in rank from colonel to general to Minister of defence. He was soon imprisoned after being captured by the Soviets during peace negotiations. He, along with Imre Nagy, was executed on charges for attempting to overthrow the People's Republic of Hungary.

The leaders of revolutions usually come from low class backgrounds, but would grow to rise in rank and lived fairly good lives. They also grew up to become very prominent forces in society and with their charisma and charm

were able to gain the trust of the people. In the French and Hungarian revolutions they were Robespierre, Danton, Nagy and Mateler. Robespierre and Danton were both sons' of lawyers and would later become lawyers themselves as well as have a certain rivalry between them. They each played an important part in the revolution and both claimed they were all about the people. They were both well spoken and intelligent which gave them their skills in convincing the people of France to get rise up against the monarchy. Robespierre and Danton did not like each other much and it Robespierre was influential in having Danton executed and in turn Danton predicted that Robespierre would die in the same manner, which it did. Nagy, the Hungarian revolution leader, was different from Robespierre and Danton. He was not ruthless or extreme. His death was felt by many. And when the Hungarian communist party fell, his body was reburied and he was given full honors for fighting for his country. The people were never against him unlike in the French revolution where allies turn into enemies in an instant.

“ The revolution like Saturn devours its own children”, It was a common saying during the French Revolution (1789) and was most famously uttered by Danton during his trial. By this period Danton fell out of favor with the Robespierre and his Committee of Public Safety, the revolution had become so suspicious it set out killing 100s of people believed to be against the revolution. In the end, the people of Paris took effective control of the National Assembly and the committee of Public Safety. Successive waves of radicalization had followed the ascension of the Jacobins to power, quickly

making conservatives out of past radicals. In the end, the terror killed 7000 people across the country, a lot had been the some of the first revolutionaries. Danton, Robespierre and Saint-Just were all guillotined. In Hungary not just the leaders suffered, but the people as well because Russia still occupied Hungary and hundreds of citizens were arrested and hundreds were executed. It wasn't until the soviet union fell and communism fell in Hungary, that Hungarians were truly free. In short, the one rule of most revolutions is, to quote Pete Townshend " Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss."

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