

The Mass Strike ... or, Grasping the Shelley Moment

by Robert Ingraham

May 18—What is the true potential of the present moment? What is it that is not only desirable, but is now possible, to accomplish?

Many people, within our culture, are trapped behind the blinders of pessimism, seeing no way out of the omnipresent seeming reality of poverty, drug addiction, war, and cultural hedonism. Others—including many among those who voted for Donald Trump—sense that we are now living in a period of great opportunity, even a potential for a transformative change in the direction of our society. In many ways this potential is not palpable, but its existence as a cultural force is undeniable. Yes, in the trans-Atlantic world, we all exist within a deeply pessimistic oligarchical culture, but to jump to the conclusion that the overwhelming majority of citizens are personally pessimistic would be a grave error. The continued support for President Trump, despite an almost uniform hostility from the major media and political parties, is itself a “proof of principle” that many, many Americans yearn for positive change.

It also must be recognized, although the full implications of this will not be discussed here, that America is not an island. Since at least 2015, we have witnessed many manifestations of hopeful political upsurge throughout the world, and this process has been greatly aided by the optimism engendered by the China-led Belt and Road Initiative. This is a global phenomenon. Old policy axioms are being discarded, and everywhere governments and leaders are looking for “a new way to do things.”

Some politically astute observers have described the turbulence of the current environment as a “Mass Strike” period. But what precisely is the nature of this Mass Strike? And what does this imply as to the actual nature of the opportunity which exists, as well as the responsibility this places on each of us? History presents opportunities, but those opportunities exist only as potentialities. They must be acted upon; yet, all action is not equal. The difference between victory and defeat rests on understanding the nature of the intervention which is required. This is where the issue of leadership arises.

The implication of this is that a great personal challenge is presented to the individual who desires to play a part in effecting positive political change.

The Future Potential

The term Mass Strike is usually associated with the history of Marxism, and most of the commentary and analysis of the term is sloppy drivel. Of all of the Marxist theorists, it was Rosa Luxemburg who presented the most rigorous definition of the term, particularly in her differentiation of the strategic nature of the Mass Strike from the tactical initiative of the General Strike. Luxemburg’s intellectual courage is praiseworthy, and her insights into the political crisis of her own time stand head-and-shoulders above her contemporaries. We need, however, to broaden our investigation, and examine current potentials through the lens of Lyndon LaRouche’s understanding of human history.

We will begin with a negative. Most people have a populist “from the bottom up” notion of humanity’s



CC/James McNellis

Trump supporters at the 2017 presidential inauguration.

struggle for a better future. In such a view, a Mass Strike—or any other type of revolutionary upsurge—is seen as a Resistance to Tyranny. You have a people who are being oppressed, who are being ground into the dirt under the Iron Heel (to use Jack London’s phrase) of a ruling class or institution—a people who “rise up” against their suffering and oppression.

This scenario is most certainly *not* a Mass Strike. It better describes incidents such as the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Under conditions where a people are facing extinction, or where they are driven beyond the limits of endurance, resistance may be their only option, and the participants may be both heroic and noble. Yet, this is not where great historical change originates.

Great change in a time of crisis, great breakthroughs in the human condition, are always born of optimism. And they always occur under conditions where a growing number of people open their minds to the implications of revolutionary advances in science, economics, and art, as those discoveries are developed by the leaders of their time. People begin to glimpse—even if only as an itch in the back of their minds—the possibility of a better future, a future framed in new principles, superior to the axioms and beliefs which have kept them in chains. That potential future, and those new principles, will provide inspiration. They define the “spirit of the age,” but to succeed, the “spirit must become flesh,” and to accomplish that requires a leadership willing to undergo the most ruthless self-examination of their own beliefs as to the nature of the human species. Most important, they must be willing to become actors on the stage, to take personal responsibility to lead the fight for a better future.

Intense and Impassioned Conceptions

Let us view the concept of Mass Strike from a different perspective. In 1821, Percy Shelley authored *A Defence of Poetry*. A concluding portion of that essay—one which is very well known and often quoted—is

directly relevant to the subject under discussion. That passage bears repeating here:

At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature. The persons in whom this power resides may often, as far as regards many portions of their nature, have little apparent correspondence with that spirit of good of which they are the ministers.

But even whilst they deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve, the power which is seated on the throne of their own soul. It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age.



Percy B. Shelley

What Shelley is describing is the quality of optimism and hope which defines all moments of great potential change. Optimism, properly nurtured, creates miracles. However, what is necessary is to understand from whence such optimism arises, and to answer the question, how might it be brought to bloom?

Think of Uncle Remus, walking down the country lane, whistling a tune, happy in his servitude. This is the Walt Disney version of optimism. That is clearly not what is required. Think also of the momentary pleasures derived by immersion in the culture of drug usage. This is the opposite of optimism, the fleeting attempt to escape from a life for which no positive future might be perceived.

What we require to appreciate Shelley’s words is something far more rigorous. In that regard, let Johannes Kepler and Lyndon LaRouche be our guides.

What we find in both men is an unshakable morality as to a dedication of their lives toward improving mankind's future, combined with a courageous determination to strive for demonstrable scientific truth—to unmask the secrets of the lawful universe. It is in the personalities of Kepler and LaRouche that the secret of the Mass Strike is revealed.

Courage and Genius

To become an effective leader in a revolutionary situation, it is necessary to abandon almost all of what you thought was true about human social reproduction. The most ruthless examination of one's "knowledge" of economics, science, music, and history is required. A willingness to



Dante Alighieri

change is a prerequisite.

Contrary to what is asserted in the multitude of nonsensical history books, all great moments of change in human history have been made possible by profound breakthroughs in Mankind's understanding of the nature of the universe and the nature of the human identity. Those breakthroughs, and the personal courage exhibited to accomplish them, were the catalysts that made possible the visualization of a more productive future. They were the indispensable keys in the emergence of a new Spirit, as Shelley discusses it.

Let us take a few examples to reference the point at hand:

Think of Dante Alighieri and Giotto di Bondone. It was Dante's Promethean development of the Italian

vernacular which unleashed powerful, hitherto unrealized, cognitive potentials within the Italian population. It was Dante's—and his ally Giotto's—examination of the nature of the human mind which shattered the straightjacket of a feudal culture. Centuries later, the publication of Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*) and the 1841 premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Nabucco* would play a similar role in sparking the cultural upsurge leading into the Italian Risorgimento.

Take the case also of the American Revolution. It was the *scientist* Benjamin Franklin who was the true author of the American Republic, an intention which he made clear as early as 1733, when in



painting by Benjamin West
'Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky.'



J.S. Bach

Poor Richard's Almanac he assigns the date of birth of Richard Saunders (the pseudonym chosen by Franklin to be the publisher of the almanac) as October 23, 1684, the precise day that the British throne had abolished the Charter of the Massachusetts Bay colony. In Philadelphia, Franklin established the Junto in 1727 and the American Philosophical Society in 1744. More to the point, Franklin, together with his collaborator Cadwallader Colden, became the key allies of the pro-Leibniz German scientific circles led by Abraham Kästner and Rudolph Erich Raspe.¹ As early as 1741, Franklin had

1. Shavin, David, "Leibniz to Franklin On 'Happiness,'" *Fidelio*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2003.

obtained a copy of the *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence* for his Library Company of Philadelphia, and in 1766 he spent ten days in Germany with Raspe and visited Kästner at Göttingen University, where Franklin’s experiments in electricity—and the implications of those experiments as to the nature of the physical universe—were discussed. It was the 1765 Raspe/Kästner publication of Leibniz’ *New Essays on Human Understanding*—and Leibniz’ devastating critique of John Locke—which would provide the moral and philosophical basis for the Declaration of Independence.

Even earlier, we find the intervention of Johann Sebastian Bach, with the 1722 issuance of his *Das Wohltempierte Klavier* (*The Well-Tempered Clavier*), a work greatly influenced by the studies and proposi-

tion of Abraham Lincoln.

Many other examples could be given—such as the movement led by Martin Luther King—but the point to be made is the role of the individual leader in uplifting and fighting the battle at the highest cultural and philosophical level—never pandering to the tactics and “practical” outlook that are commonplace among opportunistic politicians and others.

Lyndon LaRouche’s Challenge

In the years following World War II, Lyndon LaRouche created a revolution in economics—in the scientific understanding of the social reproduction of the human species. Of particular importance for our present discussion were LaRouche’s refutation of Informa-

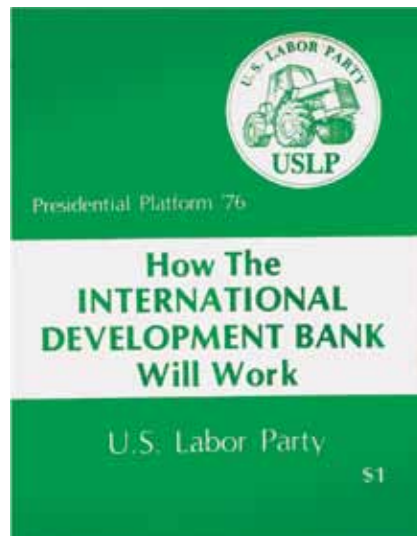


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Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. (center) at the founding meeting of the Fusion Energy Foundation, with Dr. Louis Gold, leading nuclear scientist and member of the FEF Scientific Advisory Committee (left) and Mr. Rice, a representative of the Atomic Energy Commission (right).

tions of both Johannes Kepler and Gottfried Leibniz. Bach unveils an entirely new language—one of well-tempered polyphony—and he demonstrates that this language is coherent with both the human mind and the principles which underlie the nature of the universe. An entirely new cognitive power is unleashed.

Later we see the repercussions of Friedrich Schiller’s devastating repudiation of Immanuel Kant’s concept of the human identity. Not only did German patriots go into battle with copies of Schiller’s poems in their breast pockets during the 1813-1814 War of Liberation, but Schiller’s ideas would cross the Atlantic and reverberate, contributing to the Second American



tion Theory and his application of Bernhard Riemann’s non-Euclidian approach to the nature of the physical universe. From those studies, LaRouche was able to take the original economic works of Leibniz and Alexander Hamilton and develop them even further.

LaRouche’s approach has always proceeded from the standpoint of “Man, the creator”—i.e., the singular reality that the human mind partakes and contributes in the continuing process of universal creation. It was LaRouche who developed the concept of Potential Relative Population Density as a physical economic marker to define a “measurement” as to the success or failure of economic and scientific policy, and it was LaRouche who defined the potential for a

non-entropic development of the human species.²

Between 1974 and 1976, Lyndon LaRouche created the Fusion Energy Foundation; he authored his proposal for [“The International Development Bank”](#); his textbook [Dialectical Economics](#)—which had already circulated for a number of years in manuscript form—was published; and he launched his 1976 campaign for the Presidency.

In the 1980s and 1990s LaRouche’s writings were studied intensively throughout the world, including among some of the highest leadership circles in Russia, China, and India. The effects of that intervention are witnessed today, including in the China-led Belt and Road Initiative. LaRouche never pandered.



General Douglas MacArthur (center) at Inchon, Korea, 1950.

He never prostituted himself. He never compromised on principle. His challenge was always “Come up to my level!”

Hard Work

Many people who are involved in politics complain about the population. The refrain usually goes, “We could accomplish such great things, if only the population weren’t so backward.” Such analyses are the hallmarks of moral failures, of individuals who refuse to accept the true nature of their primary responsibility. To

2. For more on LaRouche’s personal role and the development of his movement, see the edited transcript of Barbara Boyd’s address to the May 12, 2018 Manhattan meeting, printed in this issue of *EIR*.

organize others, one must begin with organizing one’s self. The problem is always with the leadership, never the population. The state of the population is simply part of the battleground. Every great military commander and political leader recognizes that.

Think in military terms. Think of Washington after his retreat across New Jersey, Grant confronted with the impregnable Vicksburg, or MacArthur just prior to the Inchon landing. Yes, they were faced with daunting battlefield conditions, and their individual military genius allowed them to accomplish glorious victories. Yet, an insightful military leader also understands that the “battleground” with which he must contend includes the minds and morale of his own troops and commanders.

Today, we have an objective political battle we are waging, both in the United States and world-wide. But, the key battleground is that being fought for the minds and hearts of the population. That is where the fight will ultimately be lost or won.

The proper role of individual leadership is to act as the midwife in giving birth to the new “Spirit of the Age,” to awaken those potentials which lie dormant in the hearts of their fellow creatures. The leadership required must never be pedantic, but must strive for challenging the most firmly held axioms within those being addressed, and to awaken that spark of creativity which exists in

every human being. However, to succeed, anyone involved in this type of work must begin with a commitment to his or her own self-perfection. There is a great joyfulness to be found in such work, but it is a joyfulness that is incompatible with self-satisfaction or mental laziness.

Each week *Executive Intelligence Review* publishes an article written by Lyndon LaRouche. If you are not reading these articles—fighting to master the concepts presented—then you will never be an effective political leader. You will operate on a much lower—and impotent—level. LaRouche built his own movement, his intended intelligentsia, as a leadership organization. If you want to change history, why would you settle for anything less?