

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

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“With nuclear power at a stalemate, revolutions have become the principal political factor of our time. To understand them may mean to understand the future.”¹ This statement from the late Hannah Arendt’s study *On Revolution* testifies to the importance of the subject which consequently has attracted a great diversity of conceptions and approaches. The continued use of the word “revolution”, which was transferred from natural science to describe the turbulent political changes of the 12th century Italian cities, assumes some common content of meaning, some regular patterns of development.² The historical circumstances under which revolutions have occurred, both successful and unsuccessful, exhibit such diversity that only the most talented and painstaking historians can detect and elucidate similarities between selected revolutions. The two adjectives most commonly descriptive of revolutionary change are “rapid” and “fundamental” which certainly indicate that psychology may exhibit more consistency than many other aspects of revolutionary experience. Robert Waite put the case for psychohistory very perceptively in his study of Hitler, entitled *The Psychopathic God*. “Psychology can help us here, but that is all that it can do. For psychology cannot supplant traditional history: it can only supplement it by adding depth to our understanding of historical personalities.”³ This indispensable supplement can add direction and continuity to the study of revolution when it is complemented by an “assessment of the mood of the masses”, to use the phrase of James Davies, or what Carl Jung called “the constellation of the collective unconscious”.⁴

1 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (N.Y., 1965), frontispiece.

2 “Let ‘revolution’ continue to do good work by pointing the way to crucial events involving a shift of power in the state swifter than ‘evolution’ . . .” Arthur Hatto, “Revolution: An Enquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term.”, *Mind*, Vol. LVIII, p. 517.

3 Robert G.L. Waite, *The Psychopathic god: Adolf Hitler* (N.Y., 1977), p. 407.

4 James C. Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” in William Lutz and Harry Brent, eds., *On Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 68-84; C.G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology: its Theory and Practice: The Tavistock Lectures* (N.Y., 1970), p. 50.

Revolutions display such dramatic events, such terrifying and unexpected outbursts, such contrasts of revenge and idealism that the subject has exerted irresistible attraction on innumerable writers. Even the most famous historians and social analysts, however, have left many aspects of the subject unsettled. Dusan Matic, French poet and scholar, stated admirably the central difficulty in the analysis of revolution.

At a certain moment in the history of the Revolution, a reversal of perspectives occurs in which the accents, as well as the scale of values and the personalities lately "in play", change, fracture, and are rearranged —so differently that one no longer knows who really was "bas", who "important", and what precisely someone did to upset the world's balance. The Revolution has its own secrets, which are not so readily accessible.⁵

In recent times the frequency of revolutions and accumulations of historical data have produced and outpouring of studies on revolution from varying viewpoints.⁶ In order not to be buried under the mass of material or lost in the confusion of differing conceptions it is necessary to select a definition which can be focused on the psychology of revolution. Fortunately William T. Daly, writing in a 1972 Sage Publication, has offered just such a definition. He defined revolutions as only those attempts to impose by any means rapid and comprehensive changes both in the way people behave and in the way people think.⁷ Daly wisely avoided proportioning the degree of change to the degree of violence. Theoretically, profound psychological changes can take place with a minimum of violence.

Any effort to understand how people think and how their thinking may be changed involves some use of psychological terms. The

⁵ Dusan Matic in Claude Manceron, *Twilight of the Old Order 1774-1778* (N.Y., 1977), frontispiece.

⁶ Recent books on revolution, including the numerous symposia, contain some critique of revolutionary theory. The most perceptive I found was that presented by Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* N.Y., 1979), pp. 6-42. In this excellent scholarly work she is certainly correct that profound structural defects must continue to fuel a revolutionary situation if it is to have much chance of success. Otherwise revolutionary leaders may not be able to overcome early mistakes and disorganization, may not have time or space to give any unity or direction to the revolutionary mood of the masses. To structural defects, however, must be added "inspired" revolutionary leadership which makes "the psychology of revolution" part of the revolutionary crisis.

For a sound and sensible survey of revolutionary theory see A.S. Cohan, *Theories of Revolution: An Introduction* (London, 1975), particularly "Psychological Approaches to Revolution", pp. 177-206.

⁷ William T. Daly, *The Revolutionary: A Review and Synthesis* (Beverly Hills, California, 1972), p. 5.

vocabulary of psychology, however, when applied to the study of revolutions must be used in a metaphorical sense. Jurgen Habermas in *Theory and Practice*, quoted an apt statement by H. H. Giegel on this point.

The revolutionary struggle is by no means a psychoanalytical treatment on a large scale. . . For the ruling class, the attempt to gain freedom from the social complex of compulsion. . . must appear as a threat to the rule which it exercises over the other classes. . . The oppressed class to conduct the dialogue with the ruling class will only serve as an opportunity for the latter to strengthen the security of its dominion.⁸

The essence of the revolutionary struggle is the disagreement between the ruling classes and the revolutionary movements as to which segments of society need treatment and what remedies should be applied.⁹ Many thinkers other than Marx have concluded that revolution may be considered a rational response to a disordered situation without accepting his faith in the curative qualities of a single all-inclusive revolution.¹⁰ In fact revolutionary consciousness begins to form when victims of any social order elaborate their experiences of injustice into an inclusive definition of their society; when for them injustice and society are only different words for the same thing.¹¹

When the dynamic youths of any generation of any society find their normal adolescent crises prolonged and exacerbated by serious and prolonged social crises they are driven to cut libidinal ties and assume an ascetic patterns of life in order to cope with such a combination of crises. Cutting ties with family and friends, the surrender

⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston, 1973), p. 30.

⁹ Paul Roazen, *Erik H. Erikson; the Power and Limits of a Vision* (N.Y., 1976), pp. 189-196; Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (Middletown, Conn., 1959), "Couch and Culture", pp. 145-156. Brown acknowledged that some revolutionary leaders may be geniuses at the profession of revolution and remarked succinctly that "psychoanalysts have shown that they can be counted on to issue a medical certificate of insanity against genius".

Toward the end of the last century the American sociologist Charles A. Ellwood undertook to formulate "A Psychological Theory of Revolution", published in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. II (1905-1906), pp. 49-59. Ellwood concluded that the more inflexible societies become the more vulnerable they are to revolution. Since no society can be entirely flexible no society can be entirely free from the threat of revolution. In fact, however, some of history's most inflexible social systems, for example Sparta, have been the most durable.

¹⁰ Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966), "Revolution: the Implications of a Political Concept", pp. 1-14; Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975) "The Logic of the Marxian Theory", pp. 105-110; Nathan Rotensreich, "Human Emancipation and Revolution", *Interpretation: a journal of political philosophy*, Vol. 3, No. 2-3, pp. 205-220.

¹¹ Carl Ogelsby, "The Revolted", in Lutz and Brent, *On Revolution*, p. 60.

of youthful privacy to some peer group, interrupted by periods of intense isolation and the privation of the senses, in short asceticism, gives such crisis-ridden youths a chance to mobilize sufficient emotional energy to achieve adult personalities in spite of crisis difficulties.¹² Individual youthful crises, supplemented by social crises provide the conditions needed to produce revolutionary ascetics and offer them the opportunity to escalate normal rebelliousness into revolutionary consciousness.¹³

The flash point at which alienation explodes into political revolutionary consciousness always seems to be the moment at which large numbers of the alienated are struck by the common perception that they are thought of as “animals”, as “machines”, as “mere numbers”, as “less than human”.¹⁴ Often this may be most readily perceived when society falls back after rapid and exciting advances. “Grievances may be patiently borne as long as they seem inevitable, but become intolerable once the possibility of remedying them is made clear”, as Alexis de Toqueville remarked of the old regime in France.¹⁵ The “miracle” of the political explosion—eruption, tidal wave, conflagration earthquake—is that it mobilizes a humiliated, disoriented and resentful people into mass action. “Revolutionaries are sorcerers. They strike the barren rock and waters gush forth.” The vision of these “revolutionary heroes” is incompatible with a modified old order, with reform and dismissal of a few hated officials. The “restored golden age” or the “New Jerusalem” they proclaim envisions

¹² Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (N.Y., 1962), pp. 134-135; Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Culture and Personality* (N.Y., 1961), “Revitalization Processes”, pp. 188-199; Anthony F.C. Wallace, “Revitalization Movements”, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (April, 1956), pp. 264-281.

Rejai and Philips in their study of revolutionary leadership selected 64 leaders in 12 different revolutions to analyze under various classifications. They gathered under six headings such characteristics as vanity, egotism, narcissism, asceticism, puritanism, virtue, deprivation, status inconsistency, marginality, inferiority complex, compulsion to excel, Oedipal conflict and romanticism as descriptive of psychological dynamics. In fact each might involve some degree of asceticism. Mostafa Rejai and Kay Phillips, *Leaders of Revolution* (Beverly Hills, California, 1979), pp. 159-183.

¹³ Bruce Mazlish, *The Revolutionary Ascetic: Evolution of a Political Type* (N.Y., 1976), pp. 22-43 and 206.

¹⁴ Three examples from widely dispersed sources should be sufficient. *The Bible*, Leviticus, 26:13; American Declaration of Independence, 1776; Petition by St. Petersburg Workers to the Tsar, 1905.

¹⁵ Alexis de Toqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (N.Y. 1955), pp. 176-177.

Hidden currents of half-conscious rebelliousness also may unify the masses in revolutionary sentiment when suddenly revealed by harsh repression and “inspired” revolutionary leadership. Pau Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution: Social Forces in the Hungarian Uprising* (Stanford, California, 1969), pp. 6 and 111.

something new, a fresh start, “a disciplined and invigorated people”, “a liberated and enobled humanity”.¹⁶

Not all the dynamic youths experiencing the trauma of combined personal and social crises, however, are able to achieve adult personalities in spite of ascetic mobilization of emotional energy. They develop ambivalent personalities, alternating between adulthood and adolescence. Rupert Wilkinson, in his study of “the authoritarian personality”, called these ascetic ambivalents, “broken rebels”, capable of leading and participating in broken revolutions.¹⁷ Erik Erikson used the term “perpetual adolescents” and composed an elegant chapter on “The Legend of Hitler’s Childhood” in his book *Childhood and Society*. Here he examined the terrifying possibilities of intense social crises dominated by ambivalent ascetics: broken rebels, combining with reactionary elements of the old order to lead aborted revolutions or revolutions of destruction.¹⁸ The “god” of revolutionary ascetics is hope; the “god” of ambivalent ascetics is despair. Moses and the Oedipus of history as opposed to “the Oedipus complex” may serve as early prototypes of these two revolutionary personalities. Lenin and Hitler may serve as recent prototypes.¹⁹ Moses, led onward by “a pillar of fire by night” and “a pillar of cloud by day”, founded at great price a new nation and a new order. Oedipus, having overthrown the old regime almost destroyed the old order by attempting to restore it and so brought despair upon himself and his new regime.²⁰

Asceticism by itself will not suffice to achieve adulthood in a “historical time of troubles”, to use Toynbee’s phrase. The adult personality, newly won at the price of “heroic asceticism” requires some set of abstractions to cope with social chaos and protect the still vulnerable psyche against the human inconstance and “betrayal”

¹⁶ Jacques Ellul, *Autopsy of Revolution* (N.Y., 1971), p. 250, also pp. 45-49.

¹⁷ Rupert Wilkinson, *The Broken Rebel: A Study in Culture, Politics and Authoritarian Character* (N.Y., 1972), pp. 196-205; 313-319.

¹⁸ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (N.Y., 1963), pp. 326-358.

¹⁹ A survey of studies on the life and times of Lenin and Hitler is too extensive to include here. A good place to begin in each case is: Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway, eds., *Lenin: the Man, the Theorist, the Leader; a Reappraisal* (N.Y., 1967) and Waite, *The Psychopathic god*, already cited.

²⁰ Victor Wolfenstein’s sincere and scholarly study: *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi* (Princeton, N.J., 1973), clings too closely to clinical vocabulary and is restricted to only three cases studies analyzed as historical illustrations of “the Oedipus complex”.

Mostafa Rejai found “Oedipal Conflict Writ Large” the least satisfactory predictive characteristic of revolutionary personalities. Rejai and Phillips, *Leaders of Revolution*, pp. 175-178. Here it is considered beyond the range of meaningful metaphor to employ this clinical term as historically descriptive.

of libidinal ties. These abstractions, embodied in revolutionary plans and pronouncements, represent the demands for a social order where libidinal ties and “reality” are not in conflict; where the harshness of “the reality principle” cannot inflict once more a humiliating retreat into narcissism. Such revolutionary plans, based on what Whitehead called “abstractions from possibility”, in contrast to “abstractions from actuality” can be relied not to wound or betray the newly achieved adult personality and, if put into practice, to produce a “new society”.²¹ Vulnerable personalities and a vulnerable social order combine into a revolutionary situation in which the social order and the human psyche seem capable of transformation into a new humanity in a new social order. Freud labeled this imaginative resource of the psyche “the omnipotence of thought” which he regarded with some suspicion as a mechanism of escape from “The reality principle”.²² Even the absence of strong ideological forces cannot destroy this sense of revolutionary transformation as Daniel Cosío Villegas insisted in the case of the Mexican Revolution.

Not everyone, but large numbers everywhere felt that exalted sensation of man turned into a god, of man with creative genius and will, with the faith that from his hands may come a new, great, brilliant, harmonious and kind world; faith also, that nothing is impossible and that anything may be achieved by simply willing it.²³

This is the stage at which the intellectuals make their greatest contribution to the development of revolutionary psychology by offering proposals and justifications for the plans of the incipient revolutionaries. When then ruling classes reject the suggestions of the intellectuals and also fail to control the persistent social crises what Crane

²¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (N.Y., 1958), pp. 170-173.

²² Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (N.Y., 1946), pp. 112-118.

²³ Daniel Cosío Villegas, “The Mexican Revolution” in Lawrence and Carol Kaplan, eds, *Revolutions: A Comparative Study* (N.Y., 1973), p. 411.

A similar experience was recorded by Rosa Levine-Meyer, the widow of Eugen Levine, one of the tragic “heroes” of the revolutionary movement in Germany following World War I: “I had heard that an approaching revolution is preceded by a mysterious wave which affects people like an epidemic and transforms them suddenly. I was convinced that it was an invention of the Party theorists and existed only in the pages of socialist literature.

I was wrong—how could I otherwise explain this excitement, this joyful anticipation of great events?” Rosa Levine-Meyer, *Leviné: The Life of a Revolutionary* (Glasgow, Great Britain, 1973), p. 53. This frank and tragic portrait of a revolutionary parallels many of the psychological patterns presented in *Bride of the Revolution: Krupskaya and Lenin*, by Robert H. McNeal (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1972).

Brinton identified as “the desertion of the intellectuals” takes place.²⁴ Coincidentally the ruling classes, beset by crises they cannot control and opposition they cannot suppress or pacify, tend progressively to lose touch with reality and adopt an irregular, irrational, dissolute and even vindictive pattern of life: quacks and charlatans flourish at the head of disputatious and bizarre cults, scandals become notorious.²⁵ This “Rasputin syndrome” seems characteristics of all revolutionary situations. When the emergence of revolutionary and ambivalent ascetics, uncontrolled social crises, the alienation of the intellectuals and the disintegration of the ruling classes all occur in the same society in a narrow time span a revolutionary situation exists. Cleverness and ruthlessness at disposing of rivals, prophetic accuracy, willingness to compromise with the old order, histrionic abilities, good fortune, personal magnetism, daring and persistence all play a part in determining what kind of revolutionary leadership emerges. The “heroes” of successful revolutions are immortalized in public monuments, sculpture, architecture, coinage, street names and grandiose mauseleums, in short are deified, while unsuccessful revolutionary leaders are the “tragic heroes”, immortalized in song and story.²⁶

Meanwhile the “normal” youths, who have enjoyed a more relaxed childhood and have achieved adult personalities without resort to prolonged and painful asceticism are more readily integrated into the institutions of the old order. However much they sympathize with revolutionary and alienated youths they will join revolutionary movements only for more clearly perceived motives of rational self-interest. As Barbara Salert noted in *Revolutions and Revolutionaries*: “Even those caught up in a revolutionary situation are likely to become

²⁴ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (N.Y., 1960), pp. 41-51; Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, pp. 63-70 and 138-139.

In the British revolution of the 1640s the alienation of the intellectuals occurred first in the Puritan clergy. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (N.Y., 1975), pp. 290-299.

Bertram Wolfe testified to the alienation of the intellectuals in 19th century Russia. “Almost involuntarily they were forced into open enmity to the old order that had no use for them. Beginning as gentle dreamers, reforms and humanitarians they were constantly being punished for mere dreaming and forbidden to dream. In despite of themselves they were driven into open rebelliousness, a mood so general that they very word ‘student’ would finally become synonymous with revolutionist.” Bertram. D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution: A Biographical History* (Bston, 1957), p. 33.

²⁵ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, pp. 53-67.

²⁶ The “tragic hero” has been one of the most enduring themes in song and story of all times and peoples. For example, no ostentacious mauseum in Rio could commemorate the legend of Antonio Conselheiro half so well as Euclides da Cunha’s classic: *Rebellion in the Backlands*.

revolutionaries for a limited period of time, if at all.”²⁷ Among all the groups attached to any “old order” the military, because of its rationalized training and coercive power, is most favorably situated to pursue a course of rational self-interest in time of crisis. In order to succeed revolutionary leaders must be able to count on support from the military or at least “benevolent neutrality” by key elements of the military at decisive moments. The causes most frequently mentioned for benevolent neutrality or active support of revolutionary elements by the military are such things as delinquent pay, bad and insufficient rations, lack of necessary equipment, prolonged inactivity or defeats in time of war, and prolonged misuse of the military for civil guard duty in time of crisis.²⁸ Paul Kickskemeti aptly remarked in his study of the Hungarian revolution: “Conscript army units that are being used as security forces to disperse large crowds are particularly vulnerable. . . when soldiers face ‘the people’ they are psychologically disarmed.”²⁹

Revolutionary leaders are quite aware of the need to penetrate the military and other institutions of the old order. Anything which tends to prolong current crises may contribute to this tactic: provocation to gain sympathy from cruel and harsh repression, fraternization with military units used for guard duty, sabotage to magnify the mistakes and failures of the old regime, tactics of terror and promised rewards, shrewd foresight and validated prophecies, all may add credibility to revolutionary propaganda. Once a rational assessment makes credible the prospect of revolutionary success organized elements in the old order the military, the civil servants, trade unions and other self-conscious groups —are impelled to entertain a whole new perception of rational self-interest.³⁰ Thus, rational self-interest, as perceived at the time, might be a motivating factor for a majority of those who support or merely accept the revolution and thus contribute to its success. Those involved in revolutionary situations, however, are often in a poor position to make rational choices revolutionary or reactio-

²⁷ Barbara Salert, *Revolution and Revolutionaries* (N.Y., 1976), p. 23.

²⁸ Katherine Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (Boston, 1973); John Ellis, *Armies in Revolution* (N.Y., 1974); D.E.H. Russell, *Rebellion, Revolution and Armed Force: A Comparative Study of Fifteen Countries with Special Emphasis on Cuba and South Africa* (N.Y., 1974).

²⁹ Paul Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, p. 152.

³⁰ For example, once the Hebrew slaves led by Moses, escaped into the wilderness the self-interest norms of Egyptian slavery were not very useful for desert survival.

nary terror. Therefore, the steadfast asceticism and legendary sacrifices of the revolutionary leaders, which in time of crisis are popularly perceived to “validate their mission”, their courage and ruthlessness, their persistence and their prophetic foresight often are decisive factors.

Moreover the psychology of revolution continues to play its role even after the triumph or defeat of the revolutionary movement. Triumphant revolutionary and victorious counter-revolutionary regimes all display some enduring combination of reform and repression. Gulag Archipelagoes and concentration camps seem to be required to keep alive the psychological tensions of revolutionary times. The psychosis of “the fatherland threatened” can be a powerful factor in revolutionary and counterrevolutionary psychology. It is precisely when the opposition is defeated that successful revolutionary leaders feel most threatened by the restoration of libidinal ties which they have just renounced at such cost and thus they launch the harshest measures of repression when they seem least justified because harshness fulfills the psychological needs of the revolutionary leaders rather than the objective requirements of the situation. The savage purges which stain revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary regimes alike reveal the psychological compulsions of the leaders and need not be ascribed solely to cynicism and cruelty.³¹ The restoration of libidinal ties and “worldly pleasures” possess a threat to the “legend” of unyielding asceticism as one of the power bases of revolutionary leadership. Mao, as also Cromwell, feared and detested situations where he could no longer control the key decisions; where he had to bide his time to reassert leadership. This seemed like a return to childhood subordination. In each case a second civil war seemed worth the cost to break again the bonds of libidinal ties³² and restore the fervor revolutionary leadership.

Doubtless it is an overstatement to speak of “the laws of revolution”;³³ but a careful study of the psychology of revolution reveals a general pattern of revolutionary behavior repeated again and again

31 “The very young among the active fighters did not, in fact, base their action upon any sort of realistic weighing of odds. There was in their combativeness an element of psychic compulsion, as though they were caught in a somnambulistic trance. It did not matter whether they lived or died.” Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, p. 113.

32 Daly, *The Revolutionary*, p. 29.

33 A careful reading of biographical and historical materials on the following revolutionary leaders and theorists indicates a high degree of conformity to this analysis: Moses, Joan of Arc, Luther, Cromwell, Rousseau, Marx, Engels, Jose Marti, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Hitler, Gandhi, Mao Tse-tung, Peron, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro.

from Moses to Castro.³⁴ This pattern begins with a “time of troubles”, that is prolonged and severe social crises —symbolized in Exodus by the ten plagues sent upon the Egyptians by Moses— which the ruling classes are psychologically unprepared to deal with. The dynamic youths of that time and social system, confronted with both psychic and social crises, that is turmoil within and turmoil without, resort to asceticism as a means of mobilizing the emotional energy to confront the combined crises. Prolonged asceticism generates visions of a new and better social order in which the ties and affections of childhood do not conflict with “the reality principle”.

When in the process of these crises, the ruling classes reject the suggestions and proposals of the intellectuals, their thoughts then enrich and fortify the plans and pronouncements of the alienated youths. The dynamic alienated youths emerge as revolutionary leaders and militants. They seek to gain the support and acquiescence of rational self-interest groups in the society, particularly the military, and by every means to provoke the old order to discredit and destroy itself. Continued mistakes and failures by the old order reveal the disintegration and irrational behavior of the ruling classes. If this chaotic condition persists the self-interest groups in the old society begin to regard to proposals of the ambivalent or ascetic revolutionaries with increased interest. Here the steadfast asceticism, prophetic foresight and organizational abilities of the “heroic” revolutionary leaders can be decisive. The psychology of the revolutionary leaders complemented by the “mood” of the restless masses thus become part of the revolutionary crisis.

With so many obstacles to success and so many chances for failure successful revolutions are rare indeed. Even unsuccessful revolutions, however, leave psychological shadows behind: some enduring reforms; varying degrees of prolong repression, exile communities; tragic heroes immortalized in song and story. Often unsuccessful revolutions and rebellions become the precursors of subsequent revolutions. Most of the innumerable rebellions, recorded and unrecorded never the stage of revolutionary consciousness; repression, a few reforms and the dismissal of hated officials suffice to terminate them.³⁵ Single issue rebellions, coups d’etat and barracks uprisings do not demand

³⁴ Lewis S. Feuer, *Ideology and the Ideologists* (N.Y., 1975), “The Mosaic Revolutionary Myth: The Invariant Ingredient”, pp. 1-4.

³⁵ Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third World Peoples* (N.Y., 1973), “Index of Principal Movements, Tribes, and Persons”, pp. 543-547; Wilson D. Wallis, *Messiahs: Their Role in Civilization* (Washington D.C., 1943).

much in the way of asceticism, do not develop “sacred” plans, nor envision the transformation of human-kind. As Jacques Ellul remarked single issue rebellions seem to lead straight to the gallows. Revolutions, however, test the revolutionary leaders and the ruling classes to the utmost; successful and unsuccessful revolutions, revolutions of hope and revolutions of despair leave a definite mark —before and after— upon history.

There is no denying that contemporary revolutionary activity is faced with formidable difficulties but all the modern machinery of repression cannot prevent clever revolutionary ascetics or ambivalent ascetics from gaining some access to the instrumentalities of propaganda, surveillance and suppression. Revolutionary leadership groups have greater opportunities than ever before for inter-communication, for mutual inspiration and coordination. In fact the increase in international sympathy and cooperation among revolutionary movements may indicate an increase in relative deprivation and ambivalence as significant aspects of revolutionary psychology. Likewise fraternization between the armed forces and dissident civilians is more difficult to prevent. Finally the likelihood that the remaining years of this century and the opening years of the next will manifest severe social crises is one of the few points of agreement by all analysts of whatever economic or political conviction. Therefore, those who have concluded that “under modern conditions” revolutions are no longer possible may not have come to terms adequately with the psychology of revolution and hence may be engaging in premature self-congratulation. No current regime or ideology seems capable of preventing the onset of severe social crises or the emergence of revolutionary and ambivalent ascetics determined to take advantage of these crises. To quote from the Preface to *Revolution and the Revolutionary Ideal*, by Robert Blakely and Clifford Paynton: “In no society can the possibility of revolution be completely excluded as a means or a cause of radical social change.”³⁶

³⁶ Robert Blakely and Clifford T. Paynton, *Revolution and the Revolutionary Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 1.