The background of the cover is a solid dark blue. Overlaid on this is a large, stylized graphic. It features a dark grey silhouette of a hand with fingers spread, reaching upwards from the bottom right. The hand appears to be holding or supporting a light grey, abstract shape that resembles a map of the African continent. The shape has a jagged, irregular top edge. The overall composition is minimalist and symbolic.

RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION

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RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION

To
K.C.,
k.c., and j.d.

preface

I confess to you, Sir, I never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread.

*Edmund Burke, Reflections
on the Revolution in France*

This book is about the brutal side of politics—conflict and violence or, in Burke’s phrase, resistance and revolution. It forces attention on the harsh facts of political life, proceeding from the assumption that all politics rests on inequality—of intelligence, of wealth, of commitment, and most important, of power. Such inequality is rooted in the nature of man, perhaps by virtue of his membership in the kingdom of animals. In any group of individuals interacting on a regular basis, inequality usually manifests itself in the rudimentary political arrangement of superordination and subordination. But political arrangements of this type do not last forever. A major source of change can be traced to the forces of resistance and revolution—conscious and sustained efforts fundamentally to alter political arrangements, even to reverse the status of ruler and ruled.

Unlike Burke’s *Reflections*, which presents the viewpoint of the impassioned conservative, this study of resistance and revolution is written from the perspective of the concerned political scientist. For while I am not a “revolutionary” in the conventional sense, neither do I necessarily disapprove of resistance and revolution.

Despite efforts to be impartial, however, I have found it impossible to remain dispassionate. The urgent necessity, in the 1970’s, of increasing our understanding of resistance and revolution precludes calm neutrality. Furthermore, I believe that proper understanding requires the marriage of normative with empirical concerns. It will not do simply to examine the facts of resistance and revolution; we must also explore the many moral dimensions associated with these phenomena. Though some people may disapprove of

Burke's conservative posture, one cannot disagree with his observation that revolution (if not resistance) indeed constitutes "extreme medicine." In terms of his metaphor, the problem becomes one of examining the social and political maladies to which this medicine is applied, of developing a concept of "health," and ultimately of evaluating the conditions and prospects for its attainment.

As a partial response to this necessity, this book begins with the explicit recognition of the interdependence of fact and value in social science analysis. To be sure, at present there exists no "science of values" that would permit the final resolution of moral issues. Yet moral questions should be raised even if they cannot be answered in absolute terms, and social scientists must be as appreciative of the normative implications of their research as they are sophisticated in dealing with the methodological and theoretical difficulties they encounter. Besides examining and attempting to clarify the "first-order" moral questions of resistance and revolution (when ought one to resist), social scientists need to take account of the "second-order" questions (what use will be made of my research).

In writing a book of this kind, one cannot help being influenced by classical political theory, for surely it constitutes an important aspect of the collected wisdom of mankind. "A classic," Mark Twain once remarked, "is a book that everyone talks about but nobody reads." Though this remark has a disturbing relevance to many political scientists, it does not apply to them all. At least some scholars continue to read the classics in search of greater understanding of politics. But classical theory differs from contemporary political inquiry, for unlike much of modern political science, which often purports only to describe and explain how politics in *fact* works, classical theories usually contain strong prescriptions about how politics *ought* to work. Robert Kennedy was fond of saying, "Some see what is and ask Why. I dream of what has never been, and ask Why not?" In the same way classical theorists combined their views on the facts of political life with a vision of a good or "ideal" society. It is the quality of this vision rather than the accuracy of their views that marks off the great political theorists from more mundane writers. For the most part, classical theory, in other words, is both empirical and normative. In discussing a problem like resistance and revolution, classical theorists grapple with two sets of questions: When (why, how, etc.) *do* men resist

the state? When (etc.) *ought* they to resist the state? These questions are closely related for a subtle but important reason: People tend to do what they feel is right, and they tend to regard as right what they have done.

This does not mean that we can construct a normative theory of resistance and revolution simply by examining the justifications and rationalizations offered by either theorists or political activists. But the reverse is more nearly true. That is, by examining these justifications and rationalizations, we may be able to understand *why* men engage in resistance and also to predict *when* resistance will occur. And of course we will be better able to think through the normative issues after reading the eloquent and profound essays of Locke or Rousseau or, indeed, Burke.

In short, I have tried to write a book rooted in political theory, combining the twin concerns of fact and value. Furthermore, in the belief that political scientists should make the most of the insight into political behavior afforded by their own discipline, I have tried to avoid the two kinds of reductionism so prevalent in the literature on political instability—the tendency either to reduce resistance behavior to a psychological problem and deal with it in terms of a theory of “frustration-aggression” or “relative deprivation,” or to explain all manifestations of instability with the use of societal-level concepts and generalizations emphasizing economic or social “causes.” Instead, this book places politics squarely at the center of analysis, introducing sociological and psychological considerations only insofar as they illuminate the changes in *political* institutions and values that underlie resistance and revolution. Thus attention is focused, for example, on authority, justice, legitimacy, and organization, rather than on aggression, deprivation, economic change, or “social strain.” While obviously this approach reflects my personal background in political theory, I strongly feel that the attempt to rescue “the political” from the status of a purely “dependent variable” will provide handsome dividends in the currency of understanding.

Acknowledgments

Many hands and many minds have contributed to this enterprise. A number of ideas originated in my seminars at York University and

(earlier) Michigan State University; by teaching, as the motto goes, I have learned a great deal. The staff, particularly Norma Tarnofsky, Joanne McGinn, and Candy Van Volkenburgh, of York University's Department of Secretarial Services made available incredibly efficient secretarial support. Research assistance was provided by Brad Boise, Greg Rathjen, Carola Luqué, and Bo Hansen. My colleagues, H. T. Wilson, Edgar J. Dosman, H. Michael Stevenson, Ross Rudolph, gave helpful comments and criticisms. Kaaren Bell edited successive drafts with unflagging enthusiasm; Richard Longaker, Lionel Rubinoff, and Samuel P. Huntington read the entire manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions. My friends at Houghton Mifflin encouraged and assisted me throughout the project. To all these people I express thanks. Of course their contributions in no way implicate them in the deficiencies of this study, but their assistance has been one factor that has permitted me to continue and enjoy my research.

My final and greatest debt is to my wife and "two both" children, who in the past two years have so often and so stoically gone without husband and father and who ultimately make the whole thing worthwhile. To them this book is fondly dedicated.

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1

an overview of resistance

Political orders resemble forests and families in that they contain the potentiality of self-renewal, but this potentiality does not exclude the chance of failure and ultimate extinction. Revolution, when successful, signalizes such extinction of a political order. Resistance is its harbinger and potential pathfinder.

Politics is like so much else in life: We take it for granted until it fails us. As long as the American political system was (or appeared to be) functioning “normally,” for example, college students in the 1950’s almost ignored it completely. Critical observers bemoaned the apathy of a whole generation and wondered whether their disinterest presaged doom for participatory democracy in the United States. At the same time, several influential scholars proclaimed “the end of ideology” and confidently predicted that future social and political problems would be worked out with a minimum of friction and conflict. “Systems theory” became the dominant paradigm in political science. As it was presented, however, the concept of the political system almost precluded discussion of resistance and revolution, focusing instead on “stability,” “persistence,” and “diffuse support.”

In the next decade, all this changed dramatically. Students vaulted from apathy to involvement. Politics became the hottest issue on the campus. The hypothesis that “ideology” had somehow “ended” seemed embarrassingly unrealistic. The image of politics as a well-oiled, smoothly “functioning” machine appeared ludicrous against the backdrop of burning cities. Politics was no

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longer functioning smoothly. By 1970, normal politics was failing badly indeed.

Failures in politics carry high costs, often counted in human lives. The tragedies at Jackson State and Kent State, the ghetto riots, the assassination of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, all made vivid to many the extent and cost of political failure in America, while a few miles across the border to the north, terrorism, kidnaping, and bombing reached almost unprecedented levels of occurrence. People in Canada and the United States were brutally reminded that government is more than a machine. And even machines make enemies. Every society has its political Luddites, people who do not like "the system"—its leaders, their policies, or its very foundation and organization. When these people become politically active, they create "resistance" to some aspect of the system's operation. Occasionally, resistance culminates in revolution: The system is completely overthrown, and a new system arises in its place. Under what conditions does resistance arise? What forms can it take? What justifications underlie it? What responses does it produce? What moral questions are relevant for evaluating resistance and counter-resistance? These and other topics are discussed in the pages that follow.

The Meaning of Resistance

It is impossible to discuss resistance outside the context of authority, for in politics the term means resistance to authority. For the present purposes, we may simply define authority as legitimate power, including the "right" to make decisions about distribution and punishment.

Justifications for resistance are closely related to justifications for authority. Because in today's world politics is almost universally regarded as exclusively human activity, quite distinct from the realm of theology and metaphysics, we are likely to forget the modernity of our secular view. Yet merely centuries ago, the notion enjoyed wide currency that authority descended from God and human resistance to authority was tantamount to heresy or sacrilege, a rejection of God's will. Competing with the "descending" interpretation of authority, however, was its antithesis, the view that authority ascended from the ruled to the ruler. In this

perspective, authority was granted on the condition that the ruler fulfill certain criteria, including procedural considerations related to how he should be chosen (for example, by election, by inheritance through the male line) and substantive considerations outlining what his authority did (and did not) allow him to do. Rulers who abrogated the procedural norms were called usurpers or tyrants "without a title" (*sine titulo*). Rulers who repudiated substantive limitations on their authority also earned the designation of tyrant, *ab exercitio*, indicating a questioning only of their exercise of, and not their title to, authority. Most resistance doctrines proceeded from a more or less sophisticated conceptualization of authority and tyranny to the specification of the forms of resistance justifiable under particular conditions.

Though (by definition) resistance aims at the limitation—and sometimes the destruction—of authority, the concept of resistance does not apply to all limitations on authority. Specifically excluded, for example, are the numerous institutional mechanisms and processes that are built into the machinery of government (through constitutionalism, the party system, civil rights) to limit political authority. These devices form an essential but "normal" aspect of the political process. Our concern is with the non-normal, noninstitutionalized forms of resistance that constitute a central feature of "revolutionary" politics.¹ Often, however, resistance comes about precisely because institutional limitations on authority have broken down and become ineffective or because rulers attempt to "exceed" their authority in defiance of existing limita-

¹ Cf. Charles E. Merriam (1934, pp. 157–59): "It is not the present purpose . . . to deal with all of the kinds of formal limitation upon political authorities. [Instead, we examine] those forms of the defense of individuals through *other than the institutionalized agencies* set up for that purpose and fully formalized in the life of the political community" (emphasis added).

It is important to point out, however, that the introduction of institutional devices (such as political parties) for legal "opposition" in modern politics is a relatively recent phenomenon, almost always bloodied by violence and far from universal even today. For a wide-ranging (though somewhat uneven) study of the growth of the development of "political opposition in Western democracies" see Dahl, 1966. Forms of "extra parliamentary opposition" are examined by Theo Schiller in his forthcoming monograph, *Parlamentarismus und ausser parlamentarische Opposition. Ein Beitrag zur Demokratietheorie* (Parliamentarianism and Extra Parliamentary Opposition: A Treatise on Democratic Theory).

tions. Thus the English Civil War, for example, occurred in part as a consequence of James I's redefinition and enlargement of the political authority of the king, presented in his treatise *A Defense of the Divine Right of Kings*. According to John D. Lewis, "When James and his successor attempted to put their theory of kingship into practice, the result was a long series of conflicts with judges and Parliament which led to the development of determined opposition in the Petition of Right and finally in civil war" (Jaszi and Lewis, 1957, p. 78). Charles I, James' son, literally lost his head over the matter.

Resistance occurs as the result of a conscious decision not to obey authority. It is more extreme than protest, which aims at the change of a policy but does not reject the authority of the policy maker. In effect, as the protester explicitly displays his disagreement with a particular policy or person in authority, he tacitly registers his conviction that "the system" can correct its faults and remedy its abuses. From 1763 until nearly a decade later, a number of inhabitants of the thirteen American colonies colorfully protested Britain's new imperialist policy, convinced that Britain would respond by abandoning the policy. When the protests seemed to be ineffectual, some colonists concluded that the entire system of colonial government required drastic revision and that the best way to achieve this change was (at first) through resistance to British policy and eventually by making revolution against Britain. Thus unsuccessful protest can lead to resistance or even to revolution. Perhaps, as Jerome Skolnick (1969, pp. 72–73) suggests, the transition stems from disillusionment with the "normal" techniques for bringing about change:

For many protesters, the phrase "from protest to resistance" has nothing to do with physical obstruction of any sort; it means instead that individuals, having exhausted *normal channels of dialogue and petition*, feel they must take a personal stance of non-compliance with the war. Tax refusal [and] the declaration of medical students that they would refuse to serve . . . are . . . examples of such resistance. The overridingly important categories, however, have been draft resistance and the association of draft-ineligible persons with draft resisters.

Also commenting on the contemporary setting, William Sloan Coffin eloquently portrays the sequence of decisions that lead the dissenter from protest to resistance. Someone who disagrees with a policy such as American participation in the Vietnam War, he writes, “does not engage in civil disobedience—not as a first resort. Rather he speaks out, writes letters, signs petitions, stands in silent vigils—all in the best American tradition” (Skolnick, 1969, pp. 74–75). But if these protest activities fail to bring about the desired change in policy, then (depending on “how wrong he thinks the war is” and “how deeply he cares”) according to Coffin, the dissenter must pursue his beliefs “to the end, even if this means going to jail.” Hence Coffin advocates “as a last resort” civil disobedience. In other words, the protester simply publicizes his objections to a policy, tacitly assuming that those in authority can and will make appropriate changes, tacitly accepting the outcome if they do not. If, however, change does not occur, the protester must decide whether to escalate from protest to resistance, which would mean at the very least illegal (though not necessarily violent) activity against the particular policy in question or perhaps against the authority system as a whole.

An advocate and practitioner of precisely such resistance, Eqbal Ahmad, while under indictment for “conspiring to kidnap a high government official” (a charge he and his associates vehemently deny), outlined his position in a speech at Michigan State University in April 1971:

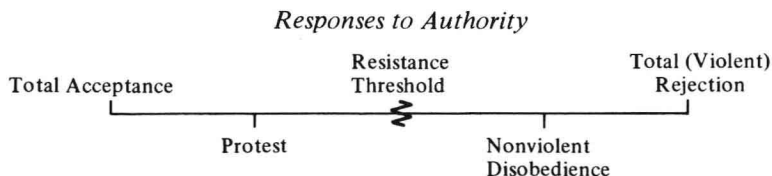
We are a group of men and women, thirteen of us, who have practically to a man, and practically to a woman, actively militantly, and consistently opposed the War in Indochina for the last several years. In the process of doing so, we have in many cases, broken the law. And we have publicly admitted to breaking the law, for we do not want to be tried for the same reasons as Lieutenant Calley. We do not want to be tried for becoming criminals by following orders, when following orders makes you accomplices in crimes against humanity. We *decided that when obeying the laws makes you accomplices in crimes against humanity then those laws should be disobeyed and broken.* When we have broken laws in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, we have publicly ad-

mitted to them. Two of us are already serving sentences in jail. Many others among us have openly and publicly admitted to acts of resistance, but none of us has either ever been known to advocate acts of violence in America, nor have we ever told a lie to the American public.

The other day I was visiting Dan Berrigan in Danbury prison and he said to me, "We ought to challenge consistently and every day. We must challenge the government through the courts and outside the court to prove that any of us, as individuals or as a group, has ever told a lie to the American public. . . ." We are men who have not told public lies, being accused by a government that has not told many truths.

For Ahmad, and probably for resisters in general, the decision to resist rests on profound distrust of the government, extreme distaste for its policies, and the conviction that obeying the laws is a conditional rather than an absolute obligation. The resister rejects the equation of legality with justice and finds in his personal conscience or in some external standard justification for his anti-nomian (literally “against the law”) behavior. Although both Ahmad and Coffin personally condone only nonviolent resistance, it would not require a great leap of logic or sentiment to extend their argument to justify violent resistance as well—provided appropriate objective conditions and subjective dispositions were present. Hence, nonviolent resistance may be a prelude to more severe forms of behavior, and it is undeniable that *any* form of resistance constitutes by definition a challenge to authority.

We begin to conceive of a continuum of responses to authority. At one extreme is complete unquestioning acceptance; at the other, utter and violent rejection. Intermediate positions include acceptance with protest and disobedience without violence. The "resistance threshold" is difficult to pinpoint precisely, but it lies somewhere near the middle of this continuum.



Yet such a continuum reduces to one dimension a range of behavior that has a multiplicity of forms. Carl Friedrich (1963, p. 635–36) remarks that “Resistance may be organized or spontaneous, continuous or sporadic. . . . [Organized] and continuous resistance occurs in two primary forms, partial and total.” Elaborating on his notion, we may observe that the *targets* of resistance can include policies, personnel, or the entire system of authority. The *means* may be nonviolent or violent. The *mode* of concurrence, spontaneous or organized. The *participants* may be few and drawn mainly from the elite or numerous and involving the masses. Resistance behavior, in short, is richly varied. Adequate conceptualization of its vicissitudes must take into account a number of attributes that cannot be represented in a one-dimensional continuum.

Before pursuing this problem, which is taken up again in Chapter 4, we must complete our preliminary investigation of the meaning of the terms *resistance* and *revolution*.

The Many Meanings of Revolution

Few (if any) “social science” words conjure such powerful images, while creating such vast confusion, as *revolution*. The term has been applied to virtually every human activity from art to engineering and was originally used in treatises on astronomy. In pre-modern times, *revolution* connoted a rotation of the wheel of change through one complete turn, and therefore its early applications to politics were tied up with the cyclical view of history. At least as late as the seventeenth (and possibly into the eighteenth) century, *revolution* carried the conservative connotation of restoration, a “revolving back” to the pretyrannical status quo. The most famous usage of the term that at all resembles its modern sense dates from 1789. The duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, so the story goes, is supposed to have corrected Louis XVI’s exclamation that “une révolte” was occurring in the streets of Paris. “Non, Sire,” said Liancourt, “c’est une révolution!” Despite the uncertain authenticity and ambiguous significance of the remark attributed to Liancourt, one cannot dispute the crucial impact of the French Revolution on all subsequent conceptualizations of the phenomenon. The events of 1789 and their aftermath remain