IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES
ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF EUGENE KAMENKA

UQP
A New Approach to the Revolutionary Crowd

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In happily accepting the invitation to join in honouring Eugene Kamenka, I selected a topic that has been a life-long preoccupation for him, as it has been for many of his generation. Ceremonial occasions are fit and proper events for a moment’s remembrance of things past, so I shall indulge a few nostalgic reveries.

Revolution, or rather its simulacrum in the euphoria of participatory politics, is the mediator of my acquaintance with Eugene. The vacant Research Fellowship in the History of Ideas Unit presented the opportunity for the leisure needed to execute the fulsome project then contemplated. The remoteness of Australia from crowd joys and ructions was a decided plus.

The RSSS was certainly peaceful, one may say almost sensory deprivation by comparison with American hype. But Eugene Kamenka was himself a world culture wrapped in a skin, always keen to discuss any topic. He made the History of Ideas Unit a cornucopia of thought and the centre of gravity of the RSSS by importing a string of visitors. Shlomo Avineri, Henri Arvon, Frank and Fritzie Manuel, Peter Munz, Isaiah Berlin, John Plamenatz, Brough Macpherson, John Pocock, Walter Kaufmann, George Rudé, Barrie Rose, Quentin Skinner, George Mosse—with that calibre of colleague, and Eugene’s own constant stimulation, research fellows were supplied a rich and rare environment.

In the interval since my departure from Canberra, there has been a massive infusion of biological orientations into most of the social sciences, while the established biological disciplines have exploded with new findings and deep theoretical advances. A small sign of this accession of knowledge is the newly published Bibliography of Human Behavior, which lists 6700 titles, selected from a population of about 60,000 titles, covering 19 fields and sub-fields, among them behaviour genetics, the brain sciences, parenting, sexuality, psychiatry, social psychology, and consciousness. It has been estimated that during the past fifteen years about 1000 human attributes have been discovered or newly elucidated. Such is the armamentarium that today facilitates a new beginning with the study of the revolutionary crowd.

Beginning anew does not require wiping the slate clean. Instead we hybridise the data obtained by conventional methodologies in the new garden of the behavioural sciences. Among the conventional disciplines is the social history of crowds and ambient events: protests, festivals, public punishments, riots, industrial conflict, and revolutions themselves. The standard of writing today is a far cry from the soaring raptures of Jules Michelet and the withering scorn of Hippolyte Taine. It is dry, archival and alert to the importance of statistical description. One may not, in this gathering, omit to mention the pioneering contributions of Barrie Rose, George Rudé and Eric Hobsbawm to these studies. I would draw particular attention to a recent achievement, Stanley Palmer’s Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850. In the Introduction of this magisterial work, Palmer adverts to what he politely calls a ‘curious matter of neglect.’ The social historians of popular protest have overlooked the ‘obvious truth’ that the immediate ambience of popular protest is that instrument of control, the police. He ascribes this oversight to the Whiggish bias of social historians, which predisposes them to sympathy with the crowd and aversion to repression. In an
aside that he must be thanked for recording, he notes that the bias reached so far that when he announced a lecture on police history at Harvard in the early 1970s, students hooted him down as a fascist.

Palmer’s discovery of the obvious is welcome because it confirms the same discovery that I made by another path. It arose by comparing systematic treatises in the sociology of collective behaviour with an important body of writing on popular protest that receives scant notice. It may be called the participant-observer sociology of protest.\(^3\) This literature is practical; it often takes the form of manuals on how to conduct protests and how to manage protest movements; and conversely, on how to control crowds. Its authors are activists who made it all happen and senior police officers who tried to prevent it from getting out of hand. These insightful practitioners are trumps over the theorists because they show in detail that protest movements since the rise of the modern police must be understood in relation to one another. They also supply ingredients missing from most sociologies of collective action, viz, adversarial tactics with the police; techniques for directing crowd action and expression; techniques for winning with the media; the arts of intimidation; what it is in the crowd experience that ‘radicalises’ and how to spread that experience.

These parameters are the yeast of revolution and the parade ground of people power. It is acknowledged today that the moment-to-moment interactions comprising the microsocial process have been neglected by sociologists. Building on Durkheim, Erving Goffman, and to some extent human ethology, some sociologists have undertaken to construct the ‘micro-macro’ link from individual behaviours to second and third level events on the political stage.\(^4\) This change of heart is welcome, but the activist literature, I suggest, already constructs this link by detailing how the stream of action in the streets dovetails with planning and organisation, with pre-event and post-event contests conducted by leaders, with coalition formation, and with the fight for hearts and minds.

Before entering upon such detail, let me note several other salient crowd traits that are either ignored or scarcely discussed by the systematists of crowd behaviour. One is sex difference. Virtually all protest crowds (from which I exclude riots) of the post-war period were mixed sex. The crowd assigned to control the protesters, by contrast, was the then all-male police force. Does sex difference correlate with behavioural difference? Very strongly so, as we shall see, yet the evidence about this key independent variable is not woven into the theory of collective action. Age difference is also ignored even though the systematists are aware that age difference is a critical indicator of arrests in crowd events of all descriptions.

Sociologists also exhibit a curious indifference to the central feature of protest politics as a political contest in which the grass roots challenge the might and legitimacy of governments. This Gestalt is one of the key links between micro and macro levels, since confrontations occurring in moment-to-moment interactions are often homologous with the war of words and with the configurations of institutional competition. An example of this homology is police use of batons at an event, the projection of police action into the political arena as the accusation, ‘Police Brutality!’, and the adroit use of that label to lever significant moral and material concessions from governments. This Gestalt is deeply embedded in the protest tradition of direct action, where the contest is often depicted as a battle for the control of resources.

Then there is the abundance of psychological factors that sociologists do not examine as causal agents of crowd behaviour. Slogans, chants, marches, and music are likely to be found wherever crowds parade their colours. Crowd impresarios have long understood that rhymicity and music stir the emotions that promote solidarity and confidence. As the Communist journal the New Masses once expressed it, ‘Singing is a
form of battle, and music is a weapon that must be put into the hands of the people.' The enhancing effects of music should be of particular interest because music is independent of social norms and other social attributes. What is the causality of this effect? Might music sometimes induce a collective trance-like state, and if so, do trance states have a patterned influence on actions? These questions are not addressed by most investigators, but answers are increasingly available.

And consider that distinctive trait of crowd power—the property of evoking opposite affective responses simultaneously. To crowd participants and sympathetic bystanders (US), nothing is quite so momentous, exhilarating, and up-lifting as crowd camaraderie. But experience of that very same crowd is for others (THEM) terrifying and intimidating. This dual effect polarises public opinion wherever crowds are active. Thus crowds are alternately praised for their courageous witness to the good cause and reprobated as frenzied, lawless mobs. Although this dual potency is central to the dynamics of mass politics, scholars construe it as an academic question about whether crowds are peaceful and instrumentally rational, or aggressive, irrational, and ritualistic. It does not occur to them that both sets of attributes are intrinsic to the dual effect potency of crowds.

Social historians are well placed to discard this last error. Their data show crowds of all complexions and allegiances. They know that the bracing euphoria of solidarity is enjoyed by Lynch mobs as well as civil rights protesters; by oppressors as well as the oppressed; by Protestants and Catholics, Arab and Jew. They know too, thanks to John Stevenson’s research on popular protests, that the Lynch mob is merely one expression of community vigilant justice known in rural England as the ‘skimmington,’ an informal ceremonial punishment of a malefactor.

Both are obviously ostracism rituals, which may be called an ‘elementary form’ of crowd behaviour because they are pan-cultural. As such they are neutral to any particular ideational content except for the basic psychosocial configuration that a person or persons is punished by directing community disapprobation against them. Yet the social history of crowds as written in recent decades tends to insinuate that such crowds are nearly always benign. The stigmata of violence, irrationality, criminality, and social corrosiveness are replaced by a view of the crowd as ordinary, law-abiding, good-natured, down-trodden, purposive and hopeful bon peuple. One of the objectives of this agenda is to refute the thesis of Gustav Le Bon and the classical social psychologists that the ‘crowd mind’ somehow transforms ordinary law-abiding people into a mindless mob. The rebuttal consists of evidence that the level of personal violence and property damage inflicted by history’s protesting crowds is minuscule relative to their reputation; and that crowds usually presented to authorities a reasonable, negotiable agenda of complaints. The Yippie catch-cry of the Sixties, ‘Be reasonable, demand the impossible!’ does not, on this view, express the mind typical of political crowds.

This characterisation does not address the problem of the dual effect potency of crowds. The instrumental rationality of the rehabilitated crowd is premised on tacit endorsement of the fairness of the value claims that they stake. This premise is unsustainable because it overlooks the fact that political crowds espouse opposing value agendas. Governments also have crowds, as do fascists and aspiring dictators. The alleged fairness of crowd value claims implicitly denies the existence of crowds that mete out rough popular justice by lynching or lesser forms of abuse. It is not inherently difficult to prevent such biasing of the evidence. Investigation need only be neutral in its relation to the value claims and ideology of protesting crowds.

A further difficulty with the instrumentally rational crowd interpretation is its inability to account for the dual effect phenomenon. It will not do to dismiss impressions of terror and hysteria as the ‘myth of the madding crowd’ that can be dispelled by careful observation. Nor will it do to label as ‘myth’ the view of
conservatives since Burke’s fulminations against the French revolutionaries. Anxiety and revulsion against crowds are not derivative from a scholarly tradition at all, but register immediate impressions of a type of bystanders, irrespective of their political views and irrespective of the crowd’s behaviour. In a word, crowds intimidate and terrify as they also exhilarate and uplift. This is, I suggest, an invariant property of crowd-bystander interaction. Which of these dual potencies is taken up by a particular bystander depends on whether they personally are captivated or repulsed by the crowd mood. To illustrate this briefly. The direct action tactics used by Pro-life activist groups are modelled on those that won public acceptance through civil rights demonstrations in the Sixties. Nevertheless, some of the same bystanders who applaud civil rights protesters as orderly and serious reprobate Pro-life protest activities as incitement to social conflict by histrionic confrontation. Again, the lynch mob that draws rousing cheers for inflicting torture and death on an outcast is loathed by other bystanders for its animal violence and cowardice. The madding crowd depiction endorsed by the classic social psychologists is but a scholarly version of a primeval response. The belief that just observations can set aside this perception appeals to the notion that all enlightened minds, given full information, will judge alike. I suggest that the interminable debate about the crowds of the French Revolution reflects the fact that crowds invariably polarised bystanders into Fans and Hostiles.

Sports and sports crowds are well adapted to test these broad statements. In current theory they are regarded as ‘expressive’ rather than ‘instrumental.’ They pursue no political agendas and espouse no social cause. This fact greatly diminishes the risk of observer bias in crowd description. Yet they are a good model of political crowds. Sports crowds divide strongly into Them and Us confrontations, even though nothing material is at stake. Much of the psychological repertoire of political crowds is present in sports crowds. They have the dual effect potency of political crowds. And finally, sex differences in behaviour are plainly visible.

Let us begin with the latter point. Although the participation rates of females in sport has greatly increased in recent decades, the sports that attract large followings are male teams competing in manly sports: rugby, soccer, grid iron, hockey, basketball, bull fighting, and the like. Whether Tottenham or Arsenal take the championship has no bearing on wage levels or the advancement of multiculturalism. Why then the fanaticism and furore of the fans? Why the fears, the commissions of inquiry, and judicial disapprovals?

Most current sociological explanations are constructed to take account of three salient facts about the sports tribe. One is that they express and cultivate a masculinity cult involving swaggering displays of physical aggression, joy in risk-taking, touchiness about personal and group honour, disparagement of woman, heroic drunkenness, and a handkerchief for symbols of outcast status, eg, the Swastika.

A second fact is that membership the sub-population of sports fans, called ‘hooligans,’ who engage in assaults and disruption, have a distinctive socio-economic profile that holds up cross-nationally. A study of 652 soccer ground arrests in the UK found that 99 percent are male. The mean age was 19. Sixty-eight percent were labourers, mostly apprentices. Twelve per cent were unemployed, 10 per cent attended school. About a third of the group had a record of prior arrest, 59.5 percent of those were for assaulting police. In a word, the sports tribe is an expression of working class youth culture.

The third fact is that the ostensible object of the tribe’s activity, the game, is often overshadowed by the intensity the tribe’s own rituals, to the point that the game itself shrinks to mere occasion. Thus Michael Smith in his study, Violence and Sport, wrote:

To a Shed fan, half the fun of a game is provided by the continual slanging match which occurs whenever a team with good support visits Chelsea. The football often becomes
irrelevant; the effect of two large groups of fans threatening, challenging and intimidating each other from opposite ends of the ground, flying their colours and singing their war songs, is rather like two medieval armies encamped on nearby hillsides warming up before the battle. If an actual attack on the enemy is staged by the North Stand, the Shed roars with approval and excitement, encouraging its advance commando group with bloodthirsty war cries. Since most of these are chants, accompanied by rhythmic, militaristic hand-clapping, they unfortunately lose their menacing effect in print.

This description echoes the finding of the official inquiry into the Hillsborough Stadium disaster. The Rt. Honourable Justice Taylor wrote that ‘new hooligans’ plan violence ‘as a recreation in itself to which the football is secondary or a mere background.’ Their main targets are opposing fans and the police.

Sociological explanations of this behaviour draw substantially on the sociology of youth culture. In the version proposed by Eric Dunning and colleagues, the soccer tribe reflects the social structure of working class communities, which he styles the ‘segmentally bonded’ village characteristic of pre-industrial society. The explanation, which I will not discuss in detail, invokes the transmission of social attitudes of the parents to offspring, particulars of housing estate life, alienation from society, and so on. Dunning rejects, as a possible explanation, the ethological hypothesis proposed by Desmond Morris and Peter Marsh, that the soccer tribe and hooligans in particular express the primordial male hunting band. It does not, he thinks, take account of the particularity of social circumstance. Nevertheless, he notices that hooligans’ social organisation seems very like the street corner gangs so often studied; and he observes that their cult of masculinity is not greatly at variance with masculinity cult found among police and the military. In other words, hooligans may after all express an ‘elementary form’ of collective behaviour.

Let us then return to the grounds to observe. Thousands, or tens of thousands, sing, chant, and gesture in synchrony. No one tells them to do that; it is a ritual that the soccer tribe has adopted of its own accord. Hear the chant from the Shed:

A-G / A-G-R / A-G-R-O / Aggro! / Come and have a go / At the Chelsea aggro! / You’re gonna get your fucking heads kicked in!

As Michael Smith notes, the cool medium of print cannot convey the chant’s hot impact. One self-confessed hooligan gave an impression of it when he told an interviewer: ‘I go to a match for one reason only: the aggro. It’s an obsession, I can’t give it up. I get so much pleasure when I’m having aggro that I nearly wet my pants.’ The hooligan is reporting the well known ‘adrenalin hit,’ in which pleasure-giving opioids flood the brain. Contributing to this effect is the soccer tribe’s ritually induced rhythmicity. Synchronised voices, drums and musical instruments accompanied fighting units into battle until recent times; they are also usually deployed in crowd rituals. It is here that the causal chain is to be sought. All vocalising species have distinct repertoires for threat, alarm, courtship, etc. The AGGRO chant is a synchronised, rhythmic threat. Musicians know that loudness and tempo are potent tools for achieving emotional tension. Neuroscientists have observed that rhythmic auditory sensations generate a brain wave distinct from the normal asynchronous pattern. They can cause visual sensations of colour, pattern, and movement, as well as organised hallucinations, seizures, and general emotional and abstract experiences. Chanting and music create a similar pattern characterised by widespread EEG coordination, producing a high index of common activity in theta and low alpha waves among chanters. Such findings suggest that the cortex may be set into oscillation at the alpha frequency, and that a wide variety of percussion instruments produce or enhance the dominance of slow wave frequencies. This in turn suggests that extensive dancing and percussion would produce a slow wave parasympathetic dominant state,
especially when resulting in parasympathetic nervous system depletion. These effects are independent of social class or particular social background. As Aldous Huxley has observed: ‘No man, however highly civilized, can listen for very long to African drumming, or Welsh hymn singing, and retain intact his critical and self-conscious personality ... if exposed long enough to tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end by capering and howling with the savages.’

The hypothesis that the soccer tribe is an elementary form of human solidarity explains this universality. On this view, the soccer tribe expresses behaviours that began to emerge about a million years ago, when hominid males began to hunt in groups and the brain underwent rapid growth that made birth traumatic. In historical times, the sports tribe is a perennial. It appears in the earliest records of sporting events, which reach back to ancient Greece and China. In Rome, sport rivalries formed around chariot racing; commotions arising from competitions of these crowds was endemic. In Constantinople rivalries were so fierce that in 532 AD they erupted into a riot that took 3000 lives. The tournaments popular in medieval Europe were the scenes of joyous bloody combats between spectators and knights alike. In England the perception of ‘rietbale’ as a vexatious sport is of long standing. Between 1314 and 1667, thirty proclamations banned it. The records of Middlesex Sessions show that in 1576 seven men were convicted for unlawfully instigating a football match that resulted in a great affray risking life and limb. In the nineteenth century horse racing was to Englishmen what chariot racing was in antiquity. At the turn of this century, 20 football clubs were closed as punishment for crowd misdemeanour.

The propensity to form a hierarchal, ritually articulated hunting pack is strongest in the years immediately after the onset of puberty, that is, about 15 to 19 when adolescent males differentiate from females by the release of androgens from the adrenal cortex. This is the sex and age group that has always been the muscle of armies and police. The sports tribe thrives upon threats and sham fighting. It takes as its totems the fierce animals, and its language is violent. Gladiatorial favourites are called Crusher, the Beast, the Terminator, and the like, while sports reporting abounds with adjectives of violence: cut-throat, slash, devour, shock, batter, crush, maul, pummel, blitz, humiliate. Older males enjoy all this vicariously. Young males tend to enact it. They are the sex and age group that account for about 85 percent of arrests for violent crime in OECD countries and about an equal percentage of arrests for riots. Their offences are predominantly personal assault, especially on police and women, vandalism, and theft. If you accept that the police and their rules are a rival tribe, then these offences correlate well with the typical attack and predation activities of hunters.

The tribe marks its identity by dress codes, greetings, argot, body decoration and other distinctive signs. Its psychological core is solidarity in aggression, which entails risk-taking as a sign of masculinity, and ritualised ingroup and outgroup tournaments displaying skill in attack and defence. The tournaments are a testing ground for male traits valorised by warriors of all cultures: self-control, endurance in hardship, cunning, courage, and ferocity. Similar patterns of tournaments are observed among many species. For species that exhibit no male bonding, the tournaments establish social dominance, which in turn establishes priority of access to females. That these tournaments focus the attention of same age reproductive females is some evidence that they are indirect courtship rituals. For species that hunt in groups, tournaments test and confirm leadership. Despite their lethal potential, blood is not usually shed. Thus sport tribe’s ‘aggro’ evokes what Peter Marsh calls the ‘illusion of violence’ that terrifies the good bourgeois and prompts solemn public inquiries about how to control the hooligans.

Another frightening attribute of sports rowdies is their marked depreciation of females and propensity to racial aspersions. Is the male hunting band innately fascist?
The answer of course is that it’s the other way around. Fascists affirmed tribal or national particularity against the universalism of bourgeois political culture. By creating rituals that glorified masculinity and affirmed the Friend/Foe as fundamental, these movements encouraged the fighting spirit.

How does the identification of the sport tribe as an expression of the male hunting band assist in making a new start on collective behaviour? It resolves the intractable problem about where collective behaviour begins. Sociologists identify collective behaviour by contrasting it with institutional behaviour. Social interactions in institutions are said to derive from norms, rules, and roles. Crowds constitute a mode of social interaction in which such common norms are missing. Their associativity is deemed to be relatively spontaneous and transient. This is why sociologists do not construe the police as a second crowd. However, the institutional-spontaneous distinction tends to unravel from both ends. Many crowds, like the sport tribe, are durable, ritualised, and are sometimes highly organised. Thus they are quasi-institutional. They become fully institutional as festivals and other conventional gatherings. So the critical defining distinction disappears. The police, for their part, are often observed to ‘degenerate’ into a ‘riotous mob’ or ‘police riot’ while carrying out crowd control duties. The terms I have placed in quotation marks are the language of civilians unaware of what hand-to-hand combat looks like. It looks very like a police riot unless the other side is equally armed, in which case it looks like a mêlée. Again, the critical defining distinction between institutional and collective behaviour disappears. The alternative proposed here replaces that distinction with a typology of the ‘elementary forms’ of human social behaviour. The hunting band, which is age and sex specific, is one such form. The police, the military unit, the sport team, sport barracking, and hooligans are all expressions of this form.

It is characteristic of ‘elementary forms’ that their norms are ‘emergent’ from the group’s interaction. They emerge, on the present hypothesis, from cognitive-motivational-behavioural programs laid down in evolutionary phylogeny. The demonstration to this effect is animal social behaviour, and experimental investigations of its biologic substrates. There are many animal models of the formation and dissolution of human social bonds. Their emergence is not essentially problematic. To stay with the present example, associations of young males are usually instigated by older males presiding over schools, the police, the military. These associations are meant to nurture young males to mature male behaviour. But in the absence of such sponsorship they form anyway; and not infrequently they form outside approved channels in defiance of parental authority. The known hormone markers of adolescence, when taken in conjunction with animal models, establish the naturalness of this behaviour.

An apt test of male hunting band hypothesis is the absence of a counterpart for same-age females. Young females are not directed outward to predation but inward to birthing. This they cannot do alone. They bond to male providers and participate in mixed-sex family-based coalitions. Human males have evolved a reciprocal compensation expressed in nurturing the young (found in no other primate), pair-bonding, and group defence of women and children. A troupe of females with babes in arms do not make an effective attack or defence force, but they are effective in coalitions.

Social experiments meant to break these patterns confirm their tenacity. In the Kibbutz, women were excluded from fighting. They entered strongly into community decision-making, but over time the traditional division of participation—men in the public sphere and in mechanical work, women in the household—reasserted itself. Few females elect to participate in contact sport. None, apparently, participates on professional teams. Females who organised to carry out protest politics, as the
Suffragettes did, sometimes used the language of attack and the metaphors of war, but they did not use the male aggro repertoire and did not brawl with police or other groups.\textsuperscript{21}

Political crowds, of which revolutionary crowds are one, are not male bands. They are mixed sex, mixed age, and this spectrum mirrors the age and sex distribution of the primordial human community. Does the primordial community express an ‘elementary form’ of human social behaviour? Durkheim believed that it did. More precisely, he believed that it expressed \textit{the} elementary form of social behaviour. This view of the matter led to attempts to derive all other forms of human sociability for the one. Such monism will not do. Ethologists recognise perhaps a dozen elementary forms, each with its distinctive cognitive-motivational-behavioural program embedded in the biological substrate.\textsuperscript{22} The result of this difference is that the behavioural repertoire of the political crowd is rather more distinctive than in Durkheim’s typology. I mention here but two attributes. The first is that the political crowd is fundamentally a \textit{ritual} crowd whose ritual act is the affirmation of group solidarity. The character of this affirmation can be diverse because the solidarity is affirmed against the back-drop of in-group conflict and coalitions with out-groups. We may say that the political crowd promotes sociability. The second attribute is the political crowd’s pacific character. I do not mean that it is unaggressive; it can be very threatening indeed and may cheer horrendous violence. But it is a bark without a bite because it is not a fighting unit. The human fighting unit is the male band. This means, if I may telescope my story, that while the political crowd is an apt vehicle for \textit{l’esprit révolutionnaire}, it can make no revolution that requires the directed use of force. If this is so, the dynamics of revolutions must reflect the difference between these two elementary forms of social solidarity.

\textbf{Theory of Revolution}

How this new beginning may be applied to elucidate revolution? Let us begin with by acknowledging that the theory of revolution is among the more perplexed topics in political science and political sociology.\textsuperscript{23} Some theories subsume revolution under a more general theory of change. \textit{The Federalist Papers}, to mention an apt case, interprets revolution in terms of the dynamics of political competition and coalition formation. It articulates revolution in its double aspect as change of government and change of regime. Provision for regular elections was meant to ventilate popular pressures that historically were seen to have caused revolutions, while the presumed popular legitimacy of democratic government was expected to be a prophylaxis against \textit{coup d’état}. A constitutional avenue for regime change was provided in the amending power of the Constitution. War was also recognised as an avenue for regime change, but that contingency is extra-constitutional. On this theory of revolution devised by revolutionaries, there is nothing distinctive about the event, unless it be that the justice question is placed in high moral focus but is actually settled by force. It is the same with war.

In large-scale developmental theory, revolutions are local motions in a mighty tide of change. Even regimes and government itself are not so important because the social change that counts historically occurs through the complex interaction of institutions, adaptive selection, and modes of production.

The emotional resonances imparted to the term ‘revolution’ by the events in France—hedonic enthusiasm alternating with the jutting jaw of justice claims—turned it into an attractive label for any desirable change. Since elites on the prowl for a government tend to be adept in public relations, there is scarcely a political force in
the past century that has neglected to promote itself as revolution. Even the dour mullahs pronounced the deposition of the Shah to be a revolution, as indeed it was.

The semantic jungle created by the promiscuous use of the term 'revolution' embarrasses theorists. To illustrate. Mobilisation of the masses to seize power is a widely accepted marker of revolution. What then is one to make of a revolution from within a revolution, such as China’s Cultural Revolution? Was it a ‘real’ revolution, or was it a long forced attendance at a revitalisation crusade? Does the decampment of the masses from communes to free enterprise constitute another revolution in China? Consider too that many leaders did not effectively mobilise the masses until after they had government; Mussolini, Peron, and Nkruma are examples. India achieved independence after fifty years of agitation and political mobilisation. Gandhi choose not to apply the revolution label until the very last moment. Was it nevertheless a revolution? Bourgeois societies apply the label to all manner of social and economic change, most trivial, some basic. Are processes such as the information revolution rightly called revolutions because of their enormous contribution to the coordination of administrative and productive activities? If we say No, how do we tell?

With these sceptical preliminaries, let me review several theories of revolution.

Birth pangs of modernity hypothesis
This is the classic theory according to which the ‘age of revolution’ was an effect of the misfit between the autocratic, patronial structures of the ancien régime and the emergence of the market economy, fluid social movement, and rapid social change. It is classic because just about everyone, from thinkers to publicists, subscribed to it in the last century, and most historical sociologists subscribe to it today. The best prima facie empirical evidence is the multitude of Latin American revolutions. But Argentina is not the dynamo of modernity. The major industrial powers—Japan, Germany, the United States, Great Britain—were never close to worker-led revolution. In Europe only France prima facie fits the model if we agree with Lenin, as I think we should, that the Russian Revolution was theoretically aberrant. That Japan grafted capitalism directly upon its feudal social order suggests that the revolutionary path was not dictated by underlying institutional necessities in France or Russia.

The social disequilibrium hypothesis
Parsonian sociologists tend to explain revolution as a sudden disequilibrium in a social system assumed to derive its cohesion from an equilibrium in the flow of demands and resources, in the allocation of status, and in economic mobility. Well, the Great Depression created the stipulated disequilibria in all capitalist countries, but none, save possibility Germany, experienced a revolution as a result. Many nations have experienced traumatic disequilibria without a revolution, major military defeat being prominent among these cases. The disequilibrium hypothesis is disconfirmed by these facts.

The political conflict hypothesis
Pluralist political scientists treat revolution as a hiatus in the legitimacy of government and its monopoly on force. These ruptures are said to occur when the normal processes of competition and conflict resolution can no longer contain the multitude of forces in society. This theory, even when fleshed out, smacks of ‘just so’ stories. Legitimacy crises certainly jeopardise a government or a regime. But what are the recognition criteria of a legitimacy crisis? Military defeat is often a legitimacy watershed, yet Nasser and Saddam Hussein survived major defeats while the Iranian throne went under in a sea of prosperity and national prestige.

Psychological hypotheses
The most influential psychological theory applied to analysis of revolution and civil disorder in the post-war period is Relative Deprivation theory and its underpinning, the
frustration-aggression hypothesis. The later hypothesis was proposed in 1939 as a comprehensive theory of aggression. Neil Smelser’s influential *Theory of Collective Behavior* (1963) transposed the theory into the language of sociology. The theory achieved official status when it was adopted by the Kerner Commission and shortly there after the Eisenhower Commission on civil disorders. One of the advisers to the Eisenhower Commission, Ted Robert Gurr, wrote the theory into a systematic statement in his 1970 study, *Why Men Rebel*. The theory attracted considerable attention in international relations circles, both academic and governmental. Today Gurr heads the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland. This Center works with the US Institute for Peace in collaboration on a large data collection and analysis project entitled Minorities at Risk.\(^{24}\)

According to Gurr, the ultimate term of rebellion is the use of violence—revolution, civil war, or guerilla war—to remove an obnoxious government. Lesser forms include manifestations of disaffection, such as industrial strikes, boycotts, non-violent harassment campaigns, and the like. The cognitive and action focus of rebellion is grievance, and grievance is a complaint of deprivation.

What is deprivation? Gurr recognises the common range of material and social conditions: poverty and malnutrition, disease, squalor, unemployment, impaired nurturing groups (especially the family), brutalisation by overlords, and cultural discrimination. None of these conditions, or all occurring together, are sufficient to trigger group conflict. Abject poverty and overlords may be thought to be irremediable or divinely ordained, and so on.\(^{25}\) The releasor of discontent is perception of discrepancy between value expectations and actual social capacity to acquire the goods that they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining.\(^{26}\) This comparative social judgment about just desert is the yeast of disaffection. Without it the identification of competing groups or governments as frustrating agents could not be made. The judgment is also the reason why the theory bears the name *Relative Deprivation*. The shared perception of deprivation, not a particular group’s scoring on social indicators, triggers struggle. It is no use responding to a grievance with the assurance, ‘you never had it so good,’ even when this is true. The emotional arousal of grievance, which arises from the comparison of ego’s social position with others, is the mind stuff that validates grievance. Meliorating an aroused group’s condition by meeting grievances half-way does not necessarily lessen the grievance and may even increase its intensity. Similarly, conditions that decrease average value position without decreasing value expectations increase deprivation, hence grievance. The values to be maintained and strengthened are implied by the list of deprivations just mentioned. But these values are not equi-potent in mobilising collective expression of grievance. The fact that the mobilising agency is a social group rather than individual means that any grievance will express ‘deep-seated grievances about group status.’\(^{27}\)

Gurr’s basic motivational proposition is that the greater the frustration felt by a mobilised group, the greater the quantity of aggression likely to be directed against the perceived source of the frustration. Frustration in turn is the psychological consequence of deprivation, which can be measured on a gradient of intensity. The greater the intensity, the more prolonged and intense the violence that the deprived are likely to express. Violence is rational to the extent that it is purposive; when the object is obtained, violence is replaced by ordered participation in community life.\(^{28}\) The model predicts that rebellion is least likely where relative deprivation (that is, comparative perception of deprivation) is least; but also that protest will increase in regimes that are less repressive and but open to minority representation.

Frustration is defined as an interference with goal-directed behaviour; aggression is an attempt to injure someone. The impulse to respond to frustration by attacking the
frustrating agent is, he says, founded in the biology of men and animals.\textsuperscript{29} The attack is directed toward removing the cause of frustration; it is thus instrumental toward satisfaction. Since human instrumental aggression always has a social learning component, the hypothesis is consistent with learning aggressive techniques. But there is a drive element in the theory as well. Attack ‘is an inherently satisfying response to anger if the attacker [harms] his frustrator, his anger is reduced, whether or not he succeeds in reducing the level of frustration per se.’\textsuperscript{30} The drive element creates the possibility of displacement of instrumental aggression by fixated or compulsive aggression. Here we encounter motivational rigidity that expresses attack stereotypy regardless of changes in goal objects or even removal of the frustration. Answering to animal models of fixation are fanatical groups unable to give up the fight even when the war is over. Further variation on the hypothesis is animal models establishing that flight, regression, and resignation may be alternatives to attack.

Since RD theory is meant to be an applied science, let us consider briefly its practical wisdom. The theory tends, Gurr says, more to the alleviation of human misery than to its perpetuation. It gives little justification for reliance on tactics of repressive control. ‘There is a wealth of evidence and principle,’ he states, ‘that repressive policies defeat their purposes, in the long run if not in the short run. The public order is most effectively maintained—it can only be maintained—when means are provided within it for men to work towards the attainment of their aspirations. This is not an ethical judgment, or rather not just an ethical judgment. It approaches the status of a scientific law of social organisation’\textsuperscript{31}

The frustration-aggression hypothesis enjoys a prima facie plausibility derived from the impulse to retaliate on those who threaten or injure us intentionally. It is perhaps the psychological core of retributive justice. Recognition of this impulse is the core of non-violent civil disobedience, which is predicated upon controlling it. It does not follow, however, that this individual motivational hypothesis plus the relative deprivation supplement is a plausible explanation of significant random or directed aggression or civil violence and revolution. Let us consider some discrepancies between the theory and the data.

- The model does not fit the two decade-long phase of civil disobedience politics in G-7 nations. Grievances abounded and frustration there was aplenty. But the grievances were not expressions of one group’s deprived status relative to another group. The SES status of protest leadership was middle class to upper middle class (including personnel of the black civil rights movement). The key issue concerning status legitimacy was a global vision of political participation alternative to the narrow, clubbish institutions of representative democracy. Furthermore, the fundamental ethical and political orientation of civil disobedience was non-violent. It was, one might almost say, a collective determination to demonstrate that the frustration-aggression hypothesis is not a general truth. The anti-nuclear movement, the Vietnam War protest, the civil rights movement, and the green movement projected a common vision of a future society free from war and violent conflict. But visions are not a recognised factor in the model, and sublimated aggression is not an element of the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

- The model tacitly assumes that the violence and aggression that count in politics comes from below. This appeared to be the case in the Third World during the phase of decolonisation, where indigenous peoples challenged European hegemony. But it does not represent the typical pattern in the post-colonial phase of Third World politics. Political competition is not vertical but lateral. It is a struggle of military-led ethnic and religious groups for relative status in loosely defined nation-states.

- The assumption that significant violence and aggression come from below is the perspective of governments. Yet in the use of violence, rebels are small beer.
Governments, commanding the police and military powers, are well ahead of rebels in wrecking terror and violence on persons, property, groups, and nations. Governments do not generally share the view that force and threat of force are self-defeating. If force is self-defeating, political power could not be constituted; but this is contrary to fact. Gurr's frustration-aggression dynamic seems to imply that a consensual society can eliminate the need for power. I am not aware of any government that has done so.

- It is a limitation of the model that in characterising group violence as reactive to a group-generated invidious comparison, it cannot explain the proactive coercion of governing elites. Political power is about the constitution and maintenance of group institutional dominance. Dominance competition is in turn a general feature of animal social systems. This competition is driven by behavioural programs written into the sub-cortical brain. An adequate account of motivation must incorporate this level of causality.

- Acceptance that the root cause of rebellions lie in people's feelings of frustration, discontent and despair uncritically accepts the propaganda of political elites who use this idea to camouflage dominance competition. This deception is frequently used. The American Revolution against so-called British tyranny is a case in point. The Declaration of Independence itemises a 27-count indictment of British misrule. When the indictment is investigated, it is found to be a compendium of fabrications and constitutional sophisms drawn from a decade of political vehemence. The Colonials enjoyed self-government, and the lower taxes than Englishmen. They were not embarrassed to complain of tyranny while holding a quarter of the population in slavery. And they got away with it. The RD model cannot distinguish real from mimicked deprivation, precisely because it is 'relative.'

- The phrase Why Men Rebel expresses the fact that all sustained organised violence, and most personal violence, is perpetrated by males. International statistics on violent crime show that the perpetrators are about 90 percent male; nearly all violent crime committed by females is against children, spouses and close kin living in the household. As I mentioned earlier, violent offences exhibit a spike in the 19-25 year age group (for both sexes), who account about 85 percent of violent crime. We are owed a sequel entitled Why Women Don't Rebel. Such a book is unlikely to appear because fifty years of frustration-aggression research has not detected the sex differences in the expression of aggression so apparent in crime statistics and in the organised use of aggression. The reason for this lapse is that deprivation theorists do not control their data for sex difference. The brain sciences, which do control for sex differences, have found some of the biological substrates of a range of aggressive expression so obvious in the behavioural indicators.

- The model ignores a spectrum of causes of human aggression. Probably the most important for the present question is hunger and malnutrition. The destabilising effect of sporadic regional dearth on French society was apparent long before the Revolution. Michelet and Taine agreed that hunger was a major instigator of civil disorder and that it inspired dreams of a new society of plenty. In more recent decades scholars have documented the social history of dearth in France and its nutritional effects, although the medical-behavioural history remains to be written. A sketch will suffice.

There is synergism between malnutrition and disease. Malnutrition impairs immune response, weakens epithelial barriers, and lowers lysozyme production. Malnutrition and diseases ramify in many, often subtle, ways on behaviour. Consider a simple case, hypoglycaemia, a condition estimated to afflict about 10 percent of people in well-nourished contemporary OECD countries. Hypoglycaemia, caused by low glucose levels, is usually chronic among hungry populations. The symptoms are diverse. Fainting, dizziness, fatigue, irritability, aggressiveness, anxiety, depression, impulsivity, and incapacity to act are common symptoms. Other less frequently
occurring states are euphoria and hilarity. Chronic hypoglycaemics may become habitually insulting and profane, and may experience full blown rage accompanied by violent acts. These symptom patterns are a good fit to much of the language of bread riots and civil disorders in France. 1789 was a dearth year. It needs little imagination to picture the public mood likely to result from 30,000 hypoglycaemics on the prowl in the environs of Rouen or Lyons.

This one consequence of malnutrition throws a different light on the simple model HUNGER DISTRESS-ANGER-FOOD RIOT that tends to prevail in social history. I don't suggest that the model is without warrant. Hungry women were quick to make social comparisons and to assail a grain factor or prefect. But relative to many malnourished populations who do not rebel, they had not reached, in substantial numbers, the physical depletion that hobbles political action.

- The model defines aggression and therewith violent aggression as reactive and retributive. There are other kinds. Dominance competition and hypoglycaemia have been mentioned. However, the biological literature is rich in explanations of cyclic and time-dependent aggression, seasonal and temperature-dependent aggression, aggression released by crowding, disease states, and emotional disorders. The frustration-aggression model includes none of the situation-dependent factors.

What conclusions may we draw from this review? It seems that revolution should not be treated as a special case in politics, eg, as breakdown of normal processes. It is best considered—along with insurgency and war—as one possible issue of ceaseless dominance competition and coalition formation. Most of the frameworks I have considered tacitly identify with the typical conviction of revolutionaries, that their program heralds a unique or special future. Experience shows this to be a momentary hope: successful revolutions are followed by governments that seek, like the governments that went before, to hold political competition within the bounds of the approved order. Revolutionaries become 'conservatives' from the moment they assume power. But since some consolidation of power within the revolutionary movement is requisite to making a revolution, every revolutionary affirms the 'conservative' principles of power centralisation and hierarchy. Truly 'radical' political change would abolish power and hierarchy, which is indeed just what a number of revolutionary movements espoused.

The relation of revolutionary crowds to revolutions is circumscribed by the fact that crowds as such wield no organised power. 'People power' can nevertheless be a mighty force. Perhaps the most singular demonstration of this power in recent decades was the wilting of the Shah's autocracy under six months of the mass protests. Most were peaceful demonstrations or strikes, but they occurred in nearly every Iranian city. Street fighting occurred only in the closing days, and that was between military units. The government changed hands without storming the palace or liquidating the elite. The Shah was obliged to vacate the throne because he could find no man or faction willing to govern in his name. The crowds had, by their massed voices, destroyed the legitimacy of his dynasty. This effect did not turn on an ideological struggle of Autocracy vs Democracy. The Western press viewed it in these terms because our habits of thought identify protest with democratic political structures. However, the only democrats on the scene were a small party of westernised, foreign-educated liberals. The masses were fervent Muslims who wanted a return of theocratic autocracy. The massed voices, I suggest, reasserted the primitive solidarity implicit in every organised society. The reassertion took the form of an ostracism ritual that simultaneously legitimated the rule of the mullahs. This, I believe, is the 'elementary form' of political crowds.
NOTES

   (Cambridge, 1988).
14. Smith, Sport and Violence, p. 28.
The McConne Commission, the Kerner Commission, and the Milton Eisenhower Commission on US riots found that the typical rioter was a young black male, a local resident, unskilled and unemployed, with an arrest record. His targets are the police and symbolic white-owned property. These youths nearly always provided the ‘spark’ or ‘flashpoint’ of a riot, often by attacking police making an arrest. These youths were opposed by ‘counter-rioters’ comprised of white and black adults. For a discussion see Ted Robert Gurr (ed.), Violence in America, vol 2., Protest, Rebellion, Reform (Newbury Park, 1989), pp. 333ff. For the statistics on young males and the violent crime, see James Q. Wilson and R.J. Herrnstein, Crime and Human Nature (New York, 1985), pp. 461–66.


The sexual attraction of athletes and rock musicians is legend. Some boast of having bedded thousands of eager young women.


Among these forms are: the mother-infant bond, the male-female pair bond, sibling bonds, twin bonds, the family bond, adolescent same sex peer bond, adolescent mixed sex peer bond, kinship bonds, the male hunting band, ethnic bonds, and perhaps four or five types of coalitions. See I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Human Ethology (New York, 1989), and A. H. Harcourt and Frans de Waal, Coalitions and Alliances in Humans and Other Animals (New York, 1992).


Ibid., p. 13.

Ted Robert Gurr, ‘Why Minorities Rebel’, p. 166. Gurr’s model mingles in another another theory known as the Social Comparison theory. It surfaces in his definition of relative deprivation as involving a comparison by one group of its status and position relative to other groups. Gurr supposes that perceptions of invidious status position induce ‘cognitive dissonance’ that acts as a frustration agent; see J. Olson, C. Herman, and M. Zanna, Relative Deprivation and Social Comparison (Hillsdale, NJ, 1986).

Leonard Berkowitz’s recent reformulation of the frustration-aggression hypothesis could accommodate social comparison theory, although he does not mention it. See Leonard Berkowitz, ‘Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation’,
Psychological Bulletin 1989 (106), pp. 59–73. Gurr does not observe that the sense of relative deprivation can occur anywhere on the social scale—its common name is ‘envy’—and hence there is no end in principle to demands made by the ‘sense of justice’. See Helmut Schoeck, Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour (Indianapolis, 1987). Biologically speaking, social comparison is one psychological expression of resource competition. The fundamentals of competition are between parents and offspring, between sibs, between spouses, and mate competition. The literature is quite vast, but see R.D. Masters and Margaret Gruter (eds), The Sense of Justice: An Inquiry into the Biological Foundations of Law (Newbury Park, CA, 1992); J. van der Dennen and V. Falger (eds), Sociobiology and Conflict: Evolutionary Perspectives on Competition, Cooperation, Violence and Warfare (London, 1990); Laura Betzig, Despotism and Differential Reproduction: A Darwinian View of History (Chicago, 1986).

Gurr, Why Men Rebel, p. 32. Gurr believes that aggression is primarily learned: ‘violence is a learned response, rationalistically chosen and dispassionately employed, is common to a number of recent theoretical approaches to collective conflict’. It is purposive, intended to destroy a ‘hated social system’. These statements are not consistent with the fact that young males account for about 85 percent of arrests for violent acts.

Ibid., p. 33.

Ibid., p. 34.

Ibid., p. x.

For an analysis, see Hiram Caton, The Politics of Progress: The Origins and Development of the Commercial Republic, 1600–1835 (Gainesville, 1988), pp. 478–91. It may also be noted that the legend of exploitative capitalists was invented by progressive factory owners in political competition with other factory owners (ibid., pp. 541–54).

Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner, Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective (New Haven, 1984); Freda Adler (ed.), The Incidence of Female Criminality in the Contemporary World (New York, 1984); Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, Homicide (New York, 1988).


A field study of the aggregate social effects of hypoglycaemia exists. It was made on the Qolla Indians of the Peruvian Andes. The exceptionally high level of social conflict among these people was found to be due a genetically derived instability in glucose homeostasis; Moyer, p. 59.