

MODERN REVOLUTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF A POLITICAL PHENOMENON. By *John Dunn*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972. xiii, 346 pp. \$14.50, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

To vary slightly Samuel Johnson's original insight, the significant thing about a talking dog is not what he says but the fact that he talks. Perhaps it is from this point of view that we should observe, and applaud, the spate of books about revolution that have appeared in the 1960s and 1970s after so many decades of neglect of the subject by scholars. This book is a typical specimen of the genre. In 257 pages of text the author gives us before-and-after essays (introduction and conclusion) on the phenomenon of revolution, and in between supplies eight chapters on the revolutions that have occurred in Russia, Mexico, China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Algeria, Turkey, and Cuba. The individual studies are original, if trendy, and the undergraduate who reads this book will at least profit from a single point of view and comprehensive footnotes. There is also appended a forty-page bibliography on revolution, which the author candidly tells us "contains a number of items . . . which I have not even contrived myself to see at all." In short, this book is an introductory survey and possibly a useful tool for teaching.

My disappointment lies in the fact that talking academics, including the one under review ("Director of Studies in History, King's College, Cambridge"), set for themselves such modest goals. This book is by an historian who has decided to set straight his social science colleagues. He tells us in a preface that his book will provide "an understanding of why the bland professional claim of political scientists or political sociologists to aloof detachment in the face of these phenomena [revolutions] must be in such bad faith" and that "it is thus possible that the present work may make it slightly easier for sociologists or political scientists with an interest in revolutionary phenomena to develop greater delicacy in their grasp of the intricate problems. . . ." Even though sectarian questions on the "delicacy" of political scientists hardly seem to be what causes our contemporaries to read books about revolution, what solution does the author propose to remedy these social science deficiencies? Well, it is history: "The tradition of historical analysis of concrete revolutionary phenomena happens in the case of modern revolutions to have reached levels of understanding which are incomparably superior, intellectually, to anything attempted in any other discipline which has attempted their analysis."

Two examples of this incomparably superior method will suffice: (1) "All political elites today in the world are subject to some measure of challenge for sheer incompetence, though many countries including the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. possess reasonably effective ways of removing the incumbents without endangering the political system itself. It is hard to know which is the more successful in this respect. The last days of Stalin and the second Eisenhower administration disclose striking limitations in each" (p. 22 and n. 50); and (2) "How long can it be meaningfully said that a 'revolutionary' process persists? If the battered bureaucrats of the Kremlin are still honorary revolutionaries may there not be hope even for Richard Nixon?" (p. 262, n. 3). Is it possible that Professor Dunn has confused history with journalism?

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