

# MAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT

An Empirical Theory of Politics



**Carl Joachim Friedrich**

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An  
Empirical  
Theory  
of  
Politics

to Hannah Arendt

In friendship -

Carl Joachim Friedrich

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CARL JOACHIM FRIEDRICH

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normative argument over the "right" it has been very generally conceded that "conscience," especially when religiously motivated, entitled a man to nonparticipation at least from a moral viewpoint, provided he was willing "to take the consequences." The entire issue of "conscientious objection" to military service, even in fully constitutionalized states, has been developed in this perspective. The vast passive resistance of Gandhi's noncooperation was carried forward on the basis of this belief,<sup>15</sup> as was the passive resistance of Germans to the French invasion of the Ruhr (1923). It has been extensively practiced by religious dissenters throughout the world. Such passive resistance can be a very effective means of undermining the authority as well as the legitimacy of a regime, by dramatizing the divisions in the underlying system of values and beliefs. To the extent that power is affected by the corrosion of authority and legitimacy, such resistance may actually destroy an established rule. In the analysis already referred to, Merriam, after discussing Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi and listing the several forms of protest, concludes that "the range of possibilities in this direction is very great, and has never been thoroughly explored. . . ." <sup>16</sup> These situations urgently call for more detailed analysis. They show the inherent weaknesses of power, and while it may be too much to say that power is "weakest" when it uses violence, and strongest when using the various modes of persuasion, as Merriam does, surely the correlation between degrees of power and resistance is not a simple one. Empirical analysis of power shows (Chapter 9) that the willing consent of those who are "poor" in power is a very real source of power. In any case, it seems clear that passive as well as active resistance, when organized and continuous, is likely to weaken any political order. When the objective of such resistance groups becomes that of overthrowing the regime and replacing it with another, sedition, rebellion and revolution are the successive stages of the process. Positive political action replaces negative action. Revolutions are successful rebellions; they are also rebellions on a more comprehensive scale. In fact, in terms of the comparative analysis here pursued, wherein all political processes are seen as occurring in parallel modes on the several levels of the individual person, the group or the comprehensive political order, revolutions are the cataclysmic manifestations of a process that occurs continually on a smaller scale as changes are delayed in personal and group relations. In this perspective one might say that many small revolutions prevent a big one; for as various factors of the social order are "revolutionized" by way of the functioning political process, the tensions which would make the forcible "overthrow" of the political order necessary are alleviated by being "channeled" into constructive operations. That is why

<sup>15</sup> Gandhi, 1948; Gandhi (ed. Jack), 1956; Zacharias, 1933.

<sup>16</sup> Merriam, 1934, p. 175.