

# Editorial Foreword

REVOLUTION is one social phenomenon almost always considered in comparative terms. As a process, it is crucial to theories of social change. As a kind of event, it lends itself to that typologizing of which social scientists are as fond as scholastics. Despite the attraction of the subject, however, the results of all this attention have been mixed. The application of a general model to particular cases can be enlightening (note, for example, the treatment of the fifteenth-century revolt in the Netherlands by Gordon Griffiths and George Nadel in *CSSH*, 2:4); yet the very concept of revolution remains elusive. Willingness to treat it comparatively has not brought agreement about what to compare.

In a sweeping review of the literature Perez Zagorin argues that revolution has become a favorite cultural myth, the term itself overloaded with different meanings. Comparative analysis, he concludes, must proceed in terms of specific types and aspects of revolution. Social revolution becomes just such a type in Theda Skocpol's carefully constructed analysis of the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions in which mechanisms of social control and the requirements of the state become the objects of comparison. Elbaki Hermassi, however, takes a somewhat different tack, emphasizing revolution as social transformation and distinguishing between early and late revolutions and between central and peripheral societies. Concerned especially with the contemporary world, he picks up some of the points that emerged in José Moreno's and Edward Friedman's discussions of revolution in Bolivia and Cuba (12:2) as well as many of the issues important to the numerous analyses of modernization that have appeared in these pages.

DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES are most familiar as a measure of human behavior and a crucial indicator of the social environment, but they can also open important questions of the relationship between social attitudes and behavior. John Luckacs raised such issues in his treatment of fertility rates during World War II (12:4); Angus McLaren turns the question around, using the reaction to arguments in favor of birth control

for insight into the British working-class culture being formed in the nineteenth century. Richard Tomasson starts from striking data on behavior to show that illegitimacy need not imply instability. His findings invite comparison with E. A. Hammel and Peter Laslett's essay on household size (16:1) and Andrejs Plakans' on Baltic households (17:1).