Aristotle: Causes of revolution in politics

* Highlight reasons why people revolt.
* Circle Types of governmental systems
* Underline all terms you do not understand

REVOLUTIONS arise from inequalities, numerical or qualitative--from a numerical mass claiming equality denied them, or from a minority claiming superiority denied them. A revolution may result either in a complete change of policy, or only in a modification of the existing one. An oligarchy is less permanent than a democracy, owing to factions within the oligarchic body.

In all revolutions, the conditions which leads up to them is the desire of the many for equality, and the desire of the minority for effective superiority. The purposes with which they are set on foot are profit, honor, or avoidance of loss or dishonor. The inciting occasions are many; jealousy of those who have wealth and honor, official arrogance, fear of the law or of its abuse, personal rivalries, failure of the middle class to maintain a balance, race antagonisms, antagonism of localities, and others.

In democracies, revolutions are due mainly to demagogic attacks on wealth, leading the wealthy of combine, and they result in the establishment of an oligarchy or of a tyranny, a 'popular' military chief seizing the power for him; or sometimes in replacing a moderate by an extreme democracy.

In oligarchies they spring from the oppressive conduct of the oligarchy, or from dissensions among the oligarchic body--e.g. exclusion of those who think themselves entitled to membership; attraction of the role of demagogue for individual members of the oligarchy; employment of mercenary troops, whose captain seizes power.

IN aristocracies they arise from the jealousy of those excluded from power, personal ambitions, and great inequality of wealth. In these, and in constitutional governments--the most stable of all--the main cause is the incomplete fusion of the three criteria, wealth, numbers and merit. The comparative stability of constitutions comes from the greater relative weight of numbers. They are, however, more liable to be revolutionized by external pressure. Equality in proportion to merit and security of rights are the true conditions of permanence.

For the preservation of politics, minor illegalities must be particularly guarded against: in oligarchies, personal rivalries, abuse of power by individuals (making short tenures of office advisable), insolence of privilege, tricks to deceive the masses; in oligarchies and constitutional states, excessive concentration of power in individuals or classes; oppression of the wealthy minority in democracies, and of the poor majority in oligarchies.

OF monarchy, the two types are the regal and the tyrannical. The king is the protector of the wealthy against spoliation, of the poor against arrogance. His own or his family's virtues or services have given him the kingship; his aim is excellence, and his authority is maintained by a citizen bodyguard. The tyrant is not a protector; his aim is his personal gratification.

Under monarchies, injustice and arrogance are the causes of insurrection, or fear, or contempt for incompetence, coupled with ambition. Tyrannies are overthrown by collision with external forces, or by private intrigues in the tyrant's entourage, and generally in the same sort of way as extreme oligarchies or extreme democracies. Kingships are endangered by intrigues in the royal family, by the King's personal incompetence, or by his developing tyrannical attributes. Hereditary monarchies are in particular danger from incompetents succeeding. But in a complex society, kingship proper is all but impossible.

A kingship is maintained by the royal self-restraint. The tyrant relies on the material and moral degradation, incapacity and lack of mutual confidence among his subjects, which he fosters by espionage, executions, taxation and the encouragement of license. Occasionally, the tyrant will seek to secure his position by playing the part and assuming the attributes of a king proper. The shrewd tyrant sees to it that he has the favor of the rich or of the poor.

Neither tyrannies nor oligarchies have proved long-lived.