Anatomy of Revolution- The ‘Fever” model

The Anatomy of Revolution is considered historian Crane Brinton's finest work. In it, he attempted to establish a pattern that most revolutions follow, a sort of blueprint. He gathered data from four distinct revolutions: the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution (or Bolshevik Revolution), and the English Civil War. Using these revolutions as models, he came up with four phases that occur in an average revolution:

1. **Symptoms:** The middle class, considered by Mr. Brinton as the driving force behind revolutions, loudly expresses its anger over certain economic restraints placed upon it by the government. While these restrictions, such as the Navigation Laws in the American colonies, are not overbearing, they are enough to cause extreme anger. At this point, the government is also incredibly inefficient. The established bureaucracy is breaking down and is unable to effectively manage the country. This could be due to an inept leader like George III or to a chronic money shortage within the government. Finally, the ruling party suffers a desertion by the intellectuals, considered the conscience of society.

1. **The Rising Fever:** The rising fever is the escalation of the anger felt by the middle class. The people rise up at this point. The uprising culminates in a climatic battle, such as the storming of the Bastille or the Battles of Lexington and Concorde, and the current governmental structure collapses under the weight of financial debt and popular uprising. The moderates, or political center, then form a new government. However, the new moderate government proves unable to weather the problems facing it: the management of a nation, a financial crisis, drafting a new constitution, etc.

1. **Crisis:** The revolution reaches a head when the moderates, inept at the job of ruling a country, are forcibly and violently removed from power by the radicals, or the political left. At this point, the Reign of Terror begins as the ultra-radicals set about violently exterminating all opposition. In addition, the new government usually embroils itself in a war in its attempt to spread the ideals of the revolution. The revolution is also beginning to lose steam, with the people only supporting it because of the constant threat of purges. Plus, because of an ever-worsening economic crisis, the revolutionaries are facing an ever-growing internal threat.

1. **Convalescence:** With the revolution winding down, the country now enters a period of recovery. A strong, central ruler, such as George Washington or Stalin, comes to power in the new government and begins the process of stabilizing the country. The most violent leaders of the revolution, such as Robespierre, are either discredited or executed. However, the moderates are generally granted amnesty. The people also begin to throw off any remaining signs of the revolution, radically changing their dress and way of life in an attempt to forget it. In the process they abandon many of the radical beliefs held by the revolutionaries.

1. Mr. Brinton concludes that, ***in the end, most revolutions generally end up back where they started.*** Some new ideas emerge, the power structure shifts slightly, some reforms are undertaken, and the worst of the old order is removed. However, the status quo becomes one similar to the pre-revolutionary one as the ruling class again begins to grab power.

While Mr. Brinton did not create an absolute pattern that all revolutions follow, the American Revolution being a notable exception, he did create a general course that most follow. Despite criticism that Brinton used the French Revolution as a model, as every step described above happened perfectly in it, and fit the other revolutions to the French one, The Anatomy of Revolution has stood the test of time and remains one of the definitive Twentieth Century historical treatises. The Anatomy of Revolution was published, in its present form, in March 1966.