



War, Moral Integrity, and  
Principled Resignation

WILLIAM F. FELICE

## Perspectives on Resignation in Protest

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**How Do I Save My Honor? War, Moral Integrity, and Principled Resignation. By William F. Felice. Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2009. 222pp.**

Resigning in protest seems to be in the air these days. Paul Clement, former Solicitor General of the United States, resigned from his law firm when, in response to criticism from the LGBT community, the firm withdrew as counsel for defenders of DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act). Wendell Porter, an insurance company executive, resigned and did TV ads supporting a public option in health care reform proposals. Robert McNamara's recent death renewed wonderment about his decision not to resign in protest despite his grave doubts about Vietnam policy. The movie *The Informant* and the current financial crisis have people talking about whistle-blowers. Apple, PG&E, and others have resigned from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in protest over differences about climate change policy. And in the book everyone in the White House purportedly has been reading, *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam*, Gordon Goldstein describes Bundy's failed attempt to resign after his advice contributed to the Bay of Pigs fiasco (President Kennedy surprisingly "pulled him closer"). What are we to make of this?

A few of such incidents involve people being implicated in illegal acts, either as principals or as accessories. The duty to resign and not to participate is then clear. However, most resignations in protest involve acts about which there is no societal consensus as to their propriety, despite the certainty of the person resigning about the unethical or immoral nature of the acts. The person who is considering resignation in those circumstances would be "guilty" only by association, not as a party to the act. It is in precisely such situations that high organizational (and especially governmental) officials often find themselves. Should they stay despite finding a policy of the organization unethical, or should they resign? If they resign, should they also publicly protest the policy? It is this dilemma that this essay addresses.

1. Steven Weinberg, Nobel Laureate in physics, began a recent essay in the *New York Review*. "A few years ago, I decided that I needed to know more about the history of science, so naturally I volunteered to teach the subject" (i.e., the history of science) "Naturally." I wonder. After attending a two-week seminar at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on the topic, I began to put together a law school course on the impact of the Holocaust on the law. Lots of new reading, many

conversations, multiple drafts, and a little over a year later, a syllabus emerged ready for testing in the classroom. I certainly learned much, as Weinberg suggests, but it didn't seem at all "natural." Rather it was difficult, even discomfoting.

That experience and coming across William Felice's book, *How Do I Save My Honor? War, Moral Integrity, and Principled Resignation*, made me curious about one's personal responsibilities for actions of organizations or institutions of which one is a member. What might a course on how others think about and experience resignation in protest look like?

Felice's book, with its challenging title, certainly ought to be reviewed to see what it has to offer in this regard. The book begins with a brief description, in a page or two each, of the decisions of William Jennings Bryan and Cyrus Vance to resign as Secretary of State; Bryan over war preparations by President Wilson, and Vance over the decision by President Carter to attempt a military rescue of the U.S. personnel held hostage in Iran in 1979-80. Felice also discusses General Harold Johnson's decision to remain as Army Chief of Staff during the war in Vietnam. And there are longer discussions of the decisions of Secretary of State Colin Powell and Wayne White, deputy director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence & Research Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia to remain in the Bush government despite strong misgivings about its post-September 11th policies in Iraq. Additionally, there are briefer discussions of three Foreign Services Officers and two Army personnel, one an officer and the other an enlisted man, who resigned their positions. The longest chapter in the book is about several resignations from the Blair government.

Felice then discusses in one chapter "the ethics of political realism, deontology and human rights, Peter Singer's utilitarianism, and the neoconservative values of the Bush administration" (42), finding each wanting. He mentions specifically the continuing debate about the conflict between the duty of national security and the right of personal privacy. He acknowledges that many decisions about such conflicts are not grounded in or based on analysis of moral theory. Rather we often make such decisions as did Tevye in the musical, "Fiddler on the Roof," debating with himself and God about how to deal with the fact that his daughter is marrying a non-Jewish Russian soldier. He says, "on the one hand...; but on the other hand...; but on another hand..."

An anonymous reviewer reminded me that, especially for readers of this journal, a rejection of deontological reasoning about rights will elicit a "how" or a "why." Obviously each of the ethical approaches Felice rejects (42) has long been the object of intense philosophical debate. Rather than merely covering the standard ethical treatises, the course being constructed seeks a more grounded and personal understanding of the complexities of resignation in protest.

Felice recognizes that in times of war, people tend to retract whatever moral antennae they might use in other circumstances, and hunker down with the flag at the center. However, he does not discuss in depth the range of risks and rewards of resignation in protest. These are more completely developed in Weisband and Franck's classic study, *Resignation In Protest*. Nor does Felice discuss in depth the social psychology of authority and responsibility, which is developed in Kelman and Hamilton's *Crimes of Obedience*. Perhaps more basically, it seems to me that Felice's approach doesn't quite capture the human anguish in such decisions as the actors struggle with the uncertain personal and professional consequences of choosing between exit, voice, and loyalty (Hirschman 1980). As Felice frankly admits, he undertook his study fully persuaded that the Bush policies in Iraq

were cynical, based on lies, illegal, unwise, and immoral, all characterizations that are used in the book. He praises those who resigned, and has little or no manifest understanding of those who chose to stay and fight inside the administration. Felice is particularly harsh towards Secretary Powell, concluding after a twenty-page review of his public career that in choosing to continue in office, Powell's "moral principles suddenly vanished" (85). That said, the book is a suggestive introduction to a question of immediate relevance in a world of increasingly value-plural institutional identities: how does one save one's honor?

2. In *Resignation in Protest*, Weisband and Franck conclude that the policies of government that most needed scrutiny and revision after America's experience with Vietnam and Watergate are not the usual suspects—i.e. those having to do with campaigns and elections; rather, they are those having to do with the relationship between the President and his advisers. They see organizational loyalty and the need for efficiency and order as often coming into conflict with a team member's personal standards and values. Thus the individual, in a sense, faces four choices: stay and work within the system as best one can to resist or correct the course perceived as wrong; leave quietly; leave protesting the policy publicly; or stay until it is impossible to live with the situation (Weisband and Franck 1975: 55).

Weisband and Franck studied all senior White House and other senior U.S. political executives between 1900 and 1970. They identified 389 top American government officials who voluntarily resigned in mid-career. Of these, thirty-four (or 8.7 percent) resigned with a public protest. And of these thirty-four public-protest resignations, they concluded that only two moved the President to change course: the resignation in protest of Attorney General Elliot Richardson from the Nixon administration during the Watergate scandal, and that of Interior Secretary Harold Ickes in protest of President Truman's nomination of Edwin Pauley to be Under Secretary of the Navy. Ickes saw Pauley as nothing more than an agent of tidelands oil interests, and his appointment as an example of the corrupting power of money in government decision-making. Despite this miniscule number of "winning" resignations in protest, other such protests have functioned to expose an unconscionable government policy; to draw the public's attention to the importance of a hidden or insufficiently debated issue; and to supply the public with the inside information necessary to obtain an informed debate.

Whatever the impact of the resignation (or lack thereof) on the Presidents, the consequences for the person resigning in protest were substantial: only one was subsequently reappointed to a comparable position. Thus, their public careers were ruined. And since the private sector also values loyalty, efficiency, and order, few obtained comparable positions in the corporate world either. Some with the requisite credentials did, however, obtain positions in the academy or in think tanks.

Weisband and Franck also look at the more frequent practice of resignation in protest in Britain. They conclude that in significant part it is a function of the Parliamentary system. There, Cabinet and other high level officials have a somewhat independent base as elected members of Parliament, permitting them to remain in government, even if only as back-benchers.

Weisband and Franck hope to see the American presidential adviser system transformed from a tradition of saying yes to one of saying no much more often. They argue that such a transformation requires an increase in ethical autonomy on the part of advisers: a willingness to challenge the

thinking of those at the top. For better or worse, studies of obedience by Milgram (examined in Blass 2004), among others, and the common social disapproval of tattling or squealing all suggest that such willingness will be rare; and it is.

Other than moving towards a parliamentary system and hoping for a more positive societal attitude towards ethical autonomy in government, Weisband and Franck offer only one concrete suggestion. They suggest appointing people actively engaged in political-electoral processes rather than “the best and the brightest” to high advisory and decision-making positions. The involvement of politicians and activists in multiple and complex community-based relationships and roles makes them more open to conflicting points of view and the need to make decisions that reflect these variegated aspects.

3. In their book, *Crimes of Obedience*, Kelman and Hamilton take a social psychological approach to the broad questions of authority and responsibility. They focus on the structure and dynamics of authority. In authority situations, one party is entitled to make demands that obligate the other party to accede to those demands. For obedience to occur voluntarily, the order or demand must be perceived as emanating from legitimate authority; must activate a sense of commitment or obligation to that authority; and must be understood as the only way to meet that commitment or obligation.

After a sweeping review of the various sources in the Western tradition of both the duty to obey and the duty to disobey, Kelman and Hamilton conclude that a key to principled disobedience is divided authority, or separation of powers in constitutional terms. They conclude that competing authorities at least sometimes share some common allegiance to a higher authority, enabling them to see an alternative to blind obedience. For instance, a common authority shared by religious and secular authorities might be a god; a common authority shared by different governmental and private authorities might be a constitution.

Central to understanding the behavior of a person ordered to do something is recognition of the complexities of “attachment” that person has to the organization or system in which the order takes place. In brief, the authors identify and distinguish rule orientation (compliance with norms); role orientation (identification with those norms); and value orientation (internalization of the norms and underlying values).

In their final chapter, “On Breaking the Habit of Unquestioning Obedience,” Kelman and Hamilton follow through on these distinctions. To loosen the binding force of rule orientation, they recognize the value of empowering individuals through collective action, as recommended in the educational theory of Paulo Freire and community organizing (Kelman and Hamilton 1989: 326-27). Exposure to multiple perspectives is necessary to diminish the power of role orientation. Structural changes such as rotating assignments or tasking two persons or groups with the same challenge are recommended. Value orientation, which in one sense suggests unquestioning obedience and a complete loss of autonomy, at the same time is the key to understanding disobedience, at least in structures or societies that recognize divided authority. It is when these authorities come into conflict that disobedience to one of them becomes necessary. Thus, features like separation of powers, freedom of association, federalism, and more general rights are important, even essential, if resignation in protest is to occur.

4. But a genuine mystery remains, one hinted at by Kelman and Hamilton in the penultimate paragraph of their book. They very briefly describe a French Protestant village, Le Chambon, where hundreds of Jewish children and others were housed or led to safety under the guidance and inspiration of the local pastor, Andre Trocme, in the years of Vichy and Nazi rule. What is it that makes or permits such goodness to happen? Why do some people become “rescuers” of those in mortal danger? Why do they obey one authority and disobey another?

Thirty years ago, Philip Hallie published a detailed study of Pastor Trocme and Le Chambon, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*. After completing the book, he was not sure he understood how goodness had happened there. He did however offer the thought that narrative, plot, and character, the tools of novelists and activists, hold the key to understanding good and evil, its causes and consequences, and the ethical dimensions of the gray areas of daily routine where we spend most of our time.

The course we are constructing to better understand the ethics of a decision to resign in protest will do as Hallie suggests, and look to the thinking of novelists and activists. Felice himself seems share that insight, as he ends his last chapter with quotes from Dostoyevsky and Martin Luther King.

Surely, the world is a mess and a mystery. We as educators and scholars have some responsibility for the world as it is. It is our students who have been, are, or will be in positions of authority and power. In so many areas of scholarship today, traditional disciplinary boundaries impede and even distort understanding of complex questions. If things are to get better, we must question the particular experiential content of our courses and the structure of our curricula. In considering resignation in protest we need to be able to answer questions like: what kinds of conflicting pressures does a conscientious public servant face? (section 5); is it possible in the midst of circumstances that threaten the government or society to avoid inflicting harm on innocent people? (section 6); can a person preserve his or her integrity in the public forum? (section 7); what goes through a person’s mind when considering resignation in protest? (section 8). Rather than using Felice’s approach of a traditional moral treatise, it may be more illuminating to use a loosely structured approach, one that seeks to draw out from diverse sources some broader and deeper insights into the decision to resign in protest.

That being the case, this new course on the dynamics of resignation in protest will look at the writings of and about a novelist; several public intellectuals; a priest-poet; a psychiatrist; two European political dissidents; several British Tory parliamentarians; a Quaker; and a Hollywood screenwriter, among others.

5. Iain Pears’s novel, *The Dream of Scipio*, problematizes Cicero’s notion of the good statesman by unfolding the historical meaning of a manuscript written in the 5th century, lost until the 14th, and lost again until the 20th century. At first, this novel appears to be a story of love; in fact, it is a treatise on loyalty. In each of these three periods, Western civilization faced a potentially fatal threat—the barbarian invasions of Rome, the Plague, and the Nazi invasion of Europe. Pears's novel features three protagonists, one from each period, all of them public figures seeking a more private contemplative lifestyle. Each protagonist is drawn into a moral cauldron. In the ancient period, Manlius reluctantly enters into the efforts of fellow Roman aristocrats to negotiate with the barbarian invaders in order to avoid a self-destructive war. What can or should be sacrificed to

guarantee survival? In the medieval period, Olivier is the amanuensis to Cardinal Cecanni, a leading Churchman in Avignon. Cecanni is plotting with the English to pressure the Pope to return to Rome. Olivier discovers the plot and must decide whom he owes his greater loyalty. And in the modern period, Julien accepts a minor position in the Vichy government of the small town in which he lives, placing himself between his two life-long friends, the Mayor and a member of the Resistance. Each of these three choices involves the welfare, even the life and death, of a father or son, a (platonic) lover, or one's dearest friend, to say nothing of power and reputation.

The decision-making and its consequences unfold as a seductive literary tapestry. Each of the main characters is caught in the web woven by persons, institutions, events, norms, and values at moments of consequence. Without being preachy or didactic, Pears allows us to reflect on the paradoxes that result when one faces a choice between two incommensurate values (often a choice between two evils), especially in governmental positions of high authority.

For instance, after Manlius has sacrificed everything (possessions, positions, power, even family), Sophia taunts him for rationalizing massacring his son, his friend, and the Jews despite the wisdom she taught him. Manlius defends himself, arguing that he used the barbarians to control barbarism; that they were manipulated so that they actually preserved civilized values rather than destroyed them: "The Roman people submitted to barbarian rule, but the barbarian rulers submitted to Roman law" (Pears 2002: 387). Sophia responds as she turns and abandons him: "Do you think that the peace of a thousand cancels out the unjust death of a single person?" (389).

The novel also illustrates the powerful effect of role or position on judgment. The situation in the small town under Vichy's control finds Marcel, who is a Catholic and a collaborator as Mayor, Bernard, the atheist in the Resistance, and Julien, their mutual dearest friend caught in between as conduit for messages to and from each. Julien feels both his friends are engaged in the business of salvation and yet both are prepared to abandon humanity to achieve their goals.

For himself, "again he thought of resigning, registering his protest, but then once more, he thought of the cold, cruel man who was likely to take over his job. It was Marcel's noble form of blackmail to keep him in place" (Pears 2002: 251). It is this argument, that resignation in protest will be futile, that is perhaps the most daunting. The potential protestor is chided: no one will hear about your protest; the media doesn't care, nor does anyone else; no one will join you; rather, the person who takes your place will make matters worse.

In choosing which person or institution to commit to, thereby resigning from the other, each of the protagonists becomes enmeshed in patterns of destruction, and at the same time victim of the forces each one sought to influence.

6. At the cusp of the Cold War, Albert Camus famously asserted his desire to be neither a victim nor an executioner. He feared the choice was between hell and reason. He acknowledged his goal was utopian, but he also rejected the reality of what he called a "century of fear" (Camus 1991: 117). Camus sought a "relative utopia" where at least murder was no longer legitimate (murder defined as both the killing of innocent people and capital punishment) (121). He refused to murder, so understood, even as a last resort.

Can one have clean hands in the 21st century? Politicians and scholars have in various formulations agreed with James Turner Johnson that “all wars, of course, produce noncombatant casualties” (Johnson 1996: 65). It is the “of course” that gives urgency to Camus's challenge and that shocks one into recognizing the paradox in which realism is caught: wars to protect the innocent “of course” kill innocent people!

Felice quotes a passage from Sartre's play, *Les Mains Sales*, as an example of Machiavellian realism, in that there is a separate morality for the State, one that diminishes or eliminates personal autonomy, certainly in times of crisis like war. Hoederer (Sartre) explains the necessities of leadership to Hugo (Camus):

“You cling so tightly to your party, my lad! How terrified you are of sullyng your hands. Well go ahead then, stay pure! What good will it do and why even bother coming here among us? Purity is a concept of fakers and fraud. But you the intellectuals, the bourgeois anarchists, you invoke purity as your rationalization for doing nothing. Do nothing, don't move, wrap your arms tight around your body, put on your gloves. As for myself, my hands are dirty. I have plunged my arms up to the elbows in excrement and blood. And what else should one do? Do you suppose that it is possible to govern innocently?” (Felice: 46).

Daniel Berrigan, in *The Geography of Faith*, argues that there is a strong link between the public and the personal: where one chooses to stand, with whom we have our picture taken, etc., all say something about what we value. In that regard, I was struck by one of Sartre's taunts of Camus: “Why even bother coming here among us?”

While underground, resisting arrest for destroying draft records, Berrigan, a Jesuit priest and poet, ruminated with Robert Coles, the Harvard Professor of Psychiatry and Medical Humanities, on the ethical significance and the consequences implicit in our choice of place (Berrigan and Coles 2001). They spoke of the boundaries or anchors that family and profession set: how they keep us from the edge, from reaching across with compassion to those at or outside the margins. As we grow in our roles, especially professionally, there is an increasing risk of losing our personal autonomy. Weber's iron cage of bureaucracy, of unchallenged and eventually unchallengeable assumptions, closes in on us (Weber 2002).

Berrigan cautions against the dangers of an overly narrow professionalism. Complete and total dedication to professional standards can leave one blind to the context in which one is operating and the consequences of one's actions. Such tunnel vision, such lack of context, can distort the meaning of what one does or sees. For instance, L. Patrick Gray III, President Nixon's FBI Chief during the Watergate crisis, described his inability to see what was going on in the White House as a product of being *Caught in Nixon's Web* (2008).

The roles we assume or accept, whether as leader or follower, present us not only to others, but to ourselves. From the places where we choose to stand, we get many kinds of sustenance, including normative. Because we occupy many places at once (parent-child; employer-friend; soldier-humanitarian; citizen-believer), there are often conflicting norms to be complied with. When such conflicts occur, one is forced to choose. One of the relevant norms will have to be transgressed.

It is at this point that Felice's argument for an absolutist ethic on war breaks down. He concludes with the assertion that, "with the exception of acts of self-defense, the killing of one innocent person to benefit others is a violation of the foundational principle of the entire human rights project launched following World War II" (Felice 197). The obliteration bombing of German cities by the Allies and the atom bombing of Nagasaki obviously resulted in the deaths of many innocent people. Clearly, if the people being killed in self-defense are innocent, they are being killed to benefit others, in violation of their human rights! How can this killing be excused, no less justified? Felice not only fails to answer this question, but it appears it never occurs to him to ask it!

7. Often those who, because of an accumulation of perceived paradoxes and inconsistencies, or some ineffable insight, escape from the bureaucratic web choose to follow Socrates's advice in his *Apology*: if one "who really fights for the right (is) to preserve his life even for a little while, (he) must be a private citizen, not a public man." Is Socrates correct? Or can one preserve his or her moral integrity in the public forum? In fact, while it cost him his life, didn't Socrates do that very thing? Certainly, directly confronting or challenging the leviathan will result in being either a victim or an executioner. But maybe the iron cage and the contemplative cell are not the only possibilities.

The dissidents and leaders of political change in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the 20th century chose not to confront or even challenge (at least not directly) the ruling political regime. But they also remained committed to the truth as they experienced it. Thus, they consciously willed to live as if their society were reasonably free. George Konrad, the Hungarian novelist and essayist, called this *Antipolitics*. The Polish workers of Solidarity, the Czechoslovakian intellectuals of Charter 77, and others chose this path. Most were able to avoid being agents of oppression. They were able to retain their personal integrity while also affecting the public weal. Yet precisely because of their autonomy, many landed in jail, a few were killed, and all lost something of value, be it job security or the job itself, friends, and even family.

In his *Letters from Prison*, Adam Michnik reflects on the questions we have been considering. When offered the opportunity by the Polish communist government in the early 1980s to emigrate, Michnik chose to stay and remain a prisoner. Others like Czeslaw Milosz chose to leave. In one letter, Michnik explains that many fled Poland after the failure of the uprising in 1968. During the bitter arguments and accusations between and among the small bands of intellectual dissidents in the early 1980s, Michnik argued that "everyone was right" in the 1960s, both those who left and those who stayed (Michnik 1987: 20). But by 1982 the possibilities for change were different. The fate of Solidarity was the question. KOR, the Workers Defense Committee, had "lit the flame of selflessness, truth, and dignity" in many people (Michnik 1987: 23). People had placed their faith in KOR and had risked their peace and security in response to its actions and the arguments of its leaders. At that point, Michnik saw his situation as more than a choice between supporting Solidarity or protecting his own safety. It was a matter of "ordinary human decency and elementary loyalty" to remain and stand with those who were standing with him (Michnik 1987: 23).

Gandhi spoke a different language, that of "moral jujitsu." He went further in challenging the British Empire than did the European dissidents in challenging the Soviets. He identified laws that oppressed the people and acted as though the oppressive laws had no validity. The Salt March is a well-known example. Again, for some the immediate consequences were beatings, jail, and even

death. Gandhi relied on British values to temper the regime's reaction to the Indians' decision to live in the truth, as if they were free, something that was not available to the anti-Soviet dissidents.

These tactics of defiance were a form of resignation in protest, a withdrawal from the imposed status of subaltern, so to speak. Clearly, while there can be and have been grave consequences, despite Socrates's contrary conclusion, one can fight for the Right and the Good as a public person.

8. To this point we've tried to personalize and contextualize another Socratic notion Felice cites, but doesn't seem to accept: "Societies are not made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole" (6). Recognition of this fact, of human beings acting as best they can within the bounds of their "character," would seem to preclude finding everyone guilty of the crimes of society. Yet Felice states that, "in a properly functioning democracy, the crimes of that nation are the crimes of the citizens collectively" (31). The problem with Felice's view of things, like Camus's dilemma, is that it makes the moral burden of living, of life itself, almost too much to bear. Paradoxically, people begin to feel that it doesn't matter what they do, because either way they are guilty. Camus himself wrote reflections on suicide and murder; he wrote on moral choice in an absurd world; and he wrote on life and history as moving inexorably forward. Yet, when it came to the Algerian War, he couldn't decide where to stand: with the French and *pieur noir* (Algerian-born French citizens), or with the Algerians and FLN (the National Liberation Front). In fact, he stood with his mother, seeking a third way, so to speak, in the gamble that those who refuse to murder will somehow "prove to be stronger than bullets" (Camus 1991: 140)

Fortunately, much moral theory has rejected the kind of total connectedness of actions Felice seems to be assuming throughout his study. The great chain of being, of everything being connected to everything, has been rejected as a basis for decision-making. We have come to accept a substantial degree of relativism as a precondition for the functioning of a complex, diverse, value-plural democracy. At the same time, we recognize that there have to be at least two additional concepts in the mix if the freedom this moral minimalism promises is to be delivered: Law and the Good. While each of these, freedom, law, and the good, are contested concepts requiring essays of their own, there does appear to be a rough consensus among the sources we have looked at thus far (and those that follow) about one essential aspect of the philosophic and pragmatic conundrum resignation in protest represents. It appears there is something in everyone that at some point says, "No I cannot" or "Yes I must."

Let us put our government officials and others back into their positions of moral dilemma. However they determine it to be the case (another topic requiring a course of its own), they have come to recognize they are now working in and contributing to some degree to the perpetuation of an unjust regime, or being asked to participate in a morally repugnant act or program. That being the circumstance, when does one decide to resign in protest, to break with the regime in an open and public way, to present one's grounds for doing so, in effect announcing, "*J' accuse*"?

As was mentioned, Felice has a chapter on the stronger British tradition of resignation in protest. He discusses the many resignations over the Iraq war from the Blair government as a counter-point to the rare and less dramatic resignations from the Bush administration. He specifically mentions the brief newspaper reports of the resignations of Anthony Eden and First

Lord of the Admiralty Duff Cooper from the Chamberlain government. Helpfully, a fuller understanding of the British experience is now available in a recent book about the events before and after Munich and the thoughts and actions of those *Troublesome Young Men: The Rebels Who Brought Churchill to Power and Helped Save England* (Olson 2007). This book facilitates consideration of the diachronic aspects of the question of resignation, which the limited and synchronic mentions in Felice's book lack.

Anthony Eden, then Foreign Secretary, and a future Prime Minister, resigned in response to Chamberlain's decision to open direct negotiations with Mussolini. As he wrestled with his conscience, which "was at war with his ambition" (Olson 2007: 96), he was encouraged to resign by others committed to following his lead. It was expected by all that there would be major changes in policy if he resigned. But after resigning, Eden failed to lead. He articulated the reasons for his resignation in very vague and muted terms, explaining to allies that "I lack the spunk" to rally efforts to bring the government down (Olson 2007: 99).

Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty and an aggressive inside critic of Chamberlain's policies, eventually felt compelled to resign when the Prime Minister returned from Munich announcing "peace with honor." The only honor Cooper saw was in resigning in protest over the abandonment of Czechoslovakia. Cooper lost position and prestige. He was shunned by former colleagues because he had committed "the cardinal sin in his tight-knit world: disloyalty to his party and prime minister." (Olson 2007: 145).

There are at least ten other resignation scenarios Lynne Olson describes as she traces the causes and consequences, the fits and starts of the efforts of Tory Party loyalists to pressure Neville Chamberlain to resign as Prime Minister. Churchill himself joined the Chamberlain government at the start of the war and remained loyal to it. He refused to encourage critics despite his own sense of foreboding. And so on, as others faced a similar choice of resignation and professional and personal exile, or loyalty to policies and people they believed were "Gambling with the Life of the Nation," as Olson's Chapter 16 is titled. Other chapter headings convey the angst experienced by officials in such circumstances: "Our Own Soul Is at Stake"; "Retribution"; "The Misery of Doing Nothing"; and "In the Name of God, Go!"

## Conclusion

As we approach the end of the course, we have to return to Felice's question: "How do I save my honor?"

John Woolman, an American Quaker of the mid-eighteenth century, explains in his *Journal* why he felt moved to preach against slavery despite (or is it because of) the fact that many in his religious community were slaveholders. Before undertaking his crusade, he sought the blessing of the Elders of his Friends Meeting in New Jersey. He was concerned that he not commit the sin of singularity, an act that would tear at the fabric of the community he had obligations to as a member. In this instance, Woolman obtained the acquiescence, if not the blessing of the group. But one suspects that more often the person conflicted about his or her loyalties has the experience that Franz Jagerstatter had when he was considering refusal to take the oath of personal allegiance to Hitler required of all those drafted into the Nazi army. The local priest and others he consulted

advised or ordered that he take the oath. At such a point, group-think and peer pressure become powerful restraining forces. Nevertheless, Jagerstatter refused to take the oath and was beheaded!

Ultimately, regardless of the response from the relevant authority, the decision to resign in protest is an individual one. Felice quotes Joel Fleischman's essay, "Self-Interest and Public Integrity," in stating that there is no code "declaring society's view of the right course in every situation, so each of us must puzzle out for our self the moral solution to each dilemma we face" (Fleishchman 1981 in Felice: 14).

Felice presents "honor" as the standard or measure to guide decisions about resignation in protest. While the word has many meanings and usages, most of them imply a dichotomous judgment: either honor or dishonor. Felice certainly uses the term that way throughout his book. The experience and the readings in this course, however, make it clear that any decision to resign in protest ought to be more nuanced and less intuitive than Felice suggests. For instance, Pears would have us ask about both the short term and long term consequences of resignation; Camus would have us consider whether our position makes us an executioner, a creator of victims; Berrigan would have us ask whether the organization for which we work truly reflects our values; and Michnik reminds us that a decision to do a particular good act is at the same time a decision not to do other good acts.

Perhaps when all is said and done, there is no better guidance than that relied on by Ring Lardner, Jr. when, during the McCarthy period, he was subpoenaed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities and asked to provide the names of friends and acquaintances whom he knew to be communists. He refused, explaining that if he did so, "I'd hate myself in the morning" (Lardner 2000).

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