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Gurr, Ted Robert, Grabosky, Peter N., Hula, Richard C. *The Politics of Crime and Conflict: A Comparative History of Four Cities*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977. Pp. xii, 792. \$35.00

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As far as it goes, this is an honest book, filled with a catching enthusiasm. The promise of an enormous wealth of material, both dependable and easy of access, is no longer remote; several man-years spent in laboriously digesting small mountains of difficult source material are beginning to pay off. Especially striking, and convincing, is the way in which the various classes of documents supplement one another and can be used to answer more questions more reliably than could any single series of records. The breadth and depth of personal and collective experience which it seems possible to grasp grows further if, as Macfarlane suggests, the documents are placed in relation to narrative sources, especially diaries and local chronicles. It is refreshing that Macfarlane is also aware of the limitations of both his data and his methods. Clearly, no histoire totale can be written merely from local sources, and the compounded data retain some of the biases of their component parts. But the balance is positive. Macfarlane's admission of shortcomings does not invalidate his study; it merely means that its limitations must be kept in mind.

As noted, this is a book of promises. One looks forward to, first of all, its sequel, which proposes to describe the ways in which the authors feel the computer can assist in the analysis of their data. Even more, one looks forward to the results of Macfarlane's project, results which go beyond the tentative and as yet ill-supported suggestions which illustrate this volume.

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Gurr, Ted Robert, Grabosky, Peter N., Hula, Richard C. The Politics of Crime and Conflict: A Comparative History of Four Cities. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977. Pp. xii, 792. \$35.00.

Historians with an interest in crime and conflict will pick up this large volume with keen anticipation. A co-operative venture headed by the distinguished political scientist Ted Robert Gurr, whose Why Men Rebel won him an American Political Science Association Woodrow Wilson Award and established him as a major authority on the process of social conflict, the work promises a comparative history of four cities, ranging in time from the late eighteenth century to the present. Concerned primarily with the decline of public order in the large cities of the West, and the institutional efforts to combat this drift towards disorder, The Politics of Crime and Conflict desires acceptance as "a contribution to a new, or at least rare, species of interdisciplinary study in which historical materials are used comparatively to formulate and test general theories germane to critical social issues." (ix) Focusing upon individual crimes such as theft and murder, "victimless" crimes such as

prostitution and homosexual acts among consenting adults, crowd actions, strikes, and ostensibly revolutionary and nationalist movements, as well as countless other manifestations of crime and conflict, this volume contains much of importance.

But if the reader's appetite is immediately whetted by a tantalizing subject, it is soon dulled. Most will find the wading too laborious, and drop the volume in weariness. For the core of the study is four case histories, examining the "politics of crime and conflict" in London, Stockholm, Sydney, and Calcutta. Each of these four units runs on for at least 100 pages, and the study of London reaches virtual book-length proportions. This is not simply a problem of length, but of length for what. And in this volume, length is used to lay out a general overview of crime and conflict resting firmly on secondary sources. To be sure, the authors have done their homework relatively well, and it is pleasing to see political scientists utilizing the work of E. P. Thompson, Douglas Hay, E. J. Hobsbawm, George Rudé, the Webbs, Radzinowicz, and others, but there is no need to spend 200 pages reiterating what has already been said. This difficulty reaches its zenith in the section on Sydney, where the presentation is merely an abridged version of a book by one of the co-authors (Peter N. Grabosky's Sydney in Ferment: Crime, Dissent, and Official Reaction, 1788-1973). In the Calcutta and Stockholm studies the development of an overview may be rationalized by the authors' reliance on sources unavailable to many North American scholars, but in the London and Sydney studies, at least, there is little excuse for such an approach.

This attempt to construct overviews of specific urban experiences raises other problems as well. It tends to overgeneralize and flatten the historical experience, glossing over important events, tossing off examples of fascinating, but relatively minor, episodes in the history of disorder with little analytical rigour, and ending with seemingly facile, but often problematical, interpretations of significant periods. To take the study of London in this volume, for instance, is to see the period of labour militancy of 1919 and the General Strike of 1926 dealt with in two paragraphs. (135-136) A brief few lines mention the skirmishes between the Salvation Army and the police in the 1880s, battles between orthodox and socialist Jews over religious issues, and a 1908 Hyde Park gathering of 60,000 people, united to protest a Government bill aimed at more stringent licensing of the retail liquor trade. We are then told that, "It is scarcely surprising that a city with seven million inhabitants, at the hub of a thriving commercial and political empire, bursting with new social and political ideas, should have had such diverse kinds of strife and protest." (134) Commenting on the nineteenth-century experience, the book argues that "controlling civil conflict" was not a serious problem, that the occasional meetings and demonstrations were anything but violent, contrasting with the "mob action" of the same period in Paris, and that this relative quiet was a result of "the firm, often repressive, yet ultimately conciliatory posture of the British elite toward an urban working class which lacked both central organization and radical leadership." (81) This is all just a little too pat. And, finally, in assessing the rise of crime

in contemporary London, the study concludes that, "the majority of Britons, and Londoners, presumably will continue to accept the fear and fact of crime stoically, as one more tax on their social and material well being." (213) Statements like this, of course, simply fail to probe important realms of the "politics of crime." Surely the relationship between rising crime and the alarming growth of the fascist movement, which must feed directly on the rational and irrational fears bred of the reality and perception of crime, is deserving of closer scrutiny in a book of this type.

Similar problems, and others as well, seem to mar the treatments of Stockholm, Sydney, and Calcutta. In the interests of brevity, and in light of my own limited knowledge of these particular urban settings, it seems appropriate to leave the dissection of these sections of the book to specialists in the respective fields. Those who can plough through these case histories, all 616 pages of them, will enter into the meat of this book, and the only actual piece of comparative work in the volume, Gurr's "Comparative Analysis of Public Disorder."

In this concluding section Gurr attempts to bring the diverse strands of the volume together. He surveys trends in crime in the four societies, engages in a discussion of civil strife and the crisis of public order, examines elite interests and the definition of public order, probes the institutions of crime and punishment, and closes with a preliminary statement on the theory of public disorder.

The trends in crime reveal striking similarities among the experiences of London, Stockholm, and Sydney, where the early nineteenth-century appears as a highpoint of common criminal activity. By mid-century, a process of reversal had set in, and the long period of relative public order was initiated, stretching into the 1920s. With the 1930s, however, crime began its resurgence, as crimes against person and property increased dramatically; this trend, of course, has continued to the present day. In Canada, for instance, crimes against property have nearly tripled between 1900 and 1960, while offences against persons have increased 800 percent in the same years, with particularly sharp leaps in the years 1910-1915, 1935-1939, and 1955-1960. Gurr points out that many problems in the data obscure the real meaning of this trend, including the difficulties of unreported crimes and distortions in the figures stemming from changing perceptions of certain crimes and different rates of reporting for specific periods. Nevertheless, he concludes that this trend likely reflects essential changes in social behaviour, changes in criminal activity that undoubtedly played some role in transforming perceptions of public disorder. Only in Calcutta, where the data are too problematical to allow precise analysis, and where the impact of civil strife and official efforts to impose social control were most forceful, did the trends in crime permit few inferences about changing patterns of individual behaviour.

In an important section on civil strife and public disorder, Gurr locates major periods of civil strife and social conflict in the four cities, and links these periods with indicators of crime, measured

largely by conviction rates. In what is perhaps one of the most significant findings of the volume, Gurr notes that when social tension is widespread and intense, "it is likely to provoke different forms of disorder at the same time that it spurs elites and officials to intensified efforts at control." (674) Put simply then, this study argues that common crime and civil strife/conflict are part and parcel of a general phenomenon of public disorder; the revolutionary and the thief are halves of a complex whole. This is fascinating terrain, deserving of much further exploration.

The book builds towards its concluding section with discrete discussions of elites and the definition of public disorder, the police, and the courts and punishment. Nowhere, unfortunately, do we see, or feel, the presence of the criminal or the militant activist, the actual personnel of crime and conflict. This is hardly a minor or inconsequential omission. For how can crime and conflict be understood if the primary actors are virtually ignored, and the whole process viewed through the experience of those who rule and serve the rulers? There is more to society, and of crime and conflict within it, than this kind of narrow approach allows one to see.

This deficiency virtually leaps off of the pages in the dismal concluding section of the book, where Gurr attempts to establish a theoretical model of public disorder. In this model, of course, everything from economic conditions to police and judicial systems and policies, elite goals, and legal definitions, as well as countless other factors, are lumped together, under the rubric of "indirect" and "immediate" conditions of public disorder. But there is little mention of the criminals themselves, or the political/social dissidents who play central roles in the emergence of social conflict. And the model, not surprisingly, tells us very little. More distressing is the (again not surprising) confession that this model came first, "in the sense that the core of it was specified before the city studies were carried out." (747) The whole enterprise, one suspects, was geared towards the construction of this model of public disorder, a model with obvious presentist concerns: Gurr closes the book with "an epilogue on policies for public order."

Political scientists, sociologists, and others (including some historians) have an unfortunate penchant for constructing models. This pastime should be left to the hobbyists, who can place their wares on a shelf, dust them occasionally, and humour themselves and others with their finished products. History, a process of complexity, resting firmly upon upon the bedrock of human agency, its limitations set by the conditions of its own past, inevitably shatters models which, in their plastic rigidity, fail to appreciate the particular texture of distinct societies, regions, communities, and settings. The writing of history, of course, is guided by theory, but history itself can often reformulate theory; indeed, it must if theory is to be more than abstraction. It must never be used merely as building blocks in the construction of a neatly packaged model. To do that is to insure only the most partial, distorting, and inadequate of pseudo-histories. And that, ultimately, is what Gurr, Grabosky, and Hula have produced.

There is, of course, much between the covers of The Politics of Crime and Conflict. This review has perhaps not adequately conveyed the extent of the information that can be gleaned from the work. Those searching for data on many areas of "deviant" behaviour, public disorder, and criminal activity can profit from a close reading of the text. But in approach, sensitivity, conception, and method, the study is too general, the net too widely cast, to tell us much beyond the most obvious. To understand "the politics of crime and conflict" we need many more historical studies of specific contexts, events, and processes. Merely using historical evidence to address questions of central concern to North America's liberal intelligensia and the funding agencies that so often finance their grandiose projects is no solution.

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Anderson, Alan D. The Origin and Resolution of an Urban Crisis: Baltimore, 1890-1930. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Pp. xi, 143. Illustrations. \$12.00 cloth.

Scholars who have analyzed the American city as it evolved during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries have usually focused on the role played by municipal government. Some have viewed the strife which erupted as a moral struggle between highminded reformers and corrupt bosses while others have seen it as a drive for modernization and order. In his book, The Origin and Resolution of an Urban Crisis: Baltimore, 1890-1930, Alan D. Anderson finds these and other interpretations inadequate because they fail to give proper weight to those economic and technological forces which he believes truly determined the course of urban history. "It is necessary," he also declares, "to view the city as a system in which the decisions of the several different institutional units interact." His work is a case study of Baltimore surveyed from this vantage point.

So many American cities found themselves in a state of crisis by the end of the Nineteenth Century that almost simultaneously they started the movements for reform which became hallmarks of the progressive era. In Baltimore's case a swollen population, a rise in per capita income, and a congested and polluted central business district had induced many citizens to move to the outer fringes of the city. This migration, plus other influences, stimulated a growing demand for more and better public services especially in the fields of education, sanitation, and transportation. Improvements of this nature, Anderson notes, demanded money and experts but the incumbent political chiefs refused to surrender their power to civil servants, and reformers proved unwilling to raise taxes for a loosely organized government run by local bosses. In 1898 a new city charter broke