

## A THEORY OF CONFLICT

*A THEORY OF CONFLICT*. By BRIAN CROZIER. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974. Pp. 245.)

Noted for his work on counterrevolution (*The Rebels*, 1960) and his more recent studies of General de Gaulle, Brian Crozier describes *A Theory of Conflict* as a "work of political and moral philosophy" (p. vii). Moralistic it is, but the book falls down badly as an essay in political philosophy or, for that matter, as an example of social science writing. Major concepts (such as conflict itself) remain undefined; the treatment of the topics is unsystematic; the book is analytically unsophisticated, for example, lacking a typology that relates the various forms of conflict to one another in a coherent fashion; and it contains numerous generalizations of questionable validity passed off as scientific or historical "truths" (e.g., Crozier pronounces an ex-cathedra judgment about the historical relationship between strength and skill in the manufacture of weapons: "Those with the skill and the weapons conquered those inferior and without," p. 30).

Evidence of the overall lack of coherence in the book can be seen from the almost random arrangement of its five parts. The first part is called "The Fundamentals of Conflict"; the second, "The State as Fact and Theory"; the third, "The Contemporary Scene"; the fourth, "The Price of Revolution"; and the fifth, "The Containment of Dissent." In part five appears a chapter on the "preconditions of conflict," which one might have expected to find much earlier in the book. The section on the theories of the state presents no organizing theme or principle and derives no important conclusions except that Marx was "evil" (p. 52).

Similarly, the chapter on "theorists and observers" presents what appears to be a random romp through more recent political theory, presumably intended to make the point "that the socialists and the egalitarians have a place in the democratic social contract—along with the conservatives and radicals—only to the extent that they believe in and practice pluralism" (p. 78). Characteristically, however, Crozier doesn't really tell us what he means by pluralism, and seems arbitrarily to have ruled out of court the possibility that socialist pluralism, as discussed by Czechoslovakian reformers in the Dubcek era, represents a valid expression of pluralistic theory. The chapter ends with a taxonomy of regimes whose purpose is unclear. If meant, as Crozier insists, "to further understanding of the target of revolutionaries [the State]," it is far too short and superficial. The taxonomy categorizes together the United States, Canada, India, Ceylon, and some Latin American countries as "representative democracies." (Other categories include "authoritarian government," "totalist regimes," "despotisms," and "discriminatory representative regimes.")

So much for the social scientific merits of the book. What of its philosophic pretensions? Crozier minces no words in criticizing those with whom he

disagrees, in particular modern day "liberals" who have fostered a "general climate of misguided tolerance" (p. 210). He insists that what is needed in dealing with contemporary subversion (besides certain organizational and tactical precautions) is a degree of "moral courage" (p. 205). Crozier obviously intends in this book to alert those governments to which he is favorably inclined to the dangers of subversion, and to convince them of the need to take adequate steps to cope with it. (Indeed, the book is "dedicated to the victims of Revolution the world over.") Crozier moralistically decries the fanaticism of revolutionaries, yet ironically, he reproduces in his own distortions the elements of fanaticism he sanctimoniously ascribes to "subversives" (who are not only "fanatics," but "whatever their stated political motives, psychopaths as well," p. 215). Crozier himself behaves like a fanatic when he insists that in revolutionary conflict, "no compromise is ultimately possible" because "what is at stake is the survival of civilization" (p. 217). His tendency to combine unreasoned, unsupported general condemnations of all revolutionary activity with his hysterical appeals for repressive measures to offset and undermine subversion stand in contradiction to his own references to occasions where "intolerable despotisms" justify rebellion (cf. 209), and his advice to counterrevolutionaries never to exaggerate or distort their position. In short, the book is riddled by an internal contradiction. In attempting to put forward a conservative position, Crozier reveals himself at points in the book as an ill-tempered reactionary, mouthing platitudes about circumstances which might justify rebellion, but nevertheless counselling unyielding repression by those in authority.

The last chapter constitutes the meandering moralizing of a man disturbed (perhaps quite rightly) by contemporary trends in art and popular culture, but lacking a theoretical framework into which his critical observations could be integrated to offer a critique of contemporary society. Instead he presents an interpretation of astounding simplicity: "The young revolutionaries [whoever they may be,] . . . are both cause and effect" of our present ills (p. 218). He presents a melodramatic image of the progressive corruption of the young from mother's milk to heroine with authority slain along the way (p. 220). His summary, on p. 225, of the so-called generalizations established by his argument are an intellectual embarrassment. They are not only substantively wrong, but also illogical.

The most disturbing aspect of the entire book is Crozier's characterization of the methodology, intentions, and presuppositions of those who call themselves peace researchers. First, Crozier reveals his own ignorance of the philosophy of science by equating science (and peace science) with quantitative research. He then proceeds to a caricature of peace scientists (all, he would have us believe, mindless computer users) as unrealistic and probably motivated by communist tendencies. (Perhaps peace is a communist plot?) Not surprisingly, this caricature is unsupported by a single shred of evidence or a single citation to an actual scholar or writer. Crozier's only reference to a living peace researcher (Galtung) cites him as "atypical" in that he is not as "unrealistic" as the others.

Despite its profound faults the book is not entirely without merit. Crozier has a lively writing style, and he frequently adduces interesting examples

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selected from a wide variety of cases. He has some insightful things to say about the impact of television on modern resistance. All in all, however, this is a cranky, ill-tempered book. It lacks the willingness to consider and present alternative interpretations and viewpoints that is essential to good scholarly writing.

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