

## BOOK REVIEW

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**Peter Adey, David J. Cox and Barry Godfrey, *Crime, Regulation and Control During the Blitz: Protecting the Population of Bombed Cities*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 253pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-5995-3.**

*Crime, Regulation and Control During the Blitz* is focused, as we might expect from the title, on the measures of governance and policing taken in both preparation and response, to the bombing of cities during World War II. However, refreshingly, the text is not London-centric, with the focus of the monograph firmly rooted in the city of Liverpool, a city subjected to some of the most concentrated city-based bombing raids of any British city during the war, outside London. Much of the text concentrates on local government and police responses to the blitz in Liverpool, albeit with some mention of wider issues that affected the country as a whole and a brief analysis of the relevant defence regulations, which is, of course, of wider interest and relevance. As the introduction explains, such a focus on measures of governance and policing contrasts with existing accounts of the Liverpool Blitz which tend to be fixated more on peripatetic views from below. These previous lone urban walkers tended to make a solemn journey through Liverpool, 'mourning the pain or hardships of the war', with the accounts being occasionally interspersed 'with the crackle and spectacle of the violent attacks', thus converging contemplation with sensory overload (pg.4). Conversely, while the experiences of the Blitz spectacle are recognised, the focus in this text is on the banalities of both Blitz life and the issues on which 'the authorities sought to govern' (pg.11). For example, while the explosion of the city's gas mains may have been spectacular, and probably tragic, this book addresses the practical aftermath for people around the city after such incidents. Namely, in that particular example, cooking becoming increasingly difficult due to low gas pressure, or indeed none at all.

In terms of the text itself, the eight substantive chapters that follow the Introduction deal variously with: the practical and administrative preparations made for the Blitz, the structure and design of the 'nervous system' of coordination, crime and policing generally, black market activities, delinquent children, mobility, and the maintenance of morale. The Conclusion focuses on both the immediate legacy of the Blitz, post-war reconstruction and post-war

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consensus on criminal justice as well as the making of the myth regarding the modern Merseyside Blitz. This final theme, which refers to the peacetime 'blitz' on Liverpool, 'constituted by urban clearances, economic and social deprivation, cuts in public services, vast unemployment and social and industrial unrest', is covered only briefly in the monograph, with the World War II Blitz being the focus of the book. However, its inclusion does lay down an important marker to the continuing struggles faced by the city of Liverpool and Merseyside generally, which continue long after the historical period covered here.

The book appears in Bloomsbury's 'Crime, Deviance, and Punishment' series, although in many ways the monograph is as much a work of historical human geography, as it is a history of crime, and hence is truly interdisciplinary in nature. This is to be expected given the identity of the authors. Professor Peter Adey is a social and political geographer at the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, while Professor Barry Godfrey is a criminologist in the School of Law and Social Justice, University of Liverpool and Dr David J. Cox a criminologist in the School of Social, Historical and Political Studies, University of Wolverhampton. Methodologically, the work is one of empirical reconstruction, with a fundamentally archival methodology with such techniques deployed with a great deal of care and skill. The text makes use of a rich variety of archival material, collected from both local Liverpoolian collections as well as national collections, including the Mass Observation Archive. The Introduction identifies that the key aim of the archival analysis is, 'to explore the ways in which the emergency and police apparatus was designed, contested, resisted, fought and subverted', rather than apply one particular 'overarching analysis' (pg.13). To this extent the book lacks an over-arching theoretical framework, although it is emphasised by the authors that its writing was influenced by contemporary debates in both the social sciences and humanities.

The Introduction identifies that three key interdisciplinary themes form the background to the study: morale, criminality, and mobilities. Morale is examined from both above and below, in the sense of examining how 'different scales of interest' managed and maintain morale, both to keep the population safe from the bombs and for their own purposes. Criminality is used as a theme, both in terms of new offences that came into existence as a result of the stringent Defence Regulations, alongside an examination of the greater opportunities to commit existing offences. Mobilities take 'static primitives of sociological and geographical thought' and identifies that such primitives, like community or the social, are far from static (pg.15). These mobilities are then considered in their own right asking, amongst other things, 'What if we were to take those mobilities seriously on their own terms and make sense of how these mobilities were conceived, worried, planned and experienced?'. Ultimately, as the Introduction explains,

the use of these three foci add up to a focus on 'efforts to govern', using the spaces created for intervention, which allowed the deployment of 'various modes of governmental, regional and local powers, regulations and practices' (pg.16).

Despite these unifying themes, it is clear that different narrative voices, and indeed writing styles, can be heard at various points in the text. Authors of particular chapters are never explicitly identified, which given the narrative-linguistic turn in history, is perhaps slightly disappointing. This is further exaggerated by the differing backgrounds of those engaged in the writing project. Obviously, despite the use of careful empirical techniques, these different narrative voices are apparent in the text of various chapters, particularly with the presence of different disciplinary voices. The authors all provide excellent narratives which really bring the archival material to life, but at times it would be nice to be informed explicitly as to whose voice it is that we are hearing, or at least who took the lead for each chapter. Also, few chapters seem to truly consider all three unifying themes. Chapters four and five, on 'Crime During Wartime' and 'Grey and Black Markets' respectively, are very much solely focussed on criminality, and perhaps miss opportunities to engage with the morale and mobility themes. Conversely, Chapters two and three, titled 'Anticipating the Blitz' and 'Nervous System', have very little mention of criminality. This dichotomy between chapters is remedied somewhat by the Introduction and Conclusion, which both serve to pull these three unifying themes together, but nevertheless, perhaps greater theme unification in individual chapters would have been useful.

Overall the monograph is a rich and detailed account of Liverpool during the Blitz, both from a crime history perspective, and as a work of wider social history/ historical human geography. Yes, perhaps a stronger theoretical framework could have been deployed, or at least the three themes of morale, criminality and mobilities, could have been utilised more consistently, but nevertheless these are minor academic criticisms of a rich and highly-readable archival history of Liverpool's Blitz.