

E.J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (revised edition). New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, \$4.95 paper.

United States Ambassador Deane Hinton recently declared that El Salvador's guerrillas are not Robin Hoods but rather "murderers, extortionists, robbers, convinced, hard-line Marxists." If he had read Hobsbawm's *Bandits* he would have to reconsider his statement since Robin Hoods—or social bandits as Hobsbawm calls them—may well be all the above. Hinton's judgment reflects an idealized version of the social bandit according to which excessive violence is deplored.

Hobsbawm recognizes that social bandits do indeed follow a moral code which discourages excess violence; nevertheless, he notes that while "Robin Hood is what all peasant bandits should be . . . few of them have the idealism, the unselfishness, or the social consciousness to live up to their role" (p. 41). In Hobsbawm's opinion Robin Hood is a fictional character created through the amalgamation of the doings of actual bandits and qualities of the nobility which represent a peasantry the "only familiar model of freedom."

Social bandits are to be distinguished from criminals by their peasant status and context. They are robbers who are recognized as good men (rarely women) by the peasant communities in which they live. To say that they rob the rich to give to the poor would be a simplification. It is crucial, however, that they *not* rob the poor. Wealth is redistributed but usually indirectly via the bandit's trader role. The bandit is integrated into peasant society even though he may not be in the mainstream of that society. He fully accepts peasant values. If he has a political program it is to right wrongs, thereby restoring traditional order. He does not aim at the elimination of all injustice but only excesses of injustice. The peasant code of justice, for instance, "demands not that there should be no more lords, or even that lords should not be expected to take their serfs' women, but only that when they did, they should not shirk the obligation to give their bastards an education" (p. 26).

Social bandits are not typically political actors of any proportion though they may be one element among others in a rural

power-game. They may keep the balance from tipping further in the favor of the lord. Perhaps in the golden age of banditry (the 18th century in Europe judging from the number of tales and ballads), bandits played only a local role, however, the 20th century bandits of the third world have been more likely to intersect with liberation struggles and revolutionary movements. Unlike criminals, social bandits have an "affinity for revolution," says Hobsbawm. Mao's early Red Army made use of social bandits and Pancho Villa joined the Mexican Revolution. After the revolutionary forces triumph the social bandit may return to outlawry "to join the last champions of the old way of life and other 'counter-revolutionaires' in increasingly hopeless resistance" (p. 103). Hobsbawm constantly stresses that social bandits are archaic.

Thus the Salvadoran guerrillas are not best understood as social bandits. Hobsbawm's discussion of banditry and violence shows that terrorism is well rooted in peasant culture; heroes may be made on the basis of their cruelty even though their acts violate indigenous moral standards. The appeal of the avenging bandit, says Hobsbawm, "is not that of the agents of justice, but of men who prove that even the poor and weak can be terrible" (p. 58). Even those who rip fetuses out of pregnant women and chop prisoners into tiny fragments have been celebrated as heroes. For those who cannot win, a "revolution of destruction" may be the only means of retaining dignity. Banditry becomes epidemic in time of social upheaval; such situations also favor orgies of destruction and cruelty, especially when the revolution is failing.

Hobsbawm's dislike of anarchy permeates this book especially in the 1980 postscript in which he explains with some impatience, that the Red Brigade, Baader-Meinhof gang, SLA, etc. . . are not to be taken as modern-day social bandits. Social banditry is archaic, a victim of modernization and is found today only in a few remote regions of the world. Bakunin and Schiller may have thought criminals were proto-revolutionaries but to Hobsbawm this opinion represents foolish confusion characteristic of anarchist thought. Hobsbawm seems to believe that criminals and ultra-leftist terrorists (especially when they are declassed intellectuals) are detrimental to revolutionary activity.

The recent upsurge of interest in terrorism makes the reissue of Hobsbawm's book timely. Originally published in 1969, the revised version features added material on Latin American bandits, a very short appendix on women and banditry, as well as the postscript in which he addresses his critics and argues with those scholars who have used his work to examine contemporary political events.

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Pearman, William A. and Robert Rotz. *The Province of Sociology: Selected Profiles*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981, 208 pp. \$15.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper.

Pearman and Rotz's *The Province of Sociology* is a collection of seventy-two short profiles of many sociologists and non-sociologists who have made significant contributions to the discipline of sociology. The profiles are divided into five chapters that are essentially arranged in chronological order. Each chapter has a brief introduction that provides an overview of the sociological thinkers included in that particular section. The first chapter includes the founders of modern sociology such as Auguste Comte, Vilfredo Pareto, and Ferdinand Toennies. Chapter two shifts the focus to America and describes the work of sociologists like Albion Small and William I. Thomas who fostered the new discipline in this country. The third chapter discusses many methodologists and theorists (e.g., Kingsley Davis, C. Wright Mills, and Edwin H. Sutherland) who have influenced the direction of contemporary sociology. The persons profiled in chapter four are theorists (e.g., Kurt Lewin, Sigmund Freud, and Thorstein Veblen) whose contributions in other disciplines have had a significant impact on sociology. Persons currently shaping the discipline (e.g., Peter Blau, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Robert A. Nisbet) are included in the last chapter on contemporary sociologists.

The profiles vary from half a page to five pages in length with a page and a half being the mode. Some are illustrated with pen and ink drawings of the theorists. Profiles usually contain a short biographical paragraph outlining the individual's academic life and achievements along with a synopsis of relevant theoretical and/or methodological contributions. In addition, Pearman and Rotz acknowledge the contributions made to sociology by other disciplines. They also clearly represent the diversity within sociology itself by including theorists from many different perspectives.

The compact statements of theory are paradoxically both a strength and weakness in this book. The brevity of the profiles permits a fairly comprehensive inclusion of theorists, but it also limits the amount of space available to explain each theory.