

Gerald J. DeGroot, ed.. *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*. London and New York: Longman, 1998. X + 296 pp. \$76.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-582-35619-1.



Reviewed by James M. Ferreira

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The editor of this collection of essays on student protest says the purpose of the text is "to break through the mists of nostalgia" surrounding the student protests of the Sixties. The nineteen essays in the text examine student dissent from a historical and cross-cultural perspective. The book is divided into five parts. Part One contains the editor's essentially unsympathetic portrait of campus protests as a futile challenges of authority by idealistic, immature and naive youth. Students are viewed by the public as an elite who never threaten the actual power of the state and who usually fail in enlisting support for their cause outside of the University.

Western students are unwilling to die for the cause as Asian students sometimes do. Nevertheless, student protest is an important tradition in different cultures. Although more recent protest movements have borrowed from each other, historically they are relative to time and place and manifest cultural myths and rituals derived from the long history of student opposition to authority in very different societies.

Part Two discusses the international student movement of the 1960s in the United States, France, Germany, Britain and Mexico. The essays are an excellent addition to the literature on the student rebellion of the decade. Eric Zolov's piece on the student movement in Mexico and Ingo Cornils' account of the rise and fall of German activist Rudy Dutschke are particularly informative.

In Sections Three and Four, the authors trace the unanticipated reactions and positive consequences of the student movements of the 1960s. Ronald Reagan was able to exploit public distaste for the Free Speech Movement and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations at Berkeley to win election as governor of California. In Mexico and Germany, the state resorted to violence to crush dissidents and preserve the status quo. Student effort to reform the American University curriculum and make it an instrument of social change failed, but through lunch counter sit-ins and freedom rides, African-American students in the South won public support for equal rights. And as Barbara L. Tishler argues in her essay on anti-war activism and the emerging feminism of the period, the

women who participated were empowered by their activism in the cause.

The final section of the text has four fascinating essays on student protest in Iran, Korea, and China, and an account of a successful effort to save San Diego State from a president determined to destroy the power of the faculty by layoffs and the elimination of departments and programs. These four concluding pieces are worth the price of the book. The text is well-edited and the essays are informative. It would be an excellent choice for students in a history course on the Sixties, or in a class stressing cross-cultural influence and behavior. It is also a good read for someone interested in understanding how different cultures determine the rites of rebellion among the best and brightest of its young.

This review was commissioned for H-Pol by Lex Renda <renlex@uwm.edu>

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