

Chapter 6 of: The sign of the last days—when?

Lawlessness in a Historical Perspective

Revised in 2010

NEVER BEFORE in history has there been so much news reporting. And news media – TV, radio, newspapers – seem to be preoccupied with the *bad* news. Every day people get their minds flooded with a concentrated dose of the latest miseries and evils in different parts of the world.

“After absorbing the news of today,” noted historian Barbara Tuchman, **“one expects to face a world consisting entirely of strikes, crimes, power failures, broken water mains, stalled trains, school shutdowns, muggers, drug addicts, neo-Nazis, and rapists. ... This has led me to formulate Tuchman’s Law, as follows: ‘The fact of being reported multiplies the apparent extent of any deplorable development by five- to tenfold.’”** [1]

No doubt this “Tuchman’s Law” at least partially explains the feeling of so many that the world today is worse than ever before and that mankind today faces an unprecedented increase of lawlessness worldwide.

Increasing crime is yet another feature graphically portrayed as evidence of the last days by some expositors of prophecy. In *Good-bye, Planet Earth*, Adventist author Pierson says:

... we are witnessing the worst epidemic of lawlessness the human race has ever experienced. Our cities are beset with rape, murder, riots, looting, and arson. (Page 3)

Later in the same publication (page 50) the author quotes from deceased Adventist leader Ellen G. White’s *Testimonies*, in which she wrote:

The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us. ... Bold robberies are of frequent occurrence. Strikes are common. Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails. (Vol. 9, p. 11)

The interesting factor here is that Ellen White wrote these words already back in 1910 – and the picture she paints of crime then is certainly every bit as dark as that portrayed by current protagonists of end-times pronouncements.

Crime is frequently dealt with in the Watch Tower Society’s publications, which attempt to give it the greatest proportions possible, since the Society explains Jesus’ words about a future “increasing of lawlessness” (Matthew 24:12, NW) as describing one more feature of the supposed “composite sign,” the fulfilment of which has been seen only since 1914.

Thus *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1983, pages 5 through 7, states that after World War I “the setting was ripe for an increasing of lawlessness on a magnitude never before beheld,” and that mankind since 1914 has seen “the greatest increase of lawlessness in all history.”

Evidently the Watch Tower Society trusts that the reader will have no difficulty in accepting these statements, because any discussion of the extent of lawlessness in the past is

totally missing, and no historian, criminologist, or any other authority is quoted in support of the claim. The Society seems to take it for granted that lawlessness in the past was something rather trivial compared to that of our time.

The Watchtower of July 15, 1983, for instance, indicates that the newsmaking incidents of robbery combined with murder are features almost unique to our time:

There was a time when a burglar, or robber, took only valuables. Now they take lives as well. (Page 5)

Such a statement, of course, is nothing but an idealization of the past in order to put a special emphasis on today's lawlessness. Actually robbery accompanied by murder may be found in every age, and it has been particularly rampant in times of famines and plagues. When syphilis scourged Europe in the sixteenth century, lawlessness and immorality saw an enormous increase everywhere. In Rome, for example, "murder and robbery were quite in the regular course of things." [2] Similarly, the generation that survived the Black Death in the fourteenth century witnessed a sharp increase of lawlessness and violence:

A striking feature about the last half of the fourteenth century is the greater amount of lawlessness then prevalent, and the number of outbreaks, both popular and intellectual, against authority. [3]

The simple truth is that violence, collective as well as individual, has always formed an integral part of man's history.

In the work *Violence in America* sociology professor Charles Tilly points out that "**Western civilization and various forms of collective violence have always been close partners.**" [4] Of the period following upon the French Revolution, for example, he says:

Western history since 1800 is violent history, full enough of revolutions, coups, and civil wars, but absolutely stuffed with conflict on a smaller scale. The odd thing is how quickly we forget. [5]

What about today? Many experts in the latter half of the past century seemed to agree that serious crimes had been increasing sharply in many countries. But is this circumstance really something new and unique to our time? Could it be that many have been given this impression only because of man's forgetfulness, or ignorance, of the past?

Industrialization, urbanization and crime

The Industrial Revolution that set in towards the end of the 18th century profoundly changed Western society. New machines and the use of mass-production techniques brought about a growing prosperity in many countries. One consequence of this was a rapid growth of city populations (urbanization). Many people in the 19th century, including sociologists, lawyers, judges, and so forth, feared that these changes would break down the traditional moral and social checks on man's behaviour, causing increasing lawlessness in society. A prevalent view in the 19th century, therefore, was that industrialization and urbanization were necessarily accompanied by rising crime.

To substantiate its thesis of an unparalleled increase of lawlessness, the Watch Tower Society has drawn extensively upon this supposed connection between industrialization, urbanization and rising crime. Evidently assuming that this idea was an established truth, *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1983, page 5, stated that "the Industrial Revolution and the growing cities" paved "the way for our 20th-century increase of lawlessness," and even claimed that

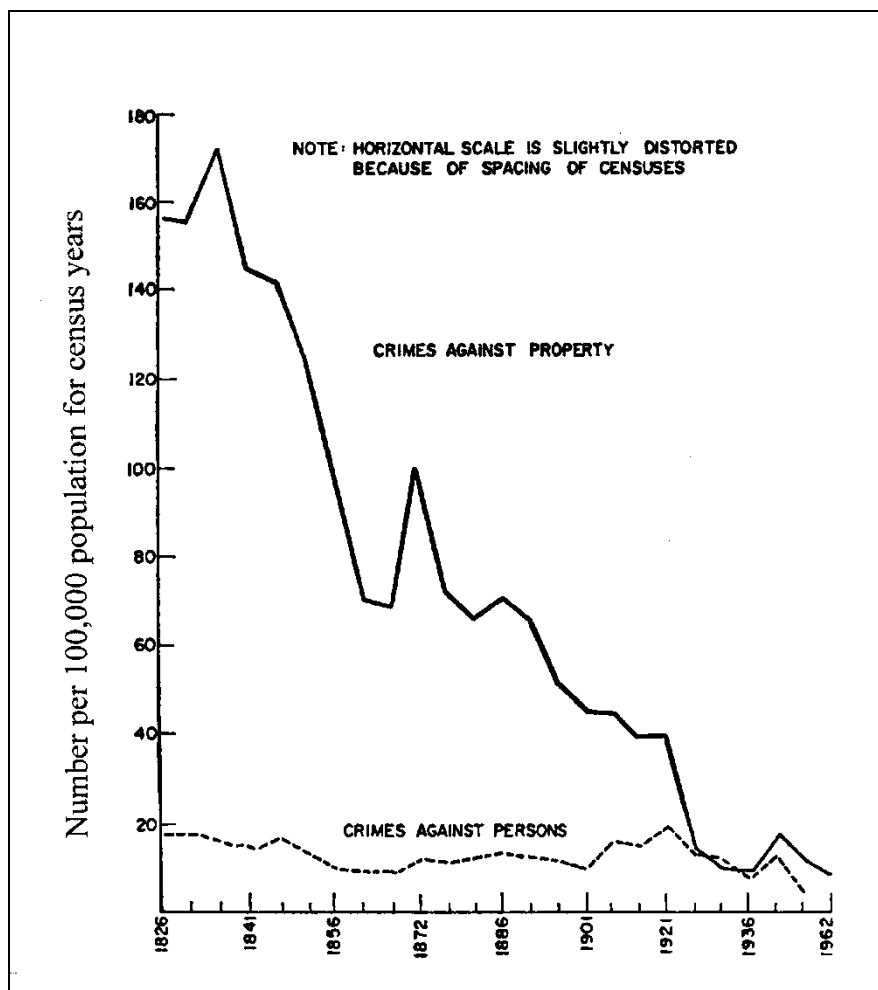
“These developments, unique to our modern age, have contributed to the greatest increase of lawlessness in all history.”

The facts, however, do not support this explanation. Though seemingly impressive and convincing, it has nevertheless been turned down by recent critical studies.

In the 19th century, the two major industrial countries were Britain and France. To test the theory that industrialization and urbanization breed an increase of lawlessness, the crime rates of these two countries in the 19th century have been carefully studied. In 1973 criminology historians A. Q. Lodhi and C. Tilly published their study of crime and violence in *France* for the period 1826-1962. Their investigation clearly demonstrated that rising crime did not accompany the growing industrialization and urbanization of this country. In fact, some types of crime even declined during the period! (Fig. 1) The authors concluded:

The linking of crime, violence and disorder to urban growth must fall into the category of things people simply want to believe, for the belief rests on no substantial foundation of verified fact or systematic analysis. [6]

FIGURE 1: CRIME IN FRANCE, 1826-1962



Persons accused of crimes against persons and property: France 1826-1962

(A.Q. Lodhi and C. Tilly, “Urbanization, Crime, and Collective Violence,” in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, 1973, p. 301. Graph used courtesy of the University of Chicago Press.)

The studies of crime rates in 19th-century *Britain*, the most advanced industrial society of that period, show similar results. “The British data are quite clear as to decreases in official crime rates in the latter half of the nineteenth century,” says Canadian sociologist Lynn McDonald in his summary of these studies. [7]

That crime does not experience a virtually automatic rise with the spread of urban industrial life was also demonstrated by history professor Roger Lane in his study of criminal violence in 19th-century Massachusetts. Rather than rising, crime tends to decrease with growing industrialization and urbanization. Lane explains:

All evidence points to the long-term drop in criminal activity as normative, and associated with urbanization. But the process was not complete without the accompaniment of rapid industrial development also. It was this which provided the means of absorbing raw immigrants, of fitting them into a ‘system’ which socialized and accommodated them into more cooperative habits of life. [8]

Thus the claim that the growing industrialization and urbanization of the 19th century paved the way for an unprecedented rise of lawlessness in the 20th century is confuted by the actual facts. The claim is based upon a theory that, on closer examination, turns out to be scarcely more than a 19th-century myth.

The recent “crime wave”

History demonstrates the fluctuating nature of crime waves, their surging and ebbing, and surging again. The pattern is seldom constant or uniform in every country.

How new, then, is the recent “crime wave”? Is it as novel or unique as some of the end-times expositors inferred?

Attempting to prove the distinctiveness of the recent crime increase, *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1983, on page 7, quoted the British criminologists Sir Leon Radzinowics and Joan King as saying, in their book *The Growth of Crime*, that **“the one thing that hits you in the eye when you look at crime on the world scale is a pervasive and persistent increase everywhere. Such exceptions as there are stand out in splendid isolation, and may soon be swamped in the rising tide.”**

True, these authors, writing in 1977, argued that crime had indeed been increasing in many countries for a couple of decades. They did *not* say, however, that this increase was unprecedented in history. Commenting upon the theory proposed by certain modern criminologists that “there is not more violence about, but that we are much more sensitive to violence than were our less civilized ancestors,” the authors also admit:

That is all very well if the comparison goes a fair way back. ... A longer view, peering into the middle ages, or even the eighteenth century, might well give more substance to the theory. With all our crime, our society as a whole is more secure, less savage, than theirs. ... The mere fact that towns had to be walled, that castles had to provide refuge for the surrounding villagers and their belongings, that travellers had to take their own protection with them, bears witness to the constant threat of brigands as well as the needs of warfare. Indeed the two would often be hard to distinguish. [9]

The end-times expositors we have cited in this book reside in the United States. Doubtless their view of the world is colored by the situation there. The United States, however, is hardly typical of the world as a whole. Perhaps these proclaimers of the end-times realize it, perhaps not, but few developed countries today compare in violent crime with the United States:

In numbers of political assassinations, riots, politically relevant armed group attacks, and demonstrations, the United States since 1948 has been among the half dozen most tumultuous nations in the world. [10]

In an article on homicide, the December 1984 issue of *Science* magazine observed that American murder statistics are higher than those for most other countries. American gun homicide, for example, is “50 times that of” England, Germany, Denmark and Japan! [11] No wonder, then, that those stirring up religious expectations about the nearness of “the end” have focused predominantly on crime in the U.S.A.

Back in 1970 Hal Lindsey, for instance, saw the increase in American crime as an important sign of the times. In his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, pages 100, 101, he wrote:

A short time ago we saw a graph in a newsmagazine which indicated the climb in serious crime in the United States from 1960 to 1968. If you had been an ant on that page you would have had a very steep stairway to climb each one of those eight years. While the number of crimes in America was increasing 122 per cent, the population rose only 11 per cent. Many people have stopped talking about the ‘crime rate.’ They now refer to the ‘crime epidemic.’

Similarly, in the Watch Tower Society’s publications, crime in the U.S.A. has a central place. It is, in fact, the only country for which the Society has published crime statistics and crime curves covering a decade or more. [12]

Few expositors, however, honestly tell their readers that when it comes to crime – as well as to many other things – the United States is not representative of the world at large. But even taken by itself, how true is the claimed enormity of crime increase in that land? How reliable is the evidence upon which such claim is made?

The FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Most of the figures and curves published by the Watch Tower Society are said to be based upon the *Uniform Crime Reports* published by the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The magazine which *The Late Great Planet Earth* quoted from regarding crime (*U.S. News and World Report*) also based its figures on this same source. (See footnote 3, for Chapter 9, of the book mentioned.) These FBI reports have been published annually since 1933 and include statistics on “serious crimes,” namely, murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft, with arson added in 1979.

This might seem to be an ideal, unimpeachable source of evidence on which to base discussions of American crime statistics. It may come as a surprise to many, therefore, to learn in what embarrassingly low esteem the trustworthiness of the FBI reports has been held by many authorities.

Actually, for at least the first three decades after 1933 the FBI’s statistics are far from reliable. Until recently, and especially before 1967, sociologists and criminologists frequently debunked them, pointing out numerous flaws in the methods used for collecting the data.

Thus Thornstein Sellin, “the dean of American statisticians,” has been quoted as describing the quality of the United States’s crime statistics as “the worst of any major country in the Western world,” while Harvard crime expert Lloyd E. Ohlin described the statistical data as “almost worthless – but it is the only thing there is.” [13] Were the statistics really that bad? What effect does their trustworthiness – or lack of it – have on charts and comparisons with crime in earlier periods?

“The largest source of error,” observes the well-known sociologist Charles E. Silberman, **“comes from the fact that the Uniform Crime Reports include only those crimes that are reported to the police and that the police, in turn, record and pass on to the FBI.”** [14] The problem here is that the majority of crimes were never reported to the police. Additionally, the police often had not passed on to the FBI all crimes that were known to them. How this allowed for manipulation of evidence, and the misleading effect this can create, was explained in 1971 by Ramsey Clark, former Attorney General of the United States:

Most crime is never reported to police. And much crime is inaccurately reported. Erroneous crime statistics are often used to create the impression that the new chief is doing a good job, or to support a movement to add more police. Frequently an apparent increase in crime really reflects an improved effectiveness in law enforcement, or in the reporting of crime itself. [15]

Changes in crime reporting, then, may create a statistical rise in crime that does not correspond to the actual fact. As one example, in Portland, Oregon, in 1973 and 1974 twice as many burglaries were reported to the police as in 1971 and 1972. This would mean a *sharp increase* in burglary during the period. An investigation, however, revealed that burglaries had actually *decreased* during those years! [16] Many other similar cases could be cited. [17]

Due to constant criticism of its statistics, the FBI has periodically revised and tightened its data-gathering system. [18] This has resulted in an increased willingness among police officials to keep better records of crimes and tell all about them to the FBI – thus causing additional “paper increases” in the statistics. [19] Nevertheless, at the same time the FBI’s statistics have gradually become more reliable. Especially since 1967, when the U.S. government began to sponsor a number of national crime surveys as independent tests of the FBI’s statistics, the attitude towards the *Uniform Crime Reports* has changed. Criminologists now usually agree that despite all inaccuracies, the overall trends depicted in the *Uniform Crime Reports* since the late 1960’s are essentially correct, and that the increase in serious crimes during the following twenty-five years is real. [20] If that is so, what significance does their earlier, and serious, unreliability have? And what is amiss in the use of U. S. crime statistics by some proclaimers of the last days?

The problem lies in the comparison of crime statistics from post-1960 years with those of pre-1960 years. To fail to recognize, or to acknowledge to readers, how unequal the reliability of the statistics for those two periods actually is, results in deception, unintentional or otherwise, for the readers.

In the Watch Tower publications the FBI *National Crime Reports* have been repeatedly referred to or quoted without any such acknowledgement, without a single word of caution. The statistics were even improved upon or “adjusted” – in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1983 – to show that “serious crimes in the United States increased over 1,000 percent from 1935 to 1980” (page 6). This statement, and the table presented on the same page to prove it, conceals another fact of the utmost importance: *that prior to the increase which set in in the 1960’s crime rates in the United States had been stable or even been decreasing during a whole quarter of a century!* That period may, in fact, have been unique in the history of American crime. As crime authority Silberman states:

For a quarter of a century, the United States, perhaps for the first time in its history, enjoyed a period in which crime rates were either stable or declining and in which fear of crime was relatively low. The death rate from homicide dropped by 50 percent between 1933 and the early ’40s; despite the FBI’s highly publicized gun battles with John Dillinger and other criminals, the rate of other serious crimes (rape, robbery, assault and burglary) declined by one-third. [21]

As one clear evidence of this decline, we may take a closer look at homicide, the most serious of the “serious crimes.” Homicide is, in fact, the only crime for which national long-term statistics exist that are *independent* of the FBI figures. Carefully kept by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, these statistics are considered “reasonably accurate,” at least from the early 1930’s onwards. [22]

In 1933, as shown by these figures, the murder rate in the United States was as high as 9.7 per 100,000 population. Then it began to decrease, until it reached a level of only 4.5 per 100,000 towards the end of the 1950’s. [23] The increase that then set in raised the number of homicides to over 20,000 annually, or to 9.8 per 100,000 population in the early 1980’s. A large, certainly newsworthy, increase, true – *but this is nearly exactly the same rate as in 1933!* Although very high, the American murder rate in the 1980’s was not unique then, but represented a return to an earlier level. [24] From 1992 to 1999 it decreased sharply to a rate of 5.7 per 100,000 in 1999. Since then it has remained at this lower level. [25]

The weakness of much of the statistical evidence used by proclaimers of the nearness of the end is clear. Yet crime is admittedly high in a considerable number of countries. Does this make our time distinctive? Is it possible that such high crime rates in the post-1914 period – or the post-1948 period pointed to by Hal Lindsey – have no parallels in earlier centuries?

Crime in the historical perspective

While crime in recent times has been given much space in the Watch Tower publications, any discussion of the extent of crime in the past has been wholly missing. The same has been true of most expositors whose writings tend to whip up a feeling that these are, far and away, the worst of all times. The fact that crime reached high levels in a number of countries in the 1920’s and 1930’s, and then again in the 1960’s, 1970’s, and 1980’s, does not prove that our time has seen more lawlessness than have earlier centuries. The evidence, in fact, is that crime was very often more prevalent in the past than it is today.

As observed by popular writer Colin Wilson, “**the history of mankind since about 2500 B.C. is little more than a non-stop record of murder, bloodshed and violence.**” Thus he concludes that “**human history has been fundamentally a history of crime.**” [26]

Not only is this conclusion corroborated by a study of past crime, historians who have delved into the subject also conclude that there is probably less crime today than in the past. Professor John Bellamy at the Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, even says:

In most modern western countries the level of crime has been so reduced that the misdeeds of the few serve rather to provide the ordinary citizen with escapist entertainment than to instill a sense of fear. [27]

For those who have been victims of crime or who now live in high crime areas, crime does indeed instill fear. But the fact remains that the actual percentage of the population affected is still not as great as it has been in earlier times of man’s history.

In the past, crime and disorder periodically seem to have been more or less out of control in many countries. It was with the growth of industrialization in the 19th century that the situation began to improve gradually in the western countries:

During the first half of the nineteenth century, all cities were dangerous – those of Europe as well as the United States. In the second half, London, Paris, and other European cities were bringing crime and disorder under control, while American cities were not – or so it appeared to contemporary observers. [28]

In the middle of the twentieth century the situation in American cities gave evidence of having changed also. In 1960, crime researcher Daniel Bell, for example, judged that **“a sober look at the problem shows that there is probably less crime today in the United States than existed a hundred, or fifty, or even twenty-five years ago, and that today the United States is a more lawful and safe country than popular opinion imagines.”** [29] True, that was written before the most recent crime wave began in the early 1960’s. But still in 1978 Silberman, commenting upon the fact that **“crime, violence, and lawlessness have been recurrent themes throughout American history,”** concluded that **“the country was more dangerous in the past than it is now.”** [30] Recently performed long-term studies on crime trends give support to this conclusion, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

The evidence of long-term studies: The United States

While criminologists often point out that there is probably less crime today than for example in the 19th century, relatively few thorough long-term studies seem to have been done that show the trends during longer periods. [31] Those existing, though, give a most interesting picture of the overall trends of criminal activity.

For the United States, there seems to be no *national* long-term study reaching back to the period before the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports. But a number of reliable *local* studies have been done that cover individual cities and states. None of these indicate that crime today has increased above that of the nineteenth century.

No comprehensive crime figures were collected prior to 1933, but studies of individual cities have been made, and they show that crime characteristically has its ups and downs, rather than a steady growth along with the population. James Q. Wilson, a crime expert at Harvard, has said that the early studies ‘agree that during the period immediately after the Civil War the rate of violent crime in the big cities was higher than at any other time in our history.’ [32]

Recent studies even indicate a sharp decline in some places:

None point to any clear proportional increase in serious crime within particular cities. And the most recent suggest, on the contrary, a sometimes striking proportional decrease. [33]

Crime statistics from the 19th century are, quite naturally, often very defective, but there are important exceptions. One example is Massachusetts, whose criminal records from the 19th century “are probably better than any kept elsewhere.” [34] The conclusions drawn from these are, therefore, of major significance:

While all criminal statistics are subject to some doubt, the central conclusion about figures from Massachusetts may be stated with confidence: serious crime in metropolitan Boston has declined sharply between the middle of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th. [35]

Registration of deaths in the United States started in 1880, but covered only a small group of states and cities and was far from complete and reliable. In 1906 the *Bureau of the Census* began publishing annual reports, *Mortality Statistics*, but it did not encompass the entire nation until 1933. The reports indicated a sharp rise in homicide during the first third of the 20th century. A closer analysis of the statistics, however, has recently revealed that this increase was illusory.

Douglas Eckberg, Professor of Sociology at the Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, discovered through a careful study that the reports were misleading in several ways. By correcting the sources of error, he could show that the period 1900-1932 was not characterized by any dramatic increase in the number of homicides. The frequency had varied between 6.4 and 9.7 per 100,000 during the whole period. [36]

Eckberg concludes his article with a retrospect of the nineteenth century:

We might hazard one tentative conclusion about long-term change in U.S. homicide. If the long nineteenth-century decline described by several researchers (e.g., Gurr 1989) led only to rates consistent with the present first-decade estimates, we have no reason to believe that nineteenth-century national rates ever approached those of the mid-1950s. Rather, they must be closer to (or even higher than) rates during the 1920s-1930s and the 1970s-1980s, because those rates are only moderately higher than were rates at the turn of the century. Conceivably, the peak homicide periods in the previous [19th] century were substantially more violent than is the present time. [37]

The long-term studies show that the present crime rate in the United States is not unique in the history of American crime. As Silberman explains, many Americans may have come to feel that way because the present rate was preceded by an abnormally low, perhaps uniquely low, crime rate in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's:

Because domestic tranquility appeared to be the norm, Americans who came of age during the 1940's and '50s were unaware of how violent and crime-ridden the United States had always been. Although they continued to romanticize violence in detective stories and Westerns, an entire generation became accustomed to peace in their daily lives. To most Americans, therefore, the upsurge in criminal violence that began around 1960 appeared to be an aberration from the norm rather than a return to it. [38]

Since the 1990's, the rates of serious crimes in the United States have declined sharply. As shown above, this includes the rate of violent crime, which peaked in 1991. [39]

To be sure, most countries have not had the dramatic rise of crime seen in the 1970's, 1980's, and the early 1990's in the United States. If even such high-crime activity in the United States is not unprecedented, likely even being surpassed in the nineteenth century, we might therefore expect to find that current crime rates in many other countries are even more clearly below their 19th-century levels. Do long-term studies exist to corroborate this?

The evidence of long-term studies: England

What a social evil crime often could be in the past is exemplified by John Bellamy's study of crime in England in the period 1290-1485:

In the England of the later middle ages the preservation of public order was very often the biggest problem the king had to face. ... Neither before that time nor since has the issue of public order bulked so large in English history. [40]

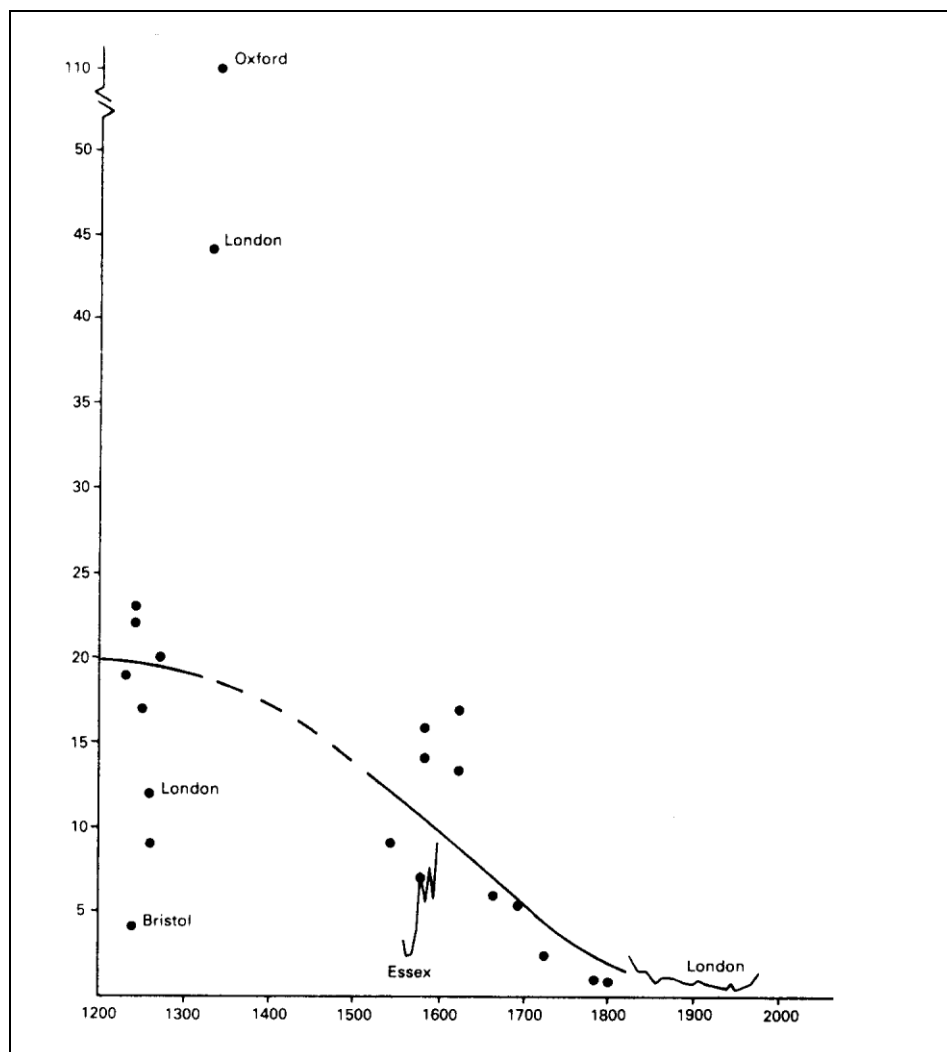
Britain is, in fact, the only country in the world where it is possible to study violent deaths since the Middle Ages to the present day. (Fig. 2) The French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais writes in his survey of criminal violence in England:

In previous centuries, violent death was common in the life of peasant societies. Although the homicide rate varied from one country to another, the incidence of murder was everywhere very high in comparison with the rates which prevail today. Homicide

rates greater than 20 per 100,000 were altogether common. In the rural area of Warwick, for example, in the thirteenth century, the homicide rate was 47 per 100,000 inhabitants. ... This high level of criminal violence diminished century by century. At the end of the seventeenth century, the death rate from homicide was, in Britain, around five per 100,000. ... The records, through the large number of murders which they reveal, offer the image of a brutal and violent society. Many victims were “found murdered” in fields, by paths or at the roadside. Whilst in recent centuries murder has primarily been the death of a person following an altercation between two individuals, in the eighteenth century, homicide was often carried out by groups, several innocent victims being found lying on the ground, killed by gangs of robbers. [41]

It may be added that the frequency of murder today has decreased to about 1.5 or less per 100,000, not only in England but in most countries in West and Central Europe.

FIGURE 2: HISTORICAL TRENDS IN VIOLENT CRIME IN ENGLAND



England: Homicides per 100,000 population, 13th to 20th centuries

(Graph reproduced from T. R. Gurr, “Historical Trends in Violent Crime: A Critical Review of the Evidence,” *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, iii, 1981, p. 313, fig. 1.)

The evidence of long-term studies: The case of France

Probably no other country in the world can present more reliable crime statistics for the 19th century than France:

The data available concerning urbanization, crime, and collective violence in France during that period are exceptionally rich and exceptionally uniform, compared with the data available for any part of the world today or yesterday. [42]

When, therefore, Abdul Qaiyum Lodhi of the University of Waterloo and Charles Tilly of the University of Michigan in 1973 presented their careful study of long-run trends in crime in France, covering the period from 1826 to 1962, their results cannot be easily dismissed. And their conclusions about that 136-year period are indeed surprising:

Over the long run, crimes against property [burglary, larceny, theft] appear to have declined significantly in frequency, crimes against persons [murder, assault, rape] fluctuated mildly without trend, and collective violence varied sharply from year to year. [43]

While the rate of violent crimes remained essentially stable and even decreased during the 136-year period, property crimes showed a very marked decrease. As shown by the graph in Figure 1 above (section “Industrialization, urbanization and crime”), persons accused of crimes against property decreased dramatically from 174 per 100,000 population in 1836 to less than 10 per 100,000 in 1962! [44]

The evidence of long-term studies: other European countries

Reliable statistics on violent crimes (homicide and assault) have been kept in *Sweden* since 1750. These show that the homicide rate was highest in the 1840’s and lowest in 1920-1950. [45] Although the rate then doubled up to 1975, it has stayed at that level since. The present rate is about 1 per 100,000, which is still below the levels during most of the 19th century.

Although statistics on homicide in Sweden only go back to the middle of the 18th century, information for a number of individual cities is available from the 15th century onwards. Eva Österberg, professor of history at Lund University, Sweden, has studied the changes in violent crimes during this period. She found that the first half of the period, 15th–17th centuries, was the most violent, with a homicide rate varying from seven and up to 50 times that of today! [46]

In a more recent study of the period 1576-1939 criminologist Maria Kaspersson shows that in Stockholm at the end of the 16th century the frequency of homicide was 56-80 per 100,000 inhabitants. In the 18th century it had fallen to one tenth of that number, and in the period 1920-1939, when the frequency reached its lowest level, it was down to 0.4 per 100,000! Kaspersson concludes:

Thus, during the period studied in the treatise [1576-1939], the frequency of lethal violence may have declined to a hundredth! [47]

In other Scandinavian countries, too, the rates of criminal violence were considerably higher in the past than today. Sverre Steen and Hans Eyvind Naess, who have studied the criminality in *Norway* in earlier centuries, give a very dark picture of violence and immorality during the 16th and 17th centuries. [48] And historical studies of criminal violence in *Finland* similarly show that violence was the predominant crime in the 16th century. In the 18th and

19th centuries, too, it reached very high levels, and homicide was even more common than in Sweden during those centuries. [49]

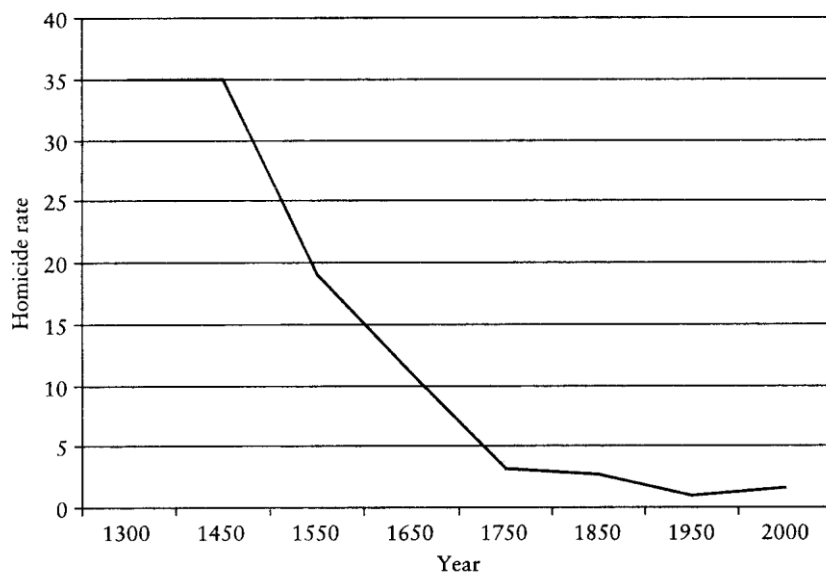
Long-term studies for other European countries show that trends were similar to those in England, France, and the Scandinavian countries. Summarizing the extent research performed in recent decades, Kaspersson finds that **“crime in the early modern period indicates that the frequency of homicide decreased significantly between 1500 and 1800 across northern European societies.”** [50]

This conclusion is confirmed in a recent overview by one of the leading scholars of the subject, Pieter Spierenburg, Professor of Historical Criminology at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. In the work, *A History of Murder*, he documents the long-term decline in the incidence of homicide in Europe during the last seven centuries, from about 1300 to 2000. [51]

As Spierenburg shows, the homicide rate in Europe was highest in the 14th century. In some cities it was as high as 110 per 100,000 (Oxford in the 1340s and Florence in the second half of the same century). Rates around 50 were not uncommon in many other European cities. The violence then dropped century by century, to below 5 in the 18th century, 2.6 in the 19th and 1.4 in the 20th century. [52] The lowest level was reached in the 1950s and 1960s:

In Europe west of the Iron Curtain, the 1950s were, on average, the least violent period in history. This decade had the lowest homicide rate ever, and in most countries prosecution rates for assault were down as well. It was an ebbing tide even in the United States, although the level there was considerably higher. In some European countries, homicide and assault slightly rose in the 1960’s, but on the whole this decade was comparable to the preceding one. [53]

FIGURE 3: VIOLENT CRIME IN EUROPE, 1300-2000 AD

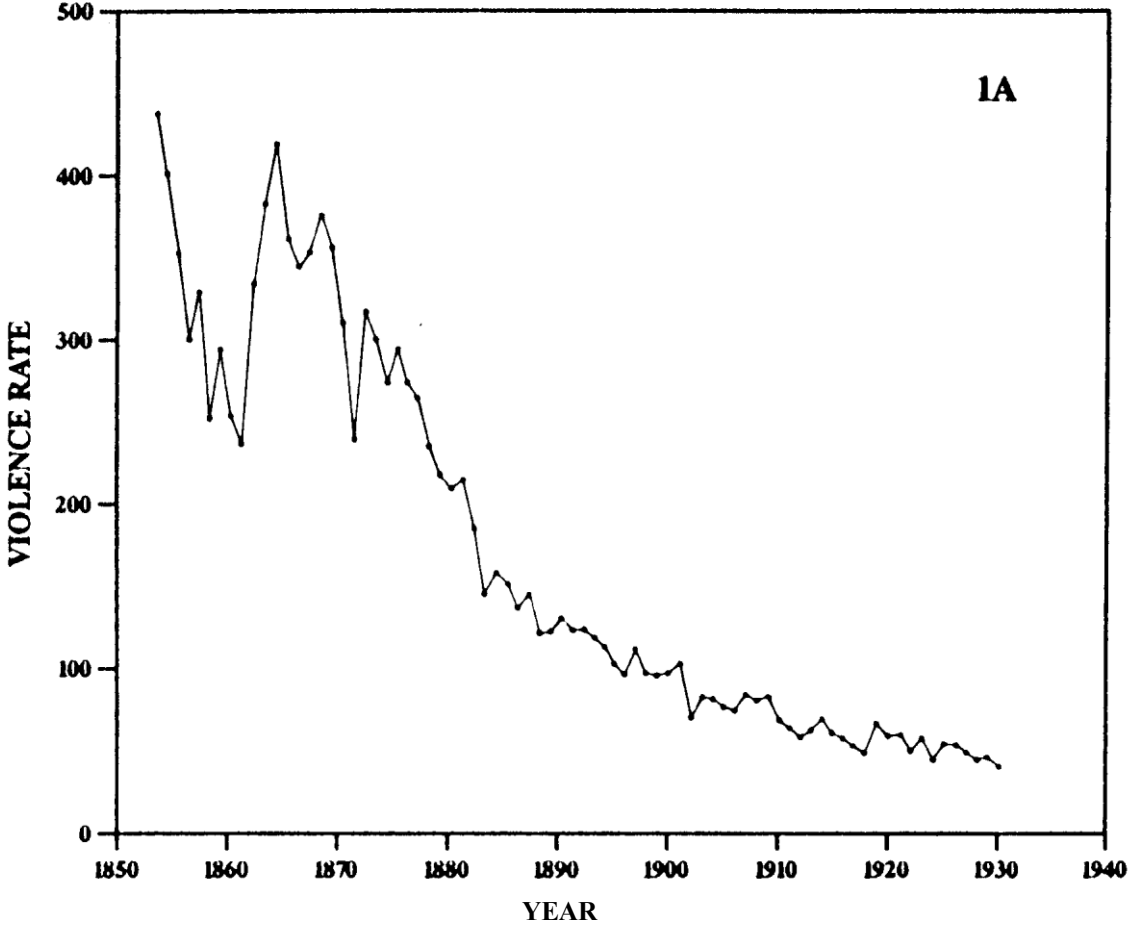


The long-term decline of homicide in Europe per 100,000 population, 1300-2000 AD. – Reproduced from Pieter Spierenburg, *A History of Murder* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), page 4.

The evidence of long-term studies: other countries

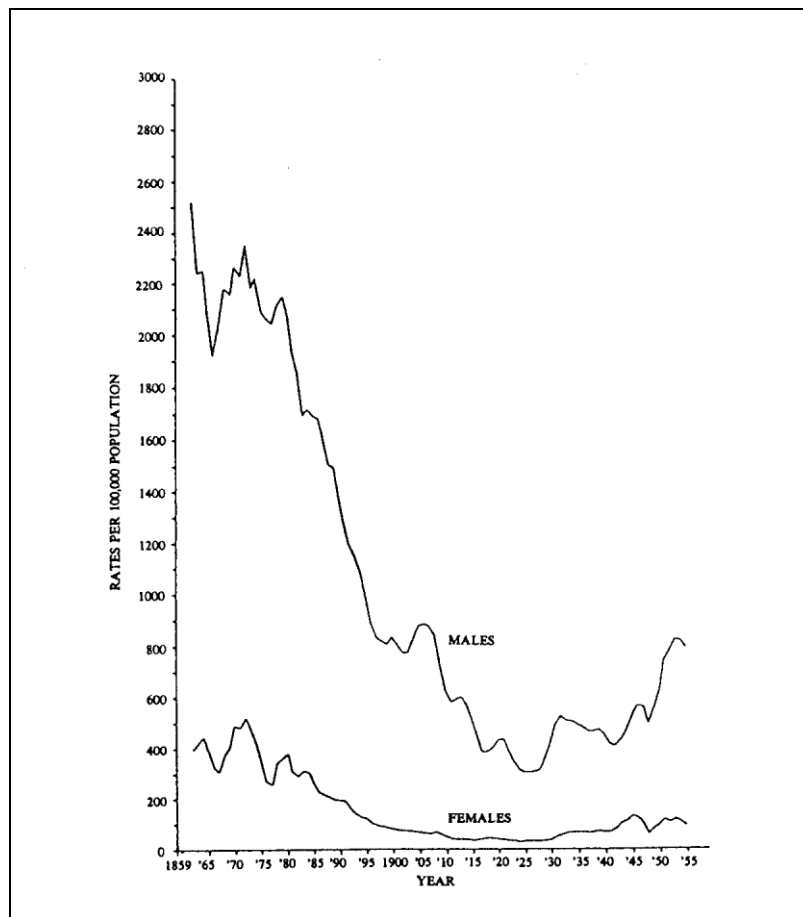
Turning to other industrialized countries outside Europe and the United States, the available studies of violence show similar patterns: a long-term, dramatic decline reaching the lowest level in the middle of the 20th century, when it turns into an upward, but less dramatic trend culminating in the late 1980's or early 1990's. Typical examples of the long-term decline in violence are the two graphs shown below for New Zealand and Toronto, Canada.

FIGURE 4: VIOLENT CRIMES ON NEW ZEALAND, 1853–1930



Persons charged with violent crimes on New Zealand, 1853–1930. Per 100,000 population and year. (From M. Fairburn & S. Haslett, “Violent Crime in Old and New Societies,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 20:1, 1986, page 111)

FIGURE 5: VIOLENT CRIMES IN TORONTO, CANADA, 1859-1955



Males and females arrested for violent offenses in Toronto, Canada, 1859–1955. (From H. Boritch & J. Hagan, “A Century of Crime in Toronto,” *Criminology*, Vol. 28:4, November 1990, page 575.)

So far, we have been dealing with crime trends in industrialized countries. What about *developing countries*? Relatively few of these countries have any data on crime trends that go further back than to the 1930’s. But studies of crime in countries that are in various stages of increasing industrialization and urbanization support the results found for the industrialized countries, namely, that industrial and economic development is usually accompanied by a decrease in violent crimes. [54]

The impact of “Tuchman’s Law”

As the evidence demonstrates, crime clearly has its “ups and downs.” The “crime wave” in the 1970s and 1980s is no exception to this rule. In many countries crime has since shown a downward trend, having reached a peak in the 1970’s and 1980’s.

Swedish criminologist Lars Westfelt has studied the crime trends since World War II in nine European countries. He found the trends to be relatively similar across Western Europe. In all countries crime increased from the 1950’s until the 1980’s, when a slow-down set in. In most of these countries the increase had been rather dramatic, with the exception of Germany and Austria, both of which had a rather slow increase of certain crime categories during the period. Then, in the early 1990’s, the increase suddenly stopped in all countries, and in a number of them crimes have been decreasing. [55]

The focus in this chapter has been on serious crimes, particularly the most serious of the serious crimes – assault, manslaughter and murder. Some other types of crime that do not include violence, such as theft, increased sharply in many countries during some decades from the mid-20th century onwards. The careful study by Hans von Hofer, published in 1984 and covering the period 1750–1980, reveals that thefts passed the 1850 level in about 1950 and then increased sharply for two decades. [56]

There are factors in connection with some types of crime that make it difficult to compare their extent today with their extent in the past. The increase in thefts, for example, may partly be due to increased reporting. Von Hofer points out that, after the introduction of householder's comprehensive insurances, these have been built out especially since the 1950's, embracing 91% of all households in Sweden in 1978. As the insurance companies pay only in cases of thefts reported to the police, the number of reported thefts has certainly increased sharply since the 1950's. On the other hand, von Hofer also notes that there is a lot more to steal today than in the past, including many items that did not exist in the past, such as bicycles, cars, stereo equipments, computers, and mobile phones. About *half* of the 515,000 thefts reported in Sweden in 1981 referred to stealing of (or *from*) cars, bicycles, and shoplifting. [57]

Another reason for the increase in some types of crime is that our modern society has required more and more laws that criminalize different kinds of behaviour. We may just think of all the traffic laws that our motorized society has enforced. It is particularly property crimes and traffic crimes that have increased most dramatically in the post-war period. Further, different types of violent behaviour that were tolerated in the past have been increasingly criminalized by new laws, including wife-battering and corporal punishment of children, at school and at home.

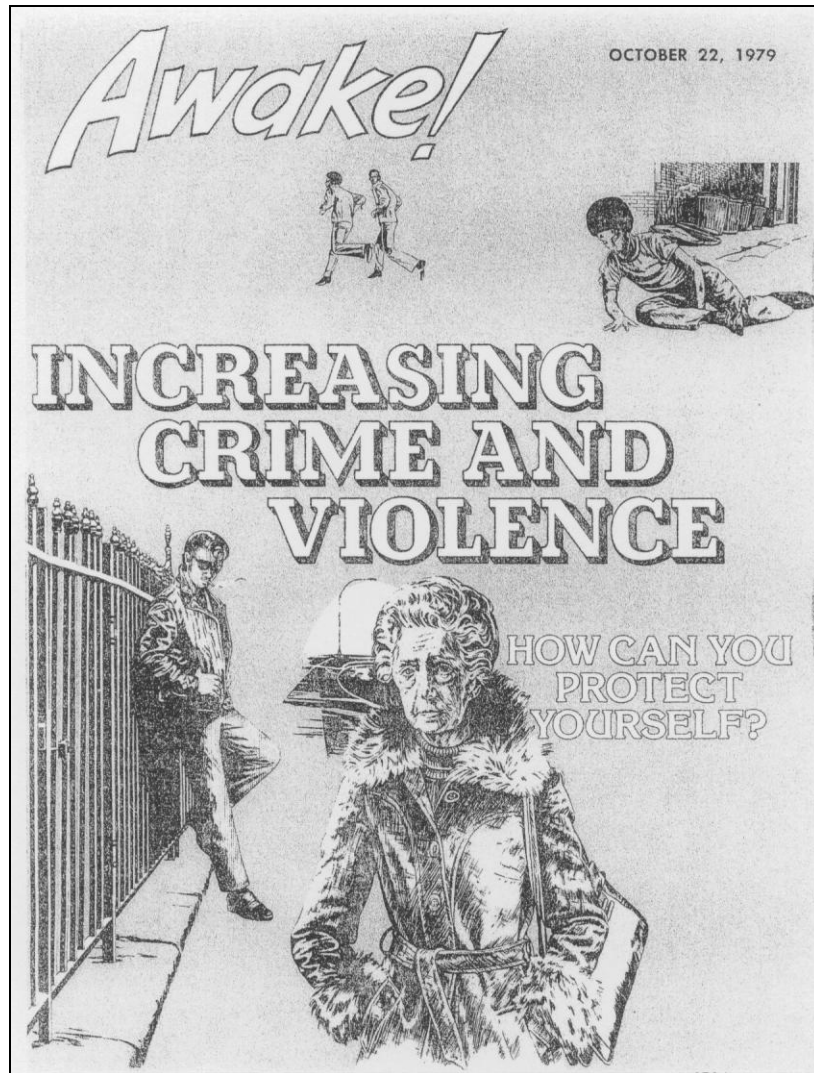
As pointed out earlier, crime rates in the United States have been declining – violent crimes very sharply – particularly since 1991. [58] Often people seem to take it for granted that crime must be increasing, even when it is not. As pointed out by Canadian criminologist Lynn McDonald, even scholars have often been so committed to the theory of rising crime that they have been blind to the factual data. Speaking of his own research on the crime rates in Canada, McDonald says:

I know, personally, how long it took me to conclude that post-war crime rates in Canada were not rising (except for minor offenses); I kept redrawing the graphs and recomputing the slopes, thinking I had made a mistake! [59]

Why, then, do people seem to take it for granted that the crime rate is rising, even when it is not? Without doubt, sensational, and sometimes distorted, newspaper coverage is to a great extent responsible for this. Commenting on the newspaper headlines about street violence, terrorism, rapes, and so on in Sweden, Johannes Knutsson of the Swedish Crime Prevention Council described **“the explosion of violence last summer [in 1983] as ‘the journalists’ brainchild’ . . . The newspapers twist reality, and the politicians, deliberately or otherwise, abet them in doing so.”** Emphasizing that a number of types of crimes had actually been *decreasing*, Knutsson said that society formerly **“used to incorporate a lot more everyday violence. . . . Criminal violence too used to be more widespread, for example in Sweden at the turn of the century, when there was a lot more heavy drinking.”** [60]

Escalating reporting on crime in the newspapers, then, may be a highly misleading indication of the true state of crime rates today. The validity of “Tuchman's Law” – quoted at the beginning of this chapter – was brought out in a study by sociologists Jason Ditton and James Duffy published in 1983. They found that there is an “over-emphasis upon crimes of violence” in the newspapers, and particularly an “over-reporting of crimes involving sex.”

[61] Further, “an increasing body of evidence indicates that people’s growing anxiety about crime is not commensurate with increases in crime itself,” and that “the fear of crime is currently out of all proportions to its incidence.” [62] As one example of this they refer to another study that revealed that **“In a period when the incidence of violent crime declined by 2.4 per cent, newspaper coverage of violent crime increased by 11.1 per cent”!** [63] Lawlessness, then, often increases only in the newspapers, and, one may add, in some religious journals and literature seeking to create an excited state of mind regarding claimed fulfillment of a prophetic “sign.”



Sensationalist newspaper reporting creates a fear of crime that often is “out of all proportion to its incidence.” Pictures like the above on the front page of *Awake!* of October 22, 1979, foster the idea that the whole world is as crime-infested as certain streets in New York City or other big-city areas of the United States.

The evidence to support the claim that our century is experiencing increasing lawlessness worldwide “on a magnitude never before beheld” simply does not exist. To the contrary, historical studies, including long-term studies of crime rates in specific cities, states and countries, indicate that there was often greater lawlessness in the past than today in many

places. This may well have been true on an earthwide scale, in view of the fact that crime usually increases in times of famine, pestilence and war.

More than this, there is sound reason for understanding Jesus' words about increasing lawlessness (in Matthew chapter twenty-four) as applying, not to the world in general where criminality has always been widespread, but to conditions among professed servants of God, including those within the Christian congregation he would establish. His preceding words indicate this, for he describes what would befall his followers due to persecution and goes on to say that **“many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”** It is in such religious context that he then says, **“Because of the increase of wickedness [lawlessness], the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”** (Matthew 24:9-13, *New International Version*) Jesus, in fact, used the term “lawlessness” elsewhere in describing, not obvious criminals, but the hypocritical, dishonest conduct of religious persons. (Matthew 7:23; 23:28) In his parable of the wheat and the weeds he likened such doers of lawlessness to the spreading weeds and said that in the day of judgment his angels would “collect out from his kingdom all things that are causing stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness.” – Matthew 13:38-41, *New World Translation*.

The writings of Jesus' apostles amply testify to the growth of wickedness and lawlessness that developed among professed Christians in later years of the apostolic period. (First Timothy 4: 1; Second Timothy 3:13; Second Peter 2:1-3, 10-14, 17-21) When Paul spoke of a coming revelation of “the man of lawlessness” he was not speaking of a source perpetrating common criminal activity such as robbery of physical property, or acts of physical violence such as murder, but of the greatest lawlessness of all, the usurpation of the place and authority that rightly belong only to the supreme Sovereign, God, combined with the religious deception of fellow humans. Paul also warned his contemporaries that “the secret power of [such] lawlessness is already at work.” (Second Thessalonians 2:3-11, NIV) The writings of the apostle John in particular show that such increase of lawlessness within the first-century congregation did indeed cause the love of many to grow cold, making necessary John's strenuous urging on behalf of love of one's brother. - First John 2:9-11; 3:4, 10-18.

The preceding understanding of Jesus' words at least is in harmony with the known facts, confirmed by the Scriptural accounts themselves. The same cannot be said for the claims made by those who assert that our day is seeing a Biblically foretold increase of crime of unsurpassed proportions. The known facts are to the contrary.

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY ABOUT LAWLESSNESS TODAY AND IN THE PAST

THE UNITED STATES:

“Crime, violence, and lawlessness have been recurrent themes throughout American history. ... the country was more dangerous in the past than it is today.” – Charles E. Silberman, *Criminal Violence. Criminal Justice*, New York, 1978, pp. 21, 22.

SWEDEN:

“In a longer perspective violence has decreased. The extent of criminal violence brought into court was considerably greater during the 19th century. ... Historically, we have probably never had less crime than now.”—Criminologist Johannes Knutsson in the Swedish journal *Uppväxtvillkor* (published by Statens ungdomsråd, Stockholm), No. 1, 1990, page 38.

EUROPE:

“In Europe west of the Iron Curtain, the 1950s were, on average, the least violent period in history. This decade had the lowest homicide rate ever, and in most countries prosecution rates for assault were down as well.” – Pieter Spierenburg, *A History of Murder. Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, USA: Polity Press, 2008), page 203.

THE WESTERN WORLD:

“These findings [the decrease of violent crimes in Toronto 1859–1955] lend further support to the growing number of historical studies that find that, over the past century in most Western nations, rates of serious crime have declined steeply The cumulative evidence strongly suggests that long-term trends in official crime rates have followed what is best described as a ‘distended U-curve,’ falling sharply from the mid-nineteenth century and then rising more moderately in mid-twentieth century (Lane, 1980b). Compared with the long-term downward trend, recent increases are proportionately small and have even been interpreted as ‘simply the latest, and best documented deviation from the underlying [downward] trend’ (Gurr, 1981:342).” – H. Boritch & J. Hagan in *Criminology*, Vol. 28:4, Nov. 1990, page 574.

THE WORLD:

“Our violence exists, undeniably, but it is nothing as compared to ancient, feudal or even classical violence. The fear is there, however, irrational, and fostered by the sensationalism of the media.”—Demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais in the *International Social Science Journal*, May 1992 (published by UNESCO), page 221.

“Today many persons seem to be hypnotized and infatuated by the thought that criminal violence has increased. But such an increase of violent crimes can scarcely be verified. Rather, the countries on the earth seem to be gradually pacified; whether it is admitted or not, our manners have become more civilized.”—Professor Yves Michaud, *La Violence* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992). Translated from the Swedish edition of 1993, page 31.

Notes and references

- 1 Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (London, 1978), p. xviii.
- 2 Matts Bergmark, *Från pest till polio*, 3rd ed. (Stockholm, 1983), p. 74.
- 3 A. M. Campbell, *The Black Death and Men of Learning* (New York, 1931), p. 129.
- 4 *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. A staff report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, edited by H. D. Graham & T. R. Gurr, Vol. 1 (Washington D.C., 1969), p. 5. This work will henceforth be referred to as *VIA*.
- 5 *VIA*, Vol. I, p. 7.
- 6 A. Q. Lodhi and C. Tilly, "Urbanization, Crime, and Collective Violence in 19th-century France," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, 1973, p. 296.
- 7 Lynn McDonald, "Theory and evidence of rising crime in the nineteenth century," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33, 1982, p. 406. "English crime rates decreased so far that by 1900 the real incidence of serious crime might have been lower there than it had ever been," writes Neil McKendrick in his introduction to the book, *Crime and the Law. The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500*, ed. by Dr. V. A. C. Gatrell *et al* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1980), page 7.
- 8 Roger Lane, "Urbanization and Criminal Violence in the 19th century: Massachusetts as a test case," *VIA*, Vol 2 (1969), p. 366. Thus, as Lane points out, "over a long term urbanization has had a settling, literally a civilizing, effect on the population involved." – *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- 9 Sir Leon Radzinowics and Joan King, *The Growth of Crime* (London, 1977), pp. 10, 11. The American criminologist J. S. Cockburn, writing in the same year, commented on the "crime wave" in similar vein: "Crime for our generation has become a common place. Conditioned by a bombardment of criminal 'statistics,' we tend to regard a soaring crime rate and the attendant debates on law enforcement, capital punishment and gun control as the peculiar monopoly of, and to some extent the natural price for, our modern industrialized society. Viewed in a broader historical perspective, however, our preoccupation with crime appears less novel. Most nineteenth century Englishmen were convinced that crime was increasing as never before; eighteenth century commentators were thoroughly alarmed by what they saw as a rising tide of violent criminality; and complaints of the imminent breakdown of law and order punctuated the Middle Ages." Of the increase in crime and lawlessness reported from many countries in the late sixteenth century, Cockburn remarks that "The trends were apparently universal." – *Crime in England 1500–1800* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), p. 49.
- 10 *VIA*, Vol. II, p. 628.
- 11 *Science*, December 1984, pp. 43, 46. Two thirds of all homicides (murder and manslaughter) in the United States are committed with guns, which are explained by the fact that "Americans own more guns per capita than any other people in the world." – *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 12 Although these show terrifying increases, they are also a bit confusing. For the decade 1960 -1969 the *Awake!* of January 22, 1970, states on page 9 that *serious crimes* in the United States increased 88 percent. *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1972, however, raised the figure for the period to 148 percent (page 614). Still more impressive are the tables shown in the June 1, 1983 issue of *The Watchtower*, telling that "serious crimes in the United States increased over 1,000 percent from 1935 to 1980"

(page 6). Most of this claimed increase must have occurred since 1960, as the figures given by the Watch Tower Society indicate an increase of only 77 percent up to that year!

13 VIA, Vol. II p. 372. Sophia M. Robinson of the Columbia School of Social Work even stated that “the FBI’s figures are not worth the paper they are printed on.” – *Ibid.*, p. 372.

14 Charles E. Silberman, *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice* (New York, 1978), p. 448.

15 Ramsey Clark, *Crime in America* (Cassell & London, 1971), p. 45.

16 Gwynn Nettler, *Explaining Crime*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1978), pp. 70, 71. Increasing *willingness* to report crime at least partly explains the statistical increase in *rapes* in recent decades. The women’s liberation movement is supposed to have played an important part in this. (Nettler, p. 56; Silberman, p. 452.) Although a high number of rapes still go unreported, there is also evidence to show that many rape reports are unfounded. Of all rapes reported in 1968, for instance, 18 percent were, on investigation, found to be groundless! – R. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

17 The example of the New York police reports has nearly become classic: “Crime figures, the FBI thought, seemed remarkably low. On checking it found that in 1950, for example, the number of property crimes reported by the police were about half those reported privately by insurance companies. ... Following a survey by police expert Bruce Smith, a new system of central recording was installed. ... In the one year following the change, assaults rose 200 per cent, robberies rose 400 per cent, and burglaries 1,300 per cent over 1948 figures. As Smith concluded, ‘such startling rises . . . do not in themselves represent an increase in crime, but rather a vast improvement in crime reporting.’ ” (Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1960, pp. 138, 139.) Similar improvements in the reporting system have created other “paper increases,” for instance in Philadelphia between 1951 and 1953 and in Chicago in 1960. (Bell, p. 138; Silberman, p. 449.) A different type of artificial crime increase concerned *larceny*, defined as stealing of property valued at more than fifty dollars. The increase of this crime was for many years partly caused by *inflation*. Many items, that originally were worth less than fifty dollars, sooner or later passed the fifty dollar limit and so crept into the statistics when stolen. (Clark, p. 53.) Larceny-theft was not re-defined until 1973.

18 In 1958, for example, the whole statistical system was overhauled, after which the Bureau “doesn’t consider the pre- and post-1958 figures to be entirely fungible [interchangeable].” – VIA, Vol. II, p. 376.

19 VIA, Vol. II pp. 380, 381; Silberman, p. 449.

20 VIA, Vol. II, pp. 381-385; Silberman, p. 449. Yet there were still great discrepancies between the FBI’s reports and the national crime surveys, that were difficult to explain. (See L. E. Cohen & K. C. Land, “Discrepancies Between Crime Reports and Crime Surveys,” *Criminology*, Vol 22, No 4, November 1984, pp. 499-529.) The criticism of the *Uniform Crime Reports* continued. In 1988, for example, criminologist William J. Chambliss at the George Washington University summarized his devastating criticism of the FBI’s statistics in these words: “The major source of crime statistics, the *Uniform Crime Reports*, published annually by the FBI, are misleading statistics that, unfortunately, form the basis for much of the misinformation used by the media, politicians, and reporters.” (William J. Chambliss, *Exploring Criminology*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p. 55) And – we may add – it is also used by religious writers to stir up a feeling that “the end is just around the corner.”

21 Silberman, p. 30.

22 Silberman, p. 28; VIA, Vol. II, p. 375.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Criminal homicide in the U.S.A. passed 20,000 as early as in 1974. As this was twice the number murdered in 1965, the *Awake!* of November 22, 1975, predicted that “there will be over 40,000 killings a year by the early 1980’s.” (Page 3.) Nothing of the kind took place. The murder rate in the early 1980’s was still roughly the same as in 1974, with a peak of 10.2 per 100,000 in 1980. Then it fell to 7.9 per 100,000 in 1984. It rose again in the late 1980’s and was back at 9.8 per 100,000 in 1991.

25 *The Disaster Center*: <http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/uscrime.htm>.

26 Colin Wilson, *A Criminal History of Mankind* (London, 1985), pp. 4, 6. True, Wilson also says, with reference to the outbreak of World War II, that the world at that time “exploded into an unparalleled epoch of murder, cruelty and violence” (page 5). This statement does not refer to ordinary social crime, however, but primarily to the bloodshed during the war. As was shown in the chapter on wars, the death figure during World War II was probably unparalleled if measured in *absolute* numbers, but not if measured in *proportion to the entire population*.

27 John Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London and Toronto, 1973), p. 1.

28 Silberman, p. 23.

29 Bell (1960), pp. 137, 155.

30 Silberman, pp. 21, 22.

31 Historical criminology is a new discipline. The first conference on the subject was held as recently as in February 1972. (*Nordisk Tidskrift for Kriminalvidenskab*, Vol. 61, Hefte 3.- 4., 1973, p. 285.)

32 Attorney Fred P. Graham in *VIA*, Vol. II, pp. 374, 375.

33 History professor Roger Lane in *VIA*, Vol. II, pp. 359, 360.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 360.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 360. The most comprehensive study, “covering the years from 1849 to 1951, shows a drop of nearly two thirds in those crimes which the FBI classifies as ‘major.’” (P. 360.)

36 Douglas Eckberg, “Estimates of Early Twentieth-Century U.S. Homicide Rates: an Econometric Forecasting Approach,” *Demography*, Vol. 32:1, 1995, pp. 1-4, 8, 13.

37 *Ibid.*, page 14.

38 Silberman, p. 31. Compare also page 19.

39 Elliott Currie, *Punishment in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1998), pp. 21-23.

40 John Bellamy, *op. cit.* (1973), page 1.

41 Jean-Claude Chesnais, “The history of violence: homicide and suicide through the ages,” *International Social Science Journal* (published by UNESCO), No. 132, May 1992, page 229. This picture of a long-term decrease in criminal violence is confirmed by other criminologists. Lawrence Stone, for example, stated back in 1983: “What already seems clear, however, is that medieval English

society was twice as violence-prone as early modern English society, and early modern English society at least five times more violence-prone than contemporary English society.” – L. Stone, “Interpersonal violence in English Society 1300-1980,” in *Past & Present*, No. 101, November 1983, page 32. Cf. also the more recent overview by James A. Sharpe, “Crime in England: Long-Term Trends and the Problem of Modernization,” in Eric A. Johnson and Eric H. Monkkonen (eds.), *The Civilization of Crime* (University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 17-34.

42 Lodhi and Billy, “Urbanization, Crime, and Collective Violence in 19th century France,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, 1973, p. 297.

43 Lodhi and Tilly, *op. cit.*, p. 296. Actually, the homicide rate, too, shows a slight downward trend during the period, as has been demonstrated by more recent studies. The highest rate occurred in the first part of the period, 1825-1830, with 1.37 murders per 100,000 population. The lowest rate was reached in 1951-1960, with 0.39 per 100,000. Although the period since 1960 has had a slight increase, the homicide rate is still considerably less than that in the 19th century. – Professor Yves Michaud, *La Violence* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), chapter 2. As Michaud points out, the rate of violent crimes in France was much higher in earlier centuries, for example in the 18th century.

44 Lodhi and Tilly, *op. cit.*, p. 301. Since 1970 serious crimes have been increasing. (Nettler, p. 20)

45 Hanns von Hofer, “Ökat våld och/eller vidgade definitioner? En empirisk och teoretisk analys av den långsiktiga våldsutvecklingen,” *Nordisk Tidskrift för Kriminalvetenskap*, Vol. 93:2, 2006, p. 196.

46 Eva Österberg in *Scandia. Tidskrift för historisk forskning*, Band 57:1, 1991, pp. 72-74. The least violent period since 1452 fell in 1911-1965 (p. 74).

47 Maria Kaspersson, *Dödligt våld i Stockholm på 1500-, 1700- och 1900-talen* (Stockholm: Krim. inst., Stockholms universitet, 2000), pp. 39, 104, 113, 229-230.

48 Eva Österberg, *op. cit.* (1991), p. 68.

49 Petri Karonen in *Historisk tidskrift*, No. 1, 1995, p. 72; Kirsi Sirén in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, Vol. 80:1, 1995, pp. 46-48, 53.

50 Maria Kaspersson, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

51 Pieter Spierenburg, *A History of Murder. Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, USA: Polity Press, 2008).

52 Spierenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 106, 107, 167-169, 199-201, 208, 209, 223.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

54 J. Q. Wilson & R. J. Herrnstein, *Crime and Human Nature* (New York, 1985), pp. 408, 440-446.

55 Lars Westfelt, *Brott och straff i Sverige och Europa* (“Crime and Punishment in Sweden and Europe”), a doctoral thesis published by Kriminologiska institutionen, Stockholm University, 2001, pp. 19-20, 62, 74, 184, 188.

56 Hanns von Hofer, *Brott och straff i Sverige*, SCB, Stockholm, 1984, pp. 5:6 and Diagram 3:3 and 5:5.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 3:2, 9ff.

58 Elliott Currie, *Punishment in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1998), pp. 21-23.

59 Lynn McDonald, "Theory and evidence of rising crime in the nineteenth century," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33 (1982), p. 417. An increase set in in 1966. – G. Nettler, *Explaining Crime*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1978), p. 26.

60 *News & Views* (an information paper for immigrants in Sweden), No. 28, Sept. 14, 1984, p. 1.

61 Ditton and Duffy, "Bias in the newspapers reporting on crime news," *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 23, No. 2, April 1983, p. 162.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 164.