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POLICE SCIENCE

COMMUNITY POLICING: AN ASSESSMENT

A. C. GERMANN

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The current tensions, revolts, riots, and rebellions in American cities are deplored by all thinking citizens of good will. Novelists, sociologists, psychologists, and social psychiatrists have pointed to the alienation, both individual and group, that shatters the unity and stability of our communities. Many citizens, looking ahead, worry over the threatening union between the young radicals—few in number—and the dispossessed and disenfranchised—who number in the millions. Foreign and domestic problems involve continual debate about the morality, rationality, and propriety of government policy and trigger demonstrations that involve not only odd and immature citizens, but also some of the most honored and respected members of our communities. The control of police is as hotly debated as the control of riots. Our core areas seethe, and democratic dialogue is often replaced by street debates that involve bricks and molotov cocktails vs. billy-clubs and tear gas. The police are seen by some citizens as men who "protect and serve" and by other citizens as men who "coerce and beat."

From coast to coast, police and sheriff's departments have initiated radical changes in program as they arm themselves in preparation for guerilla warfare. The Newark, New Jersey, *Ledger* of August 9, 1967, reported some \$331,000 budgeted by the city for riot control equipment including AR-15 rifles, barbed-wire, armored cars, and high-intensity lights to blind snipers. The Los Angeles *Times* of February 15, 1968 reported a secret police program to put down riots which included riflemen with telescopic sights, a "general staff" plan similar to the military commands, black cloth covers for "their glistening white helmets," fiber shields

"similar in appearance to those carried by Crusaders," and the budgeting of two armored cars.

Dr. Richard A. Myren, Dean of the School of Criminal Justice, State University of New York at Albany, submitted a paper on "The Role of the Police" to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. In that paper, speaking of functions that are regularly assigned to police agencies, he said:

"Although they do have an important role to play in civil defense in case of invasion, police do not have authority nor responsibility for maintaining tank, paratroop, and similar military units as do the para-military police organizations of some other countries. Police in the United States are also not lawfully assigned the role of controlling and suppressing political opposition to the party in power, although there have been instances, at particular times and places, when they have seemingly assumed or been assigned this role illicitly."

The Vietnam War has been criticized because it quietly but rapidly escalated from a small program involving a few military advisors to a full-scale war involving over a half-million American troops. Will American police agencies likewise quietly but rapidly escalate their programs to become full-fledged para-military organizations in these United States? Will the American policeman soon come to describe himself as a "citizen soldier"? These questions deserve serious consideration by all citizens interested in the role of police in a free society.

Vitally necessary changes—available housing, increased employment opportunity, crash pro-

grams in education—have been receiving but token attention and minimum action. Many citizens who will not support open housing, curbs on job discrimination, or money for schools, irrationally excoriate communists, criminals, and outside agitators and call for stronger repression and heavier sanctions whenever ill-advised action programs seek to achieve change by the use of violence. If we crush all such violence with violence and yet continue to give only token attention to needed change, it is easy to understand how angry citizens lose hope. If we decline to relate to the frustrated people of our cities, it is not easy to blame them for following other banners. If our answer to the agonized cry of the deprived lies in patronizing or derogatory speeches, jail or death, can we really expect more than the rocks and fires we have experienced? Commenting on the crisis in our cities, the late Senator Robert Kennedy recently said:

"It is right to be against violence. And it is easy to be against violence. But those who tell us that the answer to civil strife is simply more police and bigger jails, who blame a few agitators or a handful of criminals—such men betray the future of the American nation. Violence is wrong, but it is also a reminder. It is a reminder that millions of American citizens have been shut out from the blessing of American freedom. It is a reminder of our common failure to ensure opportunity for the black man, and the American Indian, for the Mexican-American and the Puerto Rican—for all of the oppressed in our midst. It is a reminder that the American promise is still unfulfilled . . . We must reject absolutely the leadership of fear, the cries of those who find repression more congenial than justice, and anger more popular than compassion." (1)

Many of the recent holocausts have been triggered by some police action. Why? Is this due to the fact that many do not look at policing as the enforcement of justice—but experience it as the enforcement of injustice? Or is it due to the fact that the man in blue is seen as the most highly visible representative of the "other" community—the affluent, apathetic, self-satisfied body of people who really do not care? Or is it due to the fact that our police are the most easily available target for the coalescence of anger? In any event, the universality of such triggering is an interesting phenomenon worthy of study.

"Law and Order" is important—but justice, the

rendering of each his due, is more important, and it is possible that all of us may learn much from these trying days. All barriers to understanding must be torn down; emotionalism and scapegoating must be rejected. It is far easier to point a finger at a communist, criminal, outside agitator, indifferent politician, or inept policeman, than it is to say "mea culpa"—"through *my* fault."

We can no longer afford the luxury of simplistic judgment whereby the community and the police cry "shame" to each other. We must quickly come to appreciate that community policing is a matter of shared responsibility and total involvement of all citizens—whether or not they wear badges. We must quickly come to appreciate that the policeman is simply a citizen who gives his full-time career attention to matters which must be the responsible concern of all citizens. We must quickly come to appreciate that the policeman is a mirror of the community and barometer of community values—good or bad.

THE COMMUNITY SCENE

Our communities very often seem to want their police "to make people good," a commendable goal, but not the proper function of police. Our communities often seem to want their police to protect the community from "the questioner of the status quo," the non-conformist, and such a desire, in these days of social protest, is unrealistic. Our extremists are questioning moderation, our peace demonstrators are questioning militarism, our minorities are questioning racism, our hippies are questioning materialism, and our youth are questioning the hypocrisy of their elders; and no police agency of integrity can allow itself to be misused as an instrument for the harassment of unpopular ideas.

In some communities there is an emotional swell to repress unpopular groups and movements by restrictive legislation, and our national congress regularly considers repressive legislative proposals. Over one hundred years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville gave an apt warning:

"If ever the free institutions of America are destroyed, that event may be attributed to the omnipotence of the majority, which may at some future time urge the minorities to desperation and oblige them to have recourse to physical force. Anarchy will then be the result but it will have been brought about by despotism." James Madison, in the *Federalist*, tells us that "It is of

great importance in a republic, not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part." (2)

The modern, creative community must see further than restrictive legislation as answers to the disquiet of social protest.

One way to create respect for law is to eliminate any questionable laws which are so sweeping in scope and heavy in penalty that they do not receive wide public support. Our criminal codes must be revised so that they prohibit specific, carefully defined, serious misconduct, so that they can be enforced with simplicity and clarity, and so that they encourage public support.

If we have unreasonable legalities, in the areas of private behavior related to marriage, sex conduct, abortion, birth control, liquor, drugs, gambling, we may legally work to repeal them. Failure to repeal foolish laws, which make moral individuals legal offenders (such as happened during the days of prohibition), has played a part in generating indifference toward observance of the reasonable laws.

Jerome Skolnick, in a paper "Professional Police in a Free Society," states:

"... legal moralism may undermine the moral authority of the criminal law. For example, whatever may be the negative effects of marihuana use, there is no evidence to substantiate the violent and destructive behavior purported to be associated with marihuana use by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and associated police literature. Surely, the penalties now imposed for the sale, possession, and use are not commensurate with harm, since there is no evidence to demonstrate that marihuana is more harmful than alcohol to the user, and it may be less so. Yet the penalties associated with marihuana use and sale approximate and sometimes exceed penalties for committing such violent and destructive behavior as robbery and rape. Excessive zeal in setting penalties cannot help but undermine the moral authority of the criminal law." (3)

There is a curious change occurring as we look at today's community. While some police are becoming conscious of the need for lawful enforcement of the law, and becoming ever more sensitive to the legal proprieties, many citizens are becoming ever more indifferent to the law, and, in some circles, to be law-abiding is to be "square." In some communi-

ties civil disobedience has become uncivil disobedience. We formally encourage legal social protest in our democracy and protect it, but illegal social protest now plagues the nation.

We certainly have an obligation to obey just laws. We may question blind obedience to all laws, but we must seriously question irrational violation of law. Conscience is important to moral well-being, but conscience is not infallible. The democratic process does not simply consist of "whether or not I get my way." We must work together, in all our communities, to build an understanding respect for reasonable law—for law is a successful weapon on the side of right and justice only if the obligation to obey the law is recognized as reasonable.

THE POLICE SCENE

The word "police" is currently used to identify that institution of social control which, for the community, attempts to prevent crime and disorder and preserve the peace, and for the individual, attempts to protect life, property, and personal liberty. Prior to the 19th Century, protection was afforded through "folk police," as exemplified by the old "hue and cry," "watch and ward." Full-time governmental policing, as we know it today, is a product of the industrial revolution, and dates from the Peelian reforms of 1829.

Unfortunately, many people have a narrow view of the police *role* and identify it with the limited function of crime repression—the mechanical treadmill of investigation, identification, arrest, and prosecution. Certainly, much more is involved, and many observers have expressed a more broad view.

Crime prevention, a function which involves all activity that attempts to keep crime from happening, is not a newly identified function of police. One very early statement was most positive:

"It should be understood, at the outset, that the principal object to be attained is the prevention of crime. To this great end, every effort of the police is to be directed. The security of person and property, the preservation of the public tranquility and all other objects of a police establishment would thus be better effected than by the detention and punishment of the offender after he has succeeded in committing the crime."

That statement is from a general order issued to the

New Police, London, England, by Commissioner Charles Rowan, September, 1829.

Some American police of limited perspective tend to view their work as that of "catching crooks," and are unable to identify with the community and departmental activities that are of educational, counseling, and service types. It was in 1931, some 37 years ago, that August Vollmer, revered mentor of American policing, said: "The policeman is no longer merely the suppressor of crime, but the social worker of the community as well." (4)

It might be helpful if we were to consider a change of name for the police as they come to assume a more broad role than that of "thief-catcher," and as they change from a *law* oriented to a *people* oriented operation. Perhaps the policeman should be re-named "human affairs officer," or "public welfare officer," "public service officer," "public safety officer," or "human relations officer." Perhaps a change in uniformed appearance is in order with a lesser emphasis on glitter, helmets, and weaponry. With a more broad role, with a different title, and with a less combative and hostile appearance, it is quite possible that public attitudes toward the police might change rapidly and affirmatively.

As we look to police organizational structure, we see a semi-military format that creates a pattern of superior-subordinate relationships which are often sycophantic in flavor, instead of a pattern of professional-professional relationships which are unified by mutual commitment to professional values. In this context, it might be helpful for our police to consider a revision of military rank designations to professional titles. And it would be most helpful to amend the organizational environment so that diversity, rather than uniformity, initiative, rather than acquiescence, and shared responsibility, rather than compliance, become the hallmarks of a mature police department.

Do not misunderstand these observations—we must acknowledge the need for crime repression and see it as a proper function of police—but we must not so exaggerate "crook catching" that we lose sight of the equally valid function of crime prevention. We must acknowledge the need for administrative control and see it as a necessary part of institutional operation, but we must not so exaggerate "rank" that we lose sight of "professional competence" as a mark of accomplishment and worth.

Police *methods* are now being examined by legal, managerial, and academic researchers. Many out-

moded procedures have survived the test of time and are just as ineffective today as they were 50 years ago. Some myopic police agencies look to increased efficiency and applications of modern scientific technology to solve all problems of modern policing—without giving sufficient attention to the values of a democratic legal order, and without giving sufficient attention to the professional development of police personnel.

Certainly, we have a great need in the American police service for people who understand the basic values of our society as well as they understand how to manipulate the radio squelch knob; for people who understand themselves and their fellow men as well as they understand how to take a burglary report; and for people who understand the alternatives to detention and arrest as well as they understand how to apply the police "strangle."

We must study and solve the impasse wherein police administrative superiors insist on increased "production" and "results," and police judicial superiors insist on "fair play" and "due process." The police institution must be as thoroughly dedicated to legally proper procedures as it is dedicated to meeting anti-social criminal acts through repression. The police supervisor must be as interested in abuses of police authority as he is interested in abuses of police equipment. He must be as opposed to the harassment of unpopular citizens as he is opposed to sleeping on duty. He must be as opposed to the "roust" arrest as he is opposed to drinking on duty. He must be as opposed to the excessive use of force as he is opposed to the acceptance of bribes.

Certainly, we must develop improved methods for public examination and control of police operations, for even though we pay lip-service to the idea of citizen controlled police, most agencies now exist without the careful audit and scrutiny necessary for the achievement of full public confidence.

Police *attitudes* are the source of community cohesiveness or divisiveness and should be examined. Some police have values and standards more appropriate to the days of public hangings, and a very limited social awareness. Some police have more readily identified with the duty of maintaining *order* than with the duty of maintaining *liberty*, and could be expected to agree with H. L. Mencken that "policemen are not given night-sticks for ornament." (5) Some police have been identified as "the last puritans" with a predilection toward moralizing.

There is evidence to indicate that the policeman

has been, traditionally, authoritarian in attitude, with a conservative social philosophy. This mental set makes for automatic conflict with behavioral scientists, civil libertarians, the legal profession, and non-conformists, and serves to make interaction uncomfortable and collaboration difficult for such officers. Chief William H. Parker, Los Angeles, noted that most of the police of America are "conservative, ultra-conservative, and very right wing." (6) If all of the surface indications of ultra-conservatism stem from a deep-rooted belief system, any community dedicated to the social ethic should be properly frightened by such phenomenon—particularly, if it is true that racist views are characteristic of ultra-conservative and very right wing mental sets.

Some police expect and welcome information concerning public wrongdoing, but reject and derogate information concerning abuses of police authority. Such attitude may stem from the fact that to find an officer at fault might be to find the department at fault, particularly if his actions are commonplace and a matter of accepted departmental routine.

Police administrators often point with alarm and repugnance to civil disobedience, assaults on police, and disrespect for authority, but are strangely silent relative to questionable police conduct. At South Carolina State College, Orangeburg, South Carolina, February 8, 1968, at least 16 of the 28 Negroes shot by troopers were struck from the rear, two of the three who were fatally injured were shot in the back, a number of the students were on the ground when shot, and two were shot in the soles of their feet. (7) As of this date it would appear that no police administrator or police spokesman has publicly questioned, even to the slightest degree, those police actions.

Much of what is called "police brutality" might more accurately be termed "police indignity," for the illegal use of physical force is far less common than improprieties of verbal expression or unjustified police field procedures.

Conformist attitudes among police personnel are common. The average police department demands conformity and compliance of its people to the point that a man cannot rise to an executive position unless he "sings the party line." The man who wants to exercise critical judgment and make innovations becomes anathema and destroys his chances for advancement. It seems obvious that to expect blind, unquestioning obedience, and to demand absolute loyalty, "right or wrong," is to imi-

tate the dictatorship. Chief Thomas Reddin, Los Angeles, states:

"Actually, law enforcement does a pretty good job of stifling creativity and encouraging conformity. A strong body of opinion exists that the conformist is the one who gets ahead. And let's not kid ourselves, many men make their way to upper levels by pursuing conventional standard approaches. But a word of warning—where conformity is being accepted, or even encouraged, a lot of good talent goes into hiding and is being wasted. Too often, conformity to established thinking and procedure is considered the keystone of a smooth running organization. And, when you think of it, why not? Under such conditions, decision making is routine. There will be no serious problems. Work performance will be adequate, though conventional. Leaders look good because all seems to be going smoothly. It appears that one would almost be a fool to experiment, encourage creativity, suggest changes and in so doing perhaps risk his reputation. But, as the doctrine of an organization, conformity can spell stagnation and a descent into mediocrity." (8)

These judgments about role, organizational structure, methods, and attitudes are not at all intended to suggest that American law enforcement is all bad. They are intended to suggest avenues by which poor American law enforcement can become good, and by which good law enforcement can be perfected.

POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Whenever we see the conjunction of "police-community," as in the title of a "police-community relations institute," we should be uneasy, for it implies an incorrect disjunction, an unsuitable dichotomy. The police are the community; the community is the police. The community and police must be considered as an organic unity, a mutually supportive partnership. Any community relations program that involves the police as *part of* the community, not *apart from* the community, is on solid ground. The community must involve itself with the police; the police with the community. Neither the community at large, nor the police, can afford insulation, isolation, indifference or enmity any more than can a healthy functioning family. Our thinking about community relations programs, of course, must be realistic, and no one should as-

sume that such programs will cure long-standing social injustices overnight.

Some police agencies have inaugurated community relations units. There are dangers here, as well as advantages, for such a unit can become a meaningless superstructure, an empty gesture, if the police on the beat are barging around the community like misguided engines of destruction at the same time that community relations personnel are attempting to initiate productive dialog and seeking meaningful resolution of grievances. The hard fact is that every single member of the police agency must be a community relations officer if any real or lasting progress is to be made.

POLICE LEADERSHIP

Many American police forces are in trouble today because they lack imaginative leadership at the top level. There is ample evidence to indicate that many American police administrators are narrow-minded, parochial, tunnel-visioned individuals who are frightened at innovation and who perpetuate ineffective law enforcement. Two thirds of our police administrators have never attended college. Less than 10% have a college degree. (9) In other words, there are a lot of deadheads and not-too-bright people in police management positions, and substantial change will only come over the dead bodies of some current neanderthal incumbents. Civil service rules must be revised so as to allow the entrance and rapid career progress of capable people. Lateral entrance—which would allow qualified people to enter the service at all levels, and in many capacities—is the primary device by which new blood, ideas, and vitality can be brought to a semi-comatose or moribund police organization.

POLICE TRAINING

We must radically alter our police training format. The police officer spends about 90% of his time in public service activities and only about 10% (or less) of his time in "crook catching" activities. But, our training programs in the police academies stress crime repression to the point that about 90% of the training is in the "crook catching" area and only about 10% in the community services-human relations area. No wonder that many police view the public they serve as "the enemy."

Some have suggested that police training be placed under civilian control, and that sociologists,

psychologists, social workers, and other community oriented people be used as advisors to police departments. It may soon come to this if we do not make dramatic changes—and soon.

Looking over the curriculum content of police training academies, we find it to be skills oriented. There is little evidence of practice in problem solving, in learning the wise use of discretion, and in learning the role of police in society. It should be obvious that more important to the policeman than repressive "know how" is the need to understand "the legal issues involved in his everyday work, the nature of the social problems he constantly encounters, and the psychology of those people whose attitudes toward law are different from his." (10) The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice tells us that training focuses "almost entirely on the apprehension and prosecution of criminals. What a policeman does, or should do, instead of making an arrest, is rarely discussed. The peacekeeping and service activities which consume the majority of police time, receive too little consideration." (11) The Police Task Force Report is very clear:

"Police officers should be given a much more solid foundation in the fundamental principles of democratic government and the society in which we live. They should be provided with sufficient background on the growth of democratic institutions to enable them to understand and appreciate the complexity of the law enforcement task and the challenge inherent in its fulfillment.

"Training programs should be designed to elicit a commitment on the part of a police officer to the importance of fairness as well as effectiveness in the exercise of his authority. He must be provided with much more than has traditionally been provided in the way of guidance to assist him in the exercise of his discretion. He should be provided with a basis for understanding the various forms of deviant behavior with which he must deal. And he should be acquainted with the various alternatives and resources that are available to him, in addition to the criminal process, for dealing with the infinite variety of situations which he is likely to confront in his daily work." (12)

This writer would suggest that our police academy programs include the following areas of study, if they do not now include them: (1) *Individual behavior*—perception, motivation, attitudes,

views and values of man and society, deviant behavior and mental illness; (2) *Inter-personal behavior*—management of conflict, interaction processes, communications; (3) *Group behavior*—group dynamics, influence, cohesion, leadership, problem solving; (4) *Inter-group relations*—prejudice, discrimination, social, religious, economic, and political values; (5) *Community issues*—collective responsibilities, detection and analysis of tensions, environmental influences, community services, unpopular or extremist groups; (6) *Criminal justice administration*—the role of police in a democratic society; police policy and discretionary alternatives; relationships with prosecution, defense, courts, probation, corrections, and parole.

Further, training programs should be evaluated by means of before and after measurements; that training programs concentrate on attitudes and values as much as on skills and techniques; that training programs utilize the latest research of the behavioral sciences; and that all training programs and departmental operations be audited in order to reduce the gap between what is *taught* and what is *done*.

CONCLUSIONS

The future is bleak, indeed, if the American police department continues to meet today's problems with yesterday's attitudes and habits. The philosophy of social control must be reconsidered, with a resultant redefinition of criminal statutes and more broad role for police so that they become less narrowly repressive and military and more obviously dedicated to protection and service. A well-educated, highly motivated, friendly appearing public service officer, public welfare officer, human affairs officer, public safety officer—whatever name be used—should replace the repressively oriented and frightening policeman.

National attention should be given to research and development so that a coordinated systems approach dealing with the etiology of crime, social pathology, administration of criminal justice, and articulation of community efforts can be developed.

Our Mayors and City Managers must assume their responsibilities for coordinating community resources and for unifying the community in cohesive efforts to secure ordered liberty for all citizens.

Police agencies must be led by articulate, well-educated, up-to-date professional administrators who are informed as to new management theory, conscious of behavioral science applications, and

solicitous of the well-being of every citizen. No man should be appointed as Chief of Police, at any time; who does not have, at the least, a baccalaureate degree. Civil service rules must be amended so as to open up promotional opportunity, so as to allow for lateral entrance from outside the agency, and so as to encourage capable and motivated career candidates. Every American police agency should carefully audit all existing policies, procedures, and practices in order to expose and reject those which are unfair or ineffective, and in order to insure that every police action is effective, efficient, legal, moral, compassionate, and rational. Every American police agency should rapidly amplify its crime prevention program and take whatever steps are necessary to make every officer a community relations officer. Every American police agency must alter current training priorities so as to stress community services and human relations.

We must be alert to certain dangers: *expediency*—believing that ideals and principles must be placed to one side due to pragmatic necessities; *futility*—believing that the problems are so immense that there is nothing that one man can do; *comfort*—believing that traditional paths are easier to follow and that one should say what people want to hear; and *timidity*—believing that colleagues, supervisors, and administrators will be filled with so great wrath at any sign of independent judgment that silence is necessary for survival.

Finally, effective and edifying community policing rests upon these requirements:

The police must demonstrate, by attitude, pronouncement, and deed, that the goal "to protect and to serve" applies to every individual and group within the community—young and old, liberal and conservative, rich and poor, black and white, popular and unpopular, believer and non-believer—that crime prevention has as high a priority as crime repression, that human rights are as highly regarded as property rights, and that all policies and procedures are implemented with essential fairness always and everywhere.

The citizenry must demonstrate, by attitude, interest, and action, their commitment to ordered liberty, their understanding of criminal justice, their support of, cooperation with, and control of police, and their involvement always and everywhere, so that community policing is the pride of every citizen.

Chief Edward J. Allen, Santa Ana, poet laureate

of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, penned a quatrain that seems pertinent:

All knowledge without action is stillborn;
 To put ideals into practice without fear
 May make you, for a moment, a thing of
 scorn—
 God soon will strike your hour—persevere!!!!
 (13)

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