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## Rioting by Police Becomes a Problem

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By Adam Yarmolinsky

IT IS PLAIN enough now that rioting by big city police is a clear and present danger to domestic tranquility in the United States. The pattern was only dimly visible in Oakland, in Newark and in Paterson. But the events in the streets of Chicago literally echoed around the world, and their reverberations may have touched off the violence involving off-duty policemen in the courthouse corridors of New York City the week before last. Although those running amok with billy clubs wear blue suits (and even blue helmets), what they are doing, in many instances, can only be described as rioting—and no less so because in some cases they were unreasonably provoked. Rioting is often a reaction to extreme provocation.

The quick reaction by Mayor Lindsay and Commissioner Leary set an example of the short-run response that other cities could well afford to emulate when their police get out of hand. But there is general agreement among riot-watchers that riots call for two kinds of action. In the short-run, violence must be restrained and order restored as rapidly as possible; in the long-run, the grievances and frustrations that led to the rioting must be identified and resolved. And if this is so in the case of rioting by black people or poor people or young people, it applies as well to rioting by the police.

THE POLICEMAN, particularly in the big city, must take his stand at the frontier where the orderly mechanisms for resolving social problems are breaking down. He is the immediate object of everybody's excess emotions. And as tensions and hostilities build up, he feels them first and most directly. It is not surprising that he can turn in anger on the people who seem to be making his job more difficult, whether they are black youths standing on the street corner because there is no place else to go, or students who want to dramatize their moral indignation over Vietnam, or news photographers who see a good story in the display of

the policeman's anger.

So long as we fail to deal with the basic causes of unrest and violence in the cities, the policeman's lot will not be a happy one. But if we continue to let that unhappiness ferment into massive rage and frustration, we will lose the precious little time that remains to put into effect constructive solutions to our domestic problems.

The guidelines have already been laid down by the President's Crime Commission, more than 18 months ago. When some of the Chicago demonstrators shouted "More pay for cops," they were showing good sense as well as good will. A career in which the maximum salary (outside the executive ranks) averages less than \$1000 more than the starting salary is not likely to attract the highest quality recruits. This is particularly true when everybody, including college graduates, must typically start at the bottom and wait up to five years for promotion. Truncated salary scales and rusty promotion policies produce serious recruiting difficulties. And because they are short of recruits, police departments find it harder to weed out the sadists and psychological misfits who are naturally attracted to a job that offers a truncheon and a gun.

ON THE JOB, policemen spend far too much of their time on unnecessary paperwork, because police departments have not recognized the savings in time, and money, that can be had with modern methods and modern equipment—an automated dispatch system, for example. Policemen waste hours of time—often their own time—in court, because courts are not organized to conserve the time of police witnesses. If a policeman's time is not treated by his superiors as worth very much, he may put a lower value on his own performance.

We seem to put a fairly low value on a policeman's life as well. A patrolman today runs a real risk of death or disabling injury in line of duty. But the standard provisions that city governments make for policemen and their families can only be described as niggardly, compared to the provisions that the Federal Government makes for the families of American soldiers who are killed or injured in military service.

Of course, professionalism in the police departments is not enough. The police have to recognize the key importance of community relations. They have to change their image as an army of occupation in slums and ghettos. They have to learn to use and work with local residents, without creating vigilante groups. As Senator Muskie has pointed out, the key words are "communication" and "restraint."

All these goals are immensely difficult to achieve. They will be even more difficult, if not impossible, so long as we continue to ignore even the manageable parts of the situation that makes rioters of policemen.