

# Metropolitan Police Cadet's Death-

By ALLAN KATZ

There is a cruel irony beyond the obvious tragedy in the sniper killing of Police Cadet Alfred Harrell, who was gunned down here by rifle fire as he stood unarmed outside Central Lockup on New Year's Eve.

Cadet Harrell was black. At 19, he had decided on a career in the Police Department, in the process making that 1,500-member organization more representative of a city that is nearly 50 per cent black. The police force is less than 10 per cent black.

Moments after Cadet Harrell was shot, in what Police Supt. Clarence Giarrusso believes was a coordinated attack on police officers here, another officer, Ptn. Edwin S. Hosli Sr., was shot from ambush as he responded to a tripped bur-

glar alarm at a warehouse on S. Gayoso, only a matter of blocks from where Harrell was shot.

It was as though whoever launched the unprecedented attack on Harrell and Hosli, who is white, were telling us that race and national origin are irrelevant to them. They just wanted some police blood and got it.

As Giarrusso aptly put it, "The executioner's prejudices were of a higher order — against law and order, against authority in any form, against the dignity of man."

New Orleans is no stranger to casual violence. In fact, this city ranks among the murder capitals of the nation. In a typical year here, some 180 homicides are committed. Of these, 90 per cent are usually "crimes of passion" where people drink too much and end up shooting or knifing someone to death in an argument.

But there are no precedents in the modern era for the shooting of Cadet Harrell and Ptn. Hosli. That kind of

planned violence has been absent here. All though the turbulent 1960s, New Orleans remained peaceful while other cities were racked by strife. In New York, for example, attempted ambushes of policemen have occurred through the late 1960s to the present. Nothing similar since the turn of the century had occurred here — until now.

Perhaps it is not remarkable that Cadet Harrell should have been the unlucky victim of the sniper. He was very much a New Orleanian. A graduate of St. Augustine High School and a student at Loyola University, he was a member of a family that has lived here for a long time, running a restaurant in a residential downtown neighborhood. Cadet Harrell, we are told, was a good cook.

It is difficult to put into words what happens to a city where people shoot at policemen from ambush. "Support your local police department" can be an empty phrase if you watch police-



KATZ

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## View

# -The Cruel Irony

men rousting hippies or sluffing their way through a accident or burglary investigation, boredom and distaste for the routine of it obvious. The idea of supporting the Police Dept. only becomes full meaning when someone starts shooting at policemen.

That's when we realize that whatever their strength and weaknesses, the police are the last line that separates us from a society where there is no law, just one's own ability to fend for himself and his family.

The only parallel I can offer occurred in the city of Bogalusa during the civil rights strife of the mid-1960s.

For a variety of reasons, the police department there had for a brief period rendered itself ineffective in a crisis that pitted whites against blacks. Neither side respected or trusted the police. For a time, it was as though the police there did not exist.

It was a shocking experience to go to Bogalusa in those days and to realize that it was open season on human

beings. If someone wanted to shoot you, they could do it. If someone wanted to dynamite your home or your business, they could do it. If someone wanted to attack your family, they could do it. For a brief period, there was no effective police force to call on for help. It was a return to the wilderness.

As one Bogalusa businessman said at the time, "You can't imagine the feeling in the pit of my stomach when I realized, 'My God, it's me against the animals. No matter how many guns I buy, I feel alone and inadequate.'"

That is the real significance of an attack on police like those that claimed the life of Cadet Harrell and wounded Ptn. Hosli. If "they" can shoot policemen at will, then "they" can shoot anyone.

For all the shock of an attack on policemen, New Orleanians seemed for the most part to be bearing it calmly this week. This, in large part, is due to

the fact that public officials once again have reacted without panic to a serious situation.

Just as they did in the Southern University in New Orleans crisis here when a wrong move could have easily led to a bloody confrontation, Police Supt. Giarrusso and Mayor Moon Landrieu have carefully avoided whipping up any feeling of panic. And, just as they did during the SUNO crisis, other public officials have remained silent at a time when one outburst could cause absolute panic.

The question now is "what next?" Will the killers of Cadet Harrell be apprehended? Will they try to strike again? If they try again, what happens then?

New Orleans, a city that has always prided itself on being of a different temperament than any other American city, is being cruelly tested by someone who is armed and doesn't mind shooting at policemen.

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