

## The Murder of Policemen

LAST YEAR, 126 local, county, and State law enforcement officers were murdered. This is 26 more than the number slain in 1970. For the years 1962 through 1971, 722 law enforcement officers were killed by criminals.

During the same 10-year period, of the 965 offenders arrested on charges relating to the killings, 73 percent had prior arrests for criminal charges. Firearms were used in 96 percent of these slayings.

THE SHARP INCREASE in the number of police officers slain from ambush is particularly alarming and foreboding. During the period 1968-71, 49 officers were killed from ambush. There were seven ambush slayings in 1968, three in 1969, 19 in 1970, and 20 in 1971.

The murdering of a police officer from ambush is a shocking, unconscionable act. Beyond this, in many instances it is the ultimate penalty exacted from an officer because of his availability.

A foot patrolman hearing the cries or screams of an alleged crime victim responds immediately; officers in a police cruiser race to the scene of a reported crime or disturbance without question—each is an act of duty and human compassion. But today, all too often it turns out to be a dastardly planned scenario for deranged killers bent on the ambush slaying of peace officers.

Too many people are misled by the revo-

lutionary romanticism babbled by self-styled guerrillas who cry of repression and abuse while plotting to overthrow the government and undermine society. The law enforcement officer, as the front-line symbol of the orderly process of justice, has become a primary target of assassination.

After some police slayings, certain insurgents have gloatingly pronounced their groups were responsible. This indicates the depths of depravity to which men can sink.

Most ambush slayings are not caused by the negligence of the victim officers. However, the increasing frequency of these tragic incidents makes it imperative that each police officer be constantly alert to the planned terrorism directed against him by extremists.

No complaint or call for police should be handled as "routine." This fact has been made evident by the number of officers slain while on their regular patrols.

THE BARBARIC MURDERERS must come to know that when law enforcement officers pay the supreme sacrifice, our society will demand a supreme penalty. To allow police killers to go without just punishment would be to encourage the growing assaults against the rule of law and the principles of self-government.

Further, the blood of every slain officer is on the hands of those who, by word or deed, condone, encourage, minimize, or excuse the terrorist tactics of extremists.