



**ANARCHY 98**

TWO SHILLINGS OR THIRTY CENTS

**A LIBERTARIAN CRIMINOLOGY?**



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April 1969

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## Towards a libertarian criminology

TONY GIBSON

MANY PEOPLE REGARD CRIMINOLOGY as essentially an "Establishment" field of study. To a great extent such a view is indeed correct. The types of people engaged in this rather loosely-defined field include lawyers, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists and associated specialists, all studying the forms of social behaviour which are designated as criminal. In practice, there is a general assumption that the law, and the social customs which are maintained by it, are wholly desirable, and the criminal, the person who breaks the law, is a morbid specimen—he is a "deviant", in some way bad or mad. Criminology, therefore, becomes on the one hand a study of these morbid creatures—what are their physical, psychological and social characteristics?—and on the other hand, a study of how best to forestall, deter, punish and maybe cure them. Let us face it, it is very difficult for anyone reared in this society, no matter what his social class, to have a view very different from this conventional one. Revolutionary anarchists tend to talk a lot of hot air about the police force, but I have noticed that in their private lives they will, if driven to it, have recourse to the power of the police should their normal rights of citizenship, in the way of liberty of the person or ownership of property, be grossly attacked in an unlawful manner. The man who would permit himself or his dependants to be flagrantly robbed, assaulted or raped when recourse to police intervention could prevent it, does not command respect. We cannot use the police against those who rob us and abuse us by *legal* means, but that does not mean that we should be high-principled victims when the means are *unlawful*.

Forced as we are, then, to live behind the shelter of actual or potential police violence, even if to a small degree, our assumptions about criminality in society are necessarily coloured by our day-to-day experience. It does not seem quite unacceptable that violent young hooligans should be sent to borstal, blackmailers should serve stiff sentences, and housebreakers should be repeatedly lagged, as an occupational hazard. Such acceptance implies that we have working stereotypes of "the violent young hooligan", "the blackmailer" and "the housebreaker", and their role as social deviants. We may be adamantly opposed to the *existence* of borstals and prisons—and quite definitely



refuse to operate such horrible engines ourselves—but in practice we accept them along with so much else. They are part of the landscape as we have always known it. “Come the revolution” we intend that things shall be different, but at the moment it is somewhat convenient that we believe ourselves to be partly, if not wholly, protected from casual violence, blackmail and having our telly pinched while we are out at work.

In order to get outside our own day-to-day assumptions, it is necessary to think of societies geographically or historically rather different from our own. If we consider London in the late eighteenth century, it does strike us as monstrous that mere children were hanged for petty thieving. If we think of the rich and powerful men who framed and upheld such laws, they appear to us as inhuman monsters, fit for extermination themselves. Knowing what they did of the privations of the poor, of the want and real hunger that wretched children suffered, how could they use the gallows as a fitting penalty for pilfering, we wonder? By an effort of imagination I wonder, while attending certain conferences, will Dr. X. there, and Professor Y. and Mrs. Z., all of them decent professional people who uphold our present-day penal code, be regarded as grotesque and inhuman monsters in some future age? I know that these three people are not monsters, that they are reasonably humane in their own lives, but nevertheless they are working within a framework of assumptions which may very well make them appear as monsters in some future age.

The assumptions of conventional criminology are that the law and all the apparatus which supports it can be taken for granted as a given fact. It could be, should be, improved this way or that as time goes on, but nevertheless it represents a norm which all right-thinking people support. Criminals are deviants, and it is the duty of criminologists to work towards the end of suppressing crime even if the ideal of abolishing it may never be reached.

A view alternative to this which is growing among social scientists, is that criminal activity is not a “morbid” social phenomenon. Basic assumptions such as that the role of the police force is the repression of crime are questioned. It is arguable, for instance, that one of the roles of the police force is the *generation* of crime. The police force is a well-established body with its niche in society, just as are the army, church, stock exchange, judiciary, etc. None of these bodies is going to operate towards its own dissolution; rather they will act to increase the range and power of their spheres of operation. It is in the interests of the police force, then, that the volume of crime should not decrease but rather increase, and that they should preserve a fertile breeding ground for the criminal activity of future generations. This preservation and generation of criminal activity is not, of course, a deliberate and cynical policy directed by police chiefs and corrupt officers, but the sum total of the operation of the police force.

The idea that the police actually increase rather than reduce the level of criminal activity may seem strange at first sight. The consideration of an analogous mechanism may help towards understanding

just what is envisaged. If I suggest that the role of the medical profession is to promote disease, such a contention appears manifestly absurd, for we all know that doctors cure diseases and prevent their occurrence through measures of public health. Yet the medical profession never works itself out of a job. There are always just as many people suffering from diseases queueing up for treatment as there ever were, in spite of the vast advances in public health. There are just as many people demanding treatment because, in a sense, the medical profession is always “creating” new diseases. New diseases are “created” in several ways; first, by improvements in diagnosis, so that some people who would previously have been regarded as not too unhealthy are now regarded as definitely sick and requiring treatment; second, the general rising standards of public health make people less tolerant of ailments which would previously have been regarded as within the range of normality; third, by prolonging the general expectation of life, the medical profession has created an enormous problem in terms of the multitude of degenerative diseases of old age which hardly existed in former times. In a very real sense therefore, the medical profession does keep on increasing the bulk and variety of what are recognised as diseases in the community, and there is no prospect of disease being abolished, however efficient the public health services are.

The creation and maintenance of crime by the police force follows a very similar pattern. It may be pointed out that the police have two fairly distinct functions, peace-keeping and the detection and arrest of offenders. The former function is analogous to the public health measures of the medical profession, and the latter to the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Recent criminological researches into self-reported delinquency have highlighted the fact that an enormous amount of criminal activity is carried on by people who are in no way abnormal. It is, in fact, the norm of behaviour in our society to break the law by overt acts which, if detected, would lead to the usual penal sanctions on criminal behaviour. The police have enough, and far more than enough by way of a pool of unlawful behaviour as the raw material out of which to manufacture the criminal statistics of arrest and prosecution. Indeed rising standards of orderly behaviour and honesty (as, indeed, such standards may well be rising) make no difference to the criminal statistics. An act of public disorder which would have passed unnoticed in former times may now be stigmatized by criminal prosecution, just as a minor skin complaint, which would have passed without notice fifty years ago, may now be the subject of elaborate National Health procedures.

The volume of ill-health may be regarded as not quite infinite in its potential for expansion, as theoretically, people will not bother to consult their doctors about every minor ailment. The range of human behaviour which can be designated as “criminal” is certainly infinite, however, for it merely needs legislation to make it so. In practice, legislation designates a far wider area of normal human behaviour “criminal” than the police can hope to cope with. If one type of crime goes out of fashion—for instance proceedings against adult male homo-



sexuals have been discontinued—it is likely that another will take its place. The persecution of homosexuals has now been replaced in great measure by the persecution of people using certain drugs. The stereotype of the drug-taker is partly the creation of the police force, because they press home charges against the type of person selected for that role. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that cannabis used to be obtainable by the pennyworth at chemists' shops, and anyone who was so inclined could use it to drug themselves with impunity.

The police force is just an example of a social institution which can be analysed in this way by a social science not committed to buttressing the status quo. Such a social science can be truly scientific in that no issues are prejudged by it. Marxist social science is by no means untrammelled by conclusions which the theorist is committed to demonstrate, and indeed it differs little from conventional capitalist social science. The problems of official criminology in the countries of the modern Russian Empire are very like those of the West, except that more emphasis is put upon crimes against the State. Indeed, Marxists are rendered incapable of providing an adequate analysis of the social institutions of capitalist society because of the pre-assumptions of their own credo which are in many ways closely similar to those of the modern capitalist ideology. The State is seen as the necessary force restraining the social deviance of the individual or of individual groups. A view alternative to this is that behaviour stigmatized as deviant may be the manifestation of something that is basically socially healthy. The waste, repression and cruelties commonly associated with such deviancy may be seen as the by-product of the inertia of older institutions.

Sociology, like psychology, is a self-reflective study, and many people have felt the need of a social theory to explain social science. Perhaps the nearest we can come to this is in the consideration of how the so-called natural sciences led to the study of the phenomenon of man by man himself. Just as the biological sciences gave rise to a discipline now known as psychology, so sociology has arisen by the application of the scientific method to the behaviour of groups. In so far as the social sciences are used to buttress the status quo, or indeed to justify any revolutionary programme such as that of the Marxists, they fail to provide an adequate analysis, just like the individual psychologist who fails adequately to analyse his own personal motivation. The extent, then, to which we may be capable of adequately analysing social institutions in which we partake, must depend upon the rigour of our methods. There is nothing to be gained by considering whether a conclusion is good or bad "propaganda" for whatever we believe in and give our loyalty to. It is natural and right that we should have our personal loyalties, but if we wish to free social science of the encumbrance of attitudes which prejudice every issue, we must lay our own value judgements on one side. Will this produce a "libertarian" criminology? At least it will be free of the need to bolster this or that social system.

## The zoo-keepers of deviancy

JOCK YOUNG

WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHICH IS CHARACTERISED by the extreme segregation of one social group from another. The modern city is divided up into different ideas, and this residential segregation is reinforced by divisions that occur at school, at work and in leisure activities. As Frank Musgrove put it

The suburban bureaucrat may live year in and year out without any but the most fleeting contact with anyone of a different level of occupation, education or civilisation from himself. His work is at the administrative headquarters remote from the factory operatives whose destiny he helps to shape; there he associates with others of like kind; he travels home, insulated by his motor car from contact with any other order of being, to an area of social equals; his leisure is spent in the club with others of the same social standing. We have unthinkingly evolved or deliberately fashioned social concentration camps: places in which one social class is concentrated to the exclusion of others.

Thus class is segregated from class, young people from old, rich people from poor, criminals from non-criminals, coloured people from whites. Moreover even where there is actual physical propinquity social distances maintain segregation of a very real sort. This is precisely what Michael Harrington was referring to when he called the massive hidden poverty of America: "the invisible land".

Our society is characterised by exclusion, as one class moves into an area the "better" class retreats out, the young create a conspiracy of silence to shield them from the middle-aged, the middle-aged in turn incarcerate their aged, the white man fears the coloured as a neighbour: we create vast leprosariums in which we put the criminal, the insane, the crippled, and the old, and we leave all these social outcasts to the ministrations of experts in deviancy: the psychiatrist, the social worker, the priest, and the criminologist. Now this process of segregation has very real consequences in terms of society's reaction to its so-called deviants. For it limits drastically the quality of the information we receive as to the motivations, attitudes, behaviour and humanity of these individuals. And it is because of the distorted information that we are bombarded with, because of the demented caricatures that are presented to us, that we—like the 1940's German inundated by anti-Semitic propaganda—lash out blindly at these scapegoats, support



organised violence against them in our name, lament the passing of the hangman.

If we take a boy who is caught stealing in a small community, his social group has a rich multi-dimensional knowledge of the lad which is derived from an actual face to face contact with him. They would know him not just as a thief but also in terms of a whole series of human attributes: the cheerful lad who delivers the papers, Stan—the publican's nephew, the boy who worked in his spare time in the village store, etc. In place of this, we have in large urban societies, one piece of information only as regards the boy, namely that he is a delinquent and around this label we perceive a hazy aura concocted of prejudice and fantasy. Now there are two major interconnected sources of this information: the mass media and the expert; and an examination of the content of this information, I suggest, will tell us more about the desires and stereotypes of middle-class journalists and experts in deviancy than it does of the life style of the delinquent or the meaning of his crime. For deviant groups are, so to speak, living Rorschach Blots onto which are projected the prejudices and class interests of these men. The notions put forward by the experts differ from those put forward by journalists in one important respect only: they are more conceptually sophisticated. They are, on the face of it, more scientific, more elaborate, more tolerant, and more "progressive" but beneath this patina they contain the same prejudices, for within the velvet glove of therapy and treatment is concealed the same iron fist of punishment.

The experts are the personnel which society selects to man the social barricades between the deviant and the hypothesised "normal" citizen. Their task is to evolve theories which explain deviant actions to the rest of society and to derive from these theories notions of means of curing, training or treating the deviant. That is these personnel perceive themselves as having primarily the therapeutic role of assimilating "the poor", "the maladjusted", "the immature personality", "the undersocialised", "the sick", "the adolescent gone wrong" into the ranks of a posited consensus of decent well-integrated people to whom they perceive themselves as belonging. That their clients, the deviants, often interpret their attempts at therapy as being punitive and coercive is regarded as lack of self-insight, that a few renegade experts attack them as being professional ideologues of middle-class values, is regarded as a sad loss of objectivity.

The hallmark of these theories is that they tend to deny the legitimacy, or in fact, the very existence of norms and values which are different from those of the theorist. They evolve a series of theoretical ploys the end result of which is a total mystification of the relationship between society and the deviant. The following principles would seem to operate:

1. **Denial of Authenticity.** The meaning that individual delinquents ascribe to their crime, political "extremists" ascribe to their activities or the reasons junkies give for why they take heroin, is ignored. Instead

"real" causes are discovered in terms of "personality disorders", genetic defects or lack of social control, thus, for instance a person stole a car *really* because he was separated from his mother in early childhood, because he has XYY sex chromosomes or because he has a weak superego. The action itself becomes denuded of meaning and any conflict over the ownership of material possessions is somehow forgotten.

2. **Denial of Existence.** Alternative values and norms are perceived as being in fact an absence of values, that is if he doesn't uphold your particular sexual, economic or political values then the deviant has no values at all. For example:

"they are acting like animals";

"the drugtaker is impulsive, thrill-seeking and amoral".

Hedonistic norms are the main contenders for this treatment.

3. **Denial of Personal Integrity.** Political, sexual and criminal deviancy is ascribed not to the emergence of alternative standards but to personality failings on the part of the individuals concerned. Thus the communist in the West is seen as undersocialised and the liberal in Russia as mentally ill. The imputation of "weak" personalities to deviants is often extended to the working class and negroes in general. As this is where, according to the statistics, criminals originate from, this theoretical insight is seen as fitting the evidence splendidly. Thus Eysenck writes: "there are very good reasons for assuming considerable differences between the classes with respect to the degree of socialisation to which they are subjected." Now people with a very low degree of socialisation are, according to Eysenck, psychopaths: so one would be able to construct a continuum with well-balanced middle-class people at one end, psychologically inadequate psychopaths at the other and the working class as a whole tending towards the latter. Working-class people are, then, not properly socialised and Eysenck clinches the argument by citing their well-known predilections for aggressiveness and premarital sexual intercourse!

4. **Denial of Freedom.** The deviant is impelled by forces beyond his control which are only properly comprehended by experts. The activities of normal people on the other hand are rational and based on free choice. We must pity the deviant, not punish him because he is unable—like us—to help what he is doing.

5. **Denial of Cognisance.** The deviant is unable to realise the real reasons why he acts the way he does. He needs the superior cognisance of the expert to delve out the hidden factors which motivate him.

6. **Denial of Aims.** The aims of deviant groups and the attitudes and behaviour of its members are systematically misperceived and misinterpreted. Onto the real aims of such groups are projected the obsessions and fantasies of the experts.

7. **Denial of Numbers.** Deviant activities are thought to occur only in small minorities which are either psychologically maladjusted or live in socially disorganised areas. Now where the numbers of individuals observed to be manifesting deviant behaviour is *obviously*



large, an extra twist to the theory is added, namely the notion of the corruptors and the corrupted. Thus deviant activity is the result of a small clique of maladjusted individuals (the corruptors) manipulating or seducing the majority of innocent bystanders (the corrupted). A strike then is doubtlessly engineered by a small group of Trotskyites, the occupation of LSE by six or seven foreign militants, and every marihuana smoker is turned by a Machiavellian pusher!

**8. Affirmation of Objectivity.** The study of social phenomena, it is insisted, should be value free and should utilise objective concepts such as those used in the natural sciences. Thus Robin Blackburn describes this position as suggesting that: "once theories are thoroughly cleansed of all 'value judgements' it is believed that they will be governed by the wholesome discipline of objective facts. The predictable consequence of this attempted purge of values is to orient theory and research towards certain crude over abstracted value notions masquerading as scientific concepts". An "ideology of objectivity" emerges but the moral yardstick of this objectivity is middle-class values. "Psychopathy", "Anomie", "social disorganisation", "under socialisation", "maturity", "weak superego", are all value-laden concepts despite the ongoing pretence of objectivity.

It is amusing to note how these principles are generally only applied to *lower working-class* criminals thus if one takes the "Ferranti Affair" of 1963 where the company overcharged the Ministry of Aviation to such an extent that they eventually agreed, after a wrangle, to return £4,250,000, still leaving themselves with 21% profit; this near-criminal coup would seem to make the activities of the Great Train Robbers a little amateurish. Yet only one criminologist, to my knowledge, Dennis Chapman (and he with his tongue in his cheek) has suggested that the Board of Directors should be psychiatrically examined to see if they exhibited signs of weak superegos, undersocialisation, immature personality or evidence of broken homes, etc. Nor has any subcultural theorist up till now produced any account of the activities of the notorious Ferranti Gang.

Now these experts are not cynical men, they are sincere dedicated people who see their role in a progressive light. They seek to *treat* the criminal and the deviant, not to *punish* him. But this ideology of therapy is immensely more insidious and allows dimensions of coercion and punishment which even the most "unenlightened" and vindictive supporter of the moral order would never have the tenacity to pursue. As Ronald Laing puts it:

To work smoothly, it is necessary that those who use this stratagem do not themselves know that it is a stratagem. They should not be cynical or ruthless; they should be sincere and concerned. Indeed, the more "treatment" is escalated—through negotiation (psychotherapy), pacification (tranquillization), physical struggle (cold-packs and straitjackets), through at one and the same time more and more *humane* and *effective* forms of destruction (electro-shocks and insulin comas), to the final solution of cutting a person's brain in two or more slices by psycho-surgery—the more the human beings who do these things to other people tend to feel sincere

concern, dedication, pity; and they can hardly help but feel more and more indignant, sorrowful, horrified and scandalized by their actions. As for the patients, the more they protest, the less insight they display; the more they fight back, clearly the more they need to be pacified; the more persecuted they feel at being destroyed, the more necessary to destroy them. And at the end of it all, they may indeed be "cured", they may even express gratitude for no longer having the brains left to protest against persecution. But many do not. This only goes to show, as one leading psychiatrist said to me: "It's the white man's burden, Ronald. We can't expect any thanks, but we must go on."

Moreover the expert, because of his position of power vis-à-vis the deviant, will tend to maintain his theoretical "insight" by a process which has been called negotiating reality (T. Scheff), that is, he elicits from the deviant precisely those responses which tend to verify his theories and that this is a negotiated situation based on the notion that if you—the deviant—are co-operative and helpful and show insight into your problem, we will be co-operative with you insofar as we will obtain material help for you, obtain you an early release, not give you shock therapy, give you warmth and sympathy or protect you from the law. In short, successful therapy involves convincing the deviant of the stupidity of his own idea of what he is doing and a translation of these ideas into those of the therapist's. This is called self-insight.

But the expert has not only the power to negotiate reality, to determine the sort of information which he is willing to see and hear, he has also the power to change reality. W. I. Thomas's famous dictum that a situation defined as real in a society will be real in its consequences has immediate relevance here. For one would expect the stereotypes that the expert holds of the deviants to have very real consequences for their future behaviour and the way they perceive themselves. Thus Goffman in *Asylums* charts what he calls the moral career of the mental patient outlining the manner in which the particular images the hospital holds of the mentally ill are internalised and acted out by the patient. Thus, particularly in those cases where individuals are incarcerated in total institutions for therapeutic reasons, the deviant begins through a self-fulfilling process to begin to look, to act, and to feel like the anomic, undersocialised, psychotic, amoral individual which the therapeutic personnel portray in their theories of deviancy. This position of power has an effect on the expert himself. Thus Lindesmith in a critique of research conducted on drug addicts writes:

In addition to considering the effects of institutionalization upon addicts, one must also consider its effects upon investigators. The institutionalized researcher or observer who is accustomed to handling inmates in an authoritarian setting tends to assign certain types of traits to those over whom he exercises power. He is in a unique position to note the recalcitrance of inmates who do not respond as it is thought they should to the benevolent and well-intentioned programs imposed upon them. By long familiarity with institutional life he sometimes comes to attach little significance to the loss of liberty by others, and he may have difficulty in understanding why addicts seem not to understand or appreciate that they are being locked up for their own good.



Within the total institution; the prison, the mental hospital, the Borstal, the individual is stripped of his autonomy, his privacy and identity are violated, his entire life is bureaucratically organised, regulated down to the minutest detail and often over a period of years the inmate is reduced to an almost childlike dependency on his captors. As the White Paper on the Adult Offender candidly notes:

Some offenders are so handicapped, mentally or physically, that the chances of their successful establishment in society are necessarily small. They will need continuous and intensive support for a very long time, and there is room for further voluntary effort here. The personality of some is so eroded by long years of imprisonment that it may well prove desirable to promote the provision of hostels, possibly with a sheltered workshop, which for the rest of their lives will give them the same sense of security that they have experienced in prison. If these unfortunates can be contained in this way it will be better than sending them back to prison and their potential victims will benefit.

Not all violence is necessarily physical: the prolonged assault of society on the dignity and sense of individuality of the deviant, the attempts to mortify him, distort him and manipulate him, are more reprehensible than the casual physical blow as the wounds that are produced can sometimes never be healed. Violence on this scale: organised, "rational", tenacious and, above all, sincere makes the sporadic violence of the criminal look half-hearted and innocuous.

Now within the field of criminology has grown up a body of sociologists, the Chicago school, who have to some extent rebelled against the type of expertise and value position implied in the theories referred to above. Chief amongst these are Becker, Goffman, Lindesmith, Matza, Erikson and Kitsuse. They have what Alvin Gouldner, in a singularly perceptive article, called: "A kind of underdog identification". They tend therefore to identify with the deviant rather than with respectable society. Now it is this school which has in my view quite justifiably the largest following amongst younger criminologists both in this country and in the States. Is it to these people then that we should turn in order to find libertarian criminology? I think not; for this school is caught in a dilemma between self-interest and identification with the underdog. As Gouldner puts it:

There are other more practical costs that would have to be paid were Becker (or anyone else) to announce his position in a direct manner. A straightforward affirmation of sympathy with the underdog would create practical difficulties for Becker as a researcher. For he might one day wish access to information held by rule-enforcers and rule-makers who, in turn, might be dismayed to hear that Becker was disposed to view them from the standpoint of those whom they feel to be threats to society. Again it might create a certain uneasiness among those who, either directly or indirectly, provide the resources which Becker like any other research entrepreneur requires. An outright expression of concern for or sympathy with the underdog thus conflicts with the sociologist's practical and professional interests.

Or as Dennis Chapman succinctly puts it:

The social sciences accept the stereotype of the criminal for to challenge it would involve heavy penalties. The penalties are: to be isolated from

the mainstream of professional activity, to be denied resources for research and to be denied official patronage with its rewards in material and status.

Self-interest then leads the liberal criminologist into a position of playing it cool, of maintaining his "unbiased" position of scholarship, of sympathising with the prisoner but only in terms of an amelioration of his condition, of making the odd pot shot at the establishment but always in terms of gradual reform, of the odd change here and there, meat twice a week and television for the inmates, nothing that smacks too much of radicalism. He is moreover dismayed at the philistine attitudes of the Press and the Public; he embodies a stance which, as Gouldner argues:

expresses the satisfaction of the Great White Hunter who has bravely risked the perils of the urban jungle to bring back an exotic specimen. It expresses the Romanticism of the zoo curator who preeningly displays his rare specimens. And like the zookeeper, he wishes to protect his collection; he does not want spectators to throw rocks at the animals behind the bars. But neither is he eager to tear down the bars and let the animals go. The attitude of these zookeepers of deviance is to create a comfortable and humane Indian Reservation, a protected social space, within which these colourful specimens may be exhibited, unmolested and unchanged.

Has the criminologist no other role then than that of either being a paid ideologue of the establishment or a collector of strange specimens of humanity, a connoisseur of deviant behaviour? There is I believe a pressing need for an anti-criminology, somewhat like Cooper's anti-psychiatry, the stated aim of which is to demystify the current notions of the position of the criminal in our society and to expose the ideology of establishment criminology. For criminology is political: its whole subject matter is that of relationships of power, of conflict over desired resources, of the mode of repression of the weak and of the guardianship of property.

In 1968 Rainer Langhans and Fritz Teufel of the Berlin Kommune were tried on the absurd charge of inciting arson. They had passed a questionnaire around Berlin with a list of buildings asking people to tick those which they would most like to see burnt, there was an additional space for people to write in buildings not mentioned. After a lengthy trial in which the prosecutors attempted to prove the psychological, sexual, and social abnormalities of members of the Kommune, the court decided as follows:

On the basis of their essentially abnormal character-structure, especially in their behaviour, their concepts and their way of life, as exemplified in the accused during trial on July 6 and 7, 1967, the accused will be examined both psychiatrically and neurologically by Dr. Spengler, head of the Board of Health of the National Institute for Forensic and Social Medicine in Berlin. The expert has to present to the Court an extensive, written and scientifically based verdict.

Langhans and Teufel in response, turned on the court and proposed that all its members, including the public prosecutor, should be psychiatrically examined. They might also undergo an intelligence test the



results of which should be published extensively!

Now and then the tables are turned, when madmen question the sanity of psychiatrists, criminals the honesty of judges, perverts the sexuality of the decent and it is against the ideology of normality, the hypocrisy of the wealthy, that we must work, exposing the real conflict issues that lie just beneath the surface of the mystification and jargon of the experts.

There have been few studies on the psychological differences between police and criminals, and the reason is not difficult to discover. The studies based on the usual psychological tests fail to detect a significant difference. Perhaps they are not sufficiently sensitive.

If civilisation has made modern man a natural schizophrenic (since he does not know at the very centre of his deliberations whether to trust his machines or the imperfect impressions still afforded him by his distorted senses and the more or less tortured messages passed along by polluted water, over-fertilized ground, and poisonously irritated air), the average man is a suicide in relation to his schizophrenia. He will suppress his impulses and die eventually of cancer, overt madness, nicotine poisoning, heart attack, or the complications of a chest cold. It is that minority—cop and crook—which seeks issue for violence who now attract our attention. The criminal attempts to reduce the tension within himself by expressing in the direct language of action whatever is most violent and outraged in his depths; to the extent he is not a powerful man, his violence is merely anti-social, like self-exposure, embezzlement, or passing bad cheques. The cop tries to solve his violence by blanketing it with a uniform. That is virtually a commonplace, but it explains why cops will put up with poor salary, public dislike, uncomfortable working conditions and a general sense of bad conscience. They know they are lucky; they know they can get away with a successful solution to the criminality they can taste in their blood. This taste is practically in the forefront of a cop's brain; he is in a stink of perspiration whenever he goes into action; he can tolerate little in the way of an insult, and virtually no contradiction; he lies with a simplicity and quick confidence which will stifle the breath of any upright citizen who encounters it innocently for the first time. The difference between a good cop and a bad cop is that the good cop will at least do no more than give his own salted version of events—the bad cop will make up his own version. That is why the police arrested the pedestrians they pushed through the window of the Haymarket Inn at the Conrad Hilton: the guiltier the situation in which a policeman finds himself, the more he will attack the victim of his guilt.

There are—it is another commonplace—decent policemen. A few are works of art. And some police, violent when they are young, mellow into modestly corrupt, humorous and decently efficient officials. Every public figure with power, every city official, high politician, or prominent government worker knows in his unspoken sentiments that the police are an essentially criminal force restrained by their guilt, their covert awareness that they are imposters, and by a sprinkling of career men whose education, rectitude, athletic ability and religious dedication make them work for a balance between justice and authority. These men, who frighten the average cop as much as a priest frightens a choirboy, are the thin restraining edge of civilisation for a police force. That, and the average corrupt cop's sense that he is not wanted that much by anyone.

—NORMAN MAILER: *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*  
(Penguin Books, 1969)

## My Dad's a copper

COLIN WHATLING

*I'll sing you a song  
It won't take long  
—All coppers are bastards*

OR ARE THEY? What I'm attempting to do in this article is not to write a brief in praise of the police nor to uphold the words of the old English air above, but to try and show that when we regard the police with abject hostility we should be certain that we are aiming our resentment and hatred of social control and authority at the main crux of the problem. My analysis may be highly subjective, though I don't apologise for this, as my father has been a police officer for over twenty years, and much of my childhood and youth was spent living on a police housing estate, and this has given me an insight into a side of the force which the majority of people lack, but what is important is that this living pattern has given me the opportunity to see the individualistic aspect of police work. Most of my evidence comes from hearing police officers' conversation and anecdotes and my father's impressions, and I hope through these to convey the disparity between the actions of the individual police officer relying mainly upon his personality, and the authoritarian, unilinear policy of police administration.

George Homans stated that social control is a property of states of social relations, and not something imposed from the outside; thus negating what, to many, would appear to be the main function of the British police. In Britain the tradition of cohesive unity and stability, which to many historians epitomises this country since the 17th century, has brought about a situation in which the formal agents of social control are relatively unimportant compared with the community definitions of behavioural norms and values.

Obedience to the law, and the following of patterns of prescribed behaviour stipulated by society, depend on the social relationships which exist within that society. In contemporary British society it appears (although this may be a dangerous and, I hope, false assumption) that behavioural patterns are governed by well-defined institutional economic and moral pressures.

To a great extent, the police officer's role, in this context, will largely depend upon the size of the community in which he is situated. Village societies are normally closely-knit communities with inter-dependent social relationships. I have found that in this situation the function of the police officer is not to provide the motive power of law-enforcement, but to keep the equilibrium of the relationships stable.



In large communities social contacts and mutual commitment are more limited, but integration is achieved by consensus or agreement upon fundamental values. In this situation, in theory, the officer enforces the standards accepted by the community, accepting its definition of rightful or wrongful conduct.

The general facade of this rather simplistic analysis has led to the idea that the policeman is the servant, friend and paternalistic guardian of the community, i.e. "generalised perfection". Politicians, governments, mass-media, courts and educational establishments constantly foster the belief that the police serve some mythical concept—namely the "common good", and that any bad behaviour on their part is the exception and does not reflect on the true nature of the police and their role in society. However, the history of the police, and that of the criminal law, show that they were designed primarily to protect property, and hence the wealth and privilege of a controlling minority. There has always been a close link between the police and the "establishment" which in turn defines the norms which govern the behavioural patterns of society.

Thus, although to many people the police appear to act in the interests of all, when propaganda, ignorance and indoctrination fail to suppress popular unrest, the state uses repression in the form of its law-enforcement agencies to wipe out effective criticism or to delimit the unrest, thus clearly revealing the class function of the police and what must be by definition its ultimate role, its authoritarian nature.

Police authorities receive their orders from the government and judiciary, and these are passed to the individual officers who act not only within the framework of these, but upon their own initiative. At times the police exceed the limits of the considerable freedom granted to them by the state, but the state rarely withdraws its protection from such a vital part of the machinery, and the facts are rarely made public. Furthermore, the police are deliberately isolated from political movements which challenge the state, and by virtue of their involvement with the establishment, they are necessarily to adopt its prejudices and values.

Most of the more arduous studies of the British police have shown at great length how the higher ranks of the force are the determinant factors in the policy decisions which govern the actions of the officer on the beat. For example, the way in which prosecutions for male opportunism suddenly rose in Manchester with the advent of a new Chief Constable in 1958 clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of policy decisions in influencing the officer on the beat, and in clearly defining his attitude to a particular crime. Individual officers tend to resent the specification of beat duty to dealing with particular crimes, although this is a convenient vehicle for young officers to build up impressive arrest records.

There is a danger in advocating freedom for individual officers, in that the police force attracts a specific type of authoritarian personality. The prejudices and values of that personality can be cloaked by a uniform. My father says, with regret, "The day is fast coming when the police force will become nothing more than a body of people who

know only the words 'Report and Arrest'. The days of warning and working with reason are going fast. A man is not judged now on how he keeps the beat clean, but by the number of reports and arrests he makes, and by the way in which he enforces the dictates of senior officers."

La Fave, of the University of Wisconsin, declares that the police must have a certain amount of discretionary power as:

- (1) It is not yet feasible to draft a criminal code which can unambiguously encompass all conduct intended to be criminal.
- (2) Lack of resources, especially manpower.
- (3) The great variation that one finds in each individual circumstance.

These factors are as relevant in Britain as in the United States, and it is largely dependent upon the individual officer in many circumstances whether action is taken or not. For example, the laws against loitering and vagrancy are difficult to define and operate as the law is aimed not at the physical state of the individual but at the behaviour which is likely to result from this state. Thus very much depends upon the assessment made by the individual officer in a specific situation, and it would appear that if the officer can command a situation by virtue of his authority, he will not pursue formal action if this course is open to him. It is very difficult to decide in a direct confrontation which course to adopt, although most officers tend to feel a certain self-vindication if their authority is supreme, and many dislike the sheer incumbrance of having to initiate formal proceedings.

My father, representing what he would define as the "old-fashioned copper", feels that it is much better to avoid proceedings by asserting one's own personality over an individual, and although it may appear barbaric, a "clip round the ear" or a "word with a father who knows how to handle his belt" is a much better solution than to submit a juvenile to the arduous passage of the law. However, he states that recent trends have been away from the solutions and he has been reprimanded a number of times for not initiating formal proceedings. (The views expressed above are his, not mine.)

I would like to quote a case which my father dealt with, and which could be used to justify any plea for greater individual freedom on the beat. Although I am not advocating this, it demonstrates in many ways the manner in which a police officer works:

"About 1 a.m. I was in a quiet street by some reasonable-class dwellings. I stood in the dark and saw a man come into the street. I thought I knew him but stayed still. It was obvious from his behaviour that he intended to break into one of the houses. I emerged and challenged him, and although very frightened, he said he was going to the toilet. I suggested that he then did so but he could not. I knew him to have a record, and should have arrested him, and told him this, to which he agreed. However, as I knew his parents, I warned him I would contact them and then let him go. He has kept out of trouble since and started his own decorating business."

It is very easy to glorify this type of case and build up a romantic



ideal of the Dixon of Dock Green kind. There is an insoluble dichotomy in advocating freedom for individual police officers, i.e. so-called "fair" treatment outside the law or worse treatment outside the law, as compared with definite treatment within the law in the case of control. To consider the case for control over individual officers one has only to read the long history of police prejudice in dealing with minority groups in society, although often this prejudice is not just a function of the individual officer but of the administration which governs the actions of those officers. These prejudices are often overlooked, ignored, or informally agreed with, and enable my father to say:

"I apply discretion to most offenders, but not to drivers under the influence of drink, or cases of indecency or to sexual offenders. I throw the book at these and they get no mercy."

For a clear account of the political bias of the police in action against minority groups in the last fifty years, S. Bowes' book *The Police and Civil Liberties* provides a comprehensive chronicle. It can be seen in any clash between left-wing groups and fascist organisations, in the way fascists are openly allowed to beat up anarchists or left-wing sympathisers while the police watch, in the way fascists openly flaunt the Race Relations Act, and in the way officers are shielded and tacitly supported if they beat up a demonstrator. In these actions, however, individual officers are supported not only by the administration, but by the mass media and the courts.

A more recent manifestation of police partiality and, possibly, lack of understanding, has been the way in which individual officers have reacted or over-reacted to the "Underground" sub-culture. With the present hysteria of the Callaghan-Hogg type over drugs, it would appear that in following the ill-informed, simple, naive and prejudiced views of their superiors, individual police officers have attacked this "problem" with an almost fanatical zeal which has led to a justifiable antipathy, distrust and hatred of the police by large sections of the younger population. In many cases officers with strong emotional prejudices have been given free rein to persecute and hound incessantly people suspected of involvement with the sub-culture. Tales of police planting, illegal intrusion into premises, are well circulated, and often the yardstick of the famous police saying, "Which pocket do you want it found in?" is applied to all police activity.

To a large extent the prejudice of an officer is a function of his ignorance, and although this is no excuse, it may justify the view which many people take, that it is against police administration and against the senior officers that our resentment should be directed. As an officer said to me confidentially at a recent demonstration:

"Although I'm ignorant, I've got a good job. If I'm told to guard that bloke in there (Enoch Powell) then I guard him. I serve the Queen and her Ministers, and my superiors know what is for the best and what is in her interests. It doesn't pay me to think or to disobey."

Sex offenders always receive particularly bad treatment from individual officers, probably because of ignorance. Sex offenders are often seen as a direct threat to the individual officer, and if asked to

justify this hatred, the reply is normally in the form of, "That could have been my little so-and-so he did that to." No attempt is made to ensure that officers have even a basic knowledge of psychology, and they will always recommend barbaric punishment as against psychiatric treatment.

However, despite these premises and conclusions about police behaviour, I feel that whichever way we regard the police we come back to the opinion of La Fave that in any police system the individual officer is bound to have a certain amount of discretionary power. A police officer will react to a situation according to an indeterminate number of factors, and I suppose that what one must do is to define these, although I have already rejected this as impossible. However, one tends not to think of such factors as:

(1) A drunk will rarely be arrested if covered in excrement as he would make the patrol car smell.

(2) One is unlikely to be arrested if the officer involved is at the end of his shift, as to fill in forms would mean extra duty.

(3) One is more likely to be arrested if it is raining or cold as the officer can go inside and write his report.

(4) An officer's activity will be directly related to his personal relationships or to his enjoyment of his supper.

These are just a few of the factors which have to be considered in examining the reaction of an officer to a given situation, and there is a great deal of study which could be done to determine the influences which make up the peculiar phenomenon of the "British Bobby".

Ortega y Gasset predicted in his book, *The Revolt of the Masses*, published in 1930, that free societies would come to fear their police. He argued that those who rely on the police to maintain order are foolish if they imagine that the police "are always going to be content to preserve . . . order (as defined by government). . . . Inevitably they (the police) will end by themselves defining and deciding on the order they are going to impose—which, naturally, will be that which suits them best." In some cities in the United States, leaders of police organisations have openly threatened that the police will disobey orders to be permissive with black or student demonstrators. The head of the Patrolman's Association in Boston has stated that the police there will enforce the law, no matter what politicians say. The president of the New York Patrolmen's Benevolent Association has also announced that his members "will enforce the law 100 per cent", even when ordered not to do so.

—SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET: "The Politics of the Police"  
(*New Society* 6/3/1969)



# The criminologist and the criminal

LAURIE TAYLOR

IF YOU LOOK THROUGH BACK NUMBERS of this journal, you'll find several articles in which academics explain how their subject can be adapted for use by anarchists and socialists. I am not certain whether such exercises have any great value as long as they remain within the framework of the academic discipline. There is enough empirical material lying around in the social sciences to provide reinforcement for everyone's political predilections and anyway, in the event of such favourable material being contradicted at a later date, we're hardly going to abandon our major critique of society because a group of psychology undergraduates appear to derive more job-satisfaction from an authoritarian rather than a non-authoritarian group. Contemporary society does not come to be seen as a fit object for attack on the basis of conclusions derived from contemporary experiments. Such an attack rests upon certain fundamental beliefs in the potentiality of man. You can't mimic the actualisation of such a potential in some corner of a laboratory, any more than you can ask a Vietnamese peasant to show you how he'd behave when the war is over.

So if I'm to talk about criminology in these pages, it must be in rather general terms, in a way which mirrors my overall conception of society rather than in a way which attempts to do justice to the many theories and facts which have been accumulated in the history of the discipline. I will not demonstrate the hint of anarchy which lies in Smith's theory or the socialist assumptions which inform Robinson's approach, or berate the reactionary implications of Jones' contribution. This is too much like academic work, trotting in and out of seminars each week with a sparkling new theory which one proceeds to dispose of with a few facts. In this way nobody ends up with any coherent general story and we all sleep well, congratulating ourselves that we have cleared the student's mind of dogma and increased his tolerance of ambiguity, that latter being regarded as the true achievement of university education; the best student being he who regards society as

being so complex, and accounts of its nature so diffuse, that his mind fairly races with ideas and his will to action completely deserts him.

## CRIMINOLOGISTS WANTED

As a group criminologists look to have a comfortable future. Like the economists they are continually being mobilised by the state to deal with social problems. Promising new economists are always wanted to help solve the ever-present balance of payments crisis, and more and more criminologists are drafted to do their bit toward erasing the social problem constituted by the rising crime rate. After a time such groups impress their special language upon the areas of concern so successfully that others who might dare to enter the field are excluded by their apparent inability to appreciate the "real issues".

It is not at all clear why crime should be a social problem which warrants the attention of a sitting army of experts. There is, after all, no absolute criterion for determining what is and what is not a social problem. Society creates its own social problems, what is a matter for national concern in one culture is ignored in another, despite the presence in both of similar patterns of behaviour. A few years ago, you didn't read much about drug-taking in the press. An occasional Sunday newspaper ran a sensation story on addiction, films such as *The Man With the Golden Arm* produced a minor flurry. In the last two years, however, we have been inundated with accounts of its prevalence and its effects. Churchmen have deplored its sapping of youthful spirits, editorials have argued for its suppression, foundations have begun to pass over cheques to social scientists for research into its causes, politicians have passed new laws to deal with the urgent situation. At the moment very similar forces are re-grouping for a sustained attack upon the social problem of "undisciplined students" or as we now call them, "militant thugs".

In neither case is the deplored behaviour an entirely new phenomenon, in neither case are its manifestations particularly visible to the general public. The idea that something should be done is at least partly created and sustained by certain powerful sections of society, the government, the press, the civil service. Such initiators claim, of course, that the abhorred behaviour conflicts with the fundamental values of the rest of society. The general values they invoke are often, at least initially, no more than those that they themselves entertain. After all, the causes they triumph, the horrors they deplore, involve a selection from a whole range of alternatives.

Why should drug-taking fill the papers when there are over half a million unemployed, when there are nearly 7,500,000 people in the United Kingdom living below a defined "national assistance" level of living? Why should it take an urban rebellion before racial discrimination is generally defined as a social problem in America and massive



funds allocated for its eradication? Do not these states of affairs touch upon the values of society?

The truth is that certain matters are seen as involving a deliberate attack upon society's interests, whereas others are not so defined. Crime falls into the first category. It costs the country a great deal of money, it does nothing to help the balance of payments. On the other hand there are phenomena which arise as one of the costs we pay for the type of society we live in. There is a "grin and bear it" attitude to such problems, assuming that they even reach the status of problem at all. To eradicate the source of such troubles would be to strike at certain central interests. The proliferation of the motor car and all its attendant troubles, the air pollution, the high accident rate, remains unchecked as long as it is regarded as a by-product of an activity which accords with the dominant interests of society, in this case the concern with growth of output. The same is true of unemployment and poverty. They arise as the results of an economic policy which is claimed to be in the best interests of all.

Not only, however, do certain groups assist in the definition of crime as a social problem, they may also seek to subsume under the heading of crime other behaviour which is not so much criminal as political. In the same way that headmasters often define the rebellious pupil as disturbed, so that he may be removed to a special school, so we find certain political activities being defined as the work of "hoodlums" and "gangsters" in order that their explicit criticism of society becomes deflected. Definitions of an activity as political or criminal do not arise from the value-free allocation of particular incidents to autonomous political and criminal categories. They represent attempts by certain groups in society, consciously or otherwise, to reduce any threat to the "national good", to the status quo. "You disapprove of crime," the argument goes, "then you must disapprove of demonstrations, they're organised by militant thugs."

## CRIMINOLOGISTS AT WORK

Not only then is crime a favourite social problem, a darling of the public trusts, its ranks are also swollen by the inclusion of other potentially embarrassing societal disorders. The demand for criminology seems assured. It is tied firmly to the interests of the ruling class by its acceptance of crime as that behaviour which is so defined by the law. It is true that there have been criminologists who felt uneasy about such a situation, but their anxieties are usually allayed by the end of the first chapter and they then proceed in much the same way as other writers. Perhaps the most promising trend in this country is the increasing stress upon the sociology of deviant behaviour. This approach regards infringement of state rules as merely one instance of rule-breaking; it highlights the relativity of such rules and tends to focus as much upon the interests which are promoted by its infringement.

A tacit acceptance of the criminal law as some absolute yardstick is hardly surprising in view of the origins of the discipline of criminology. It did not spring up like some daisy in the field; it arose in response to particular demands which were being made by certain sections of society. As soon as criminals began to interfere with certain central interests, they became an object of especial concern. As long as they kept out of the way of such interests, as long as they did not impinge upon the "aims of society", they could be merely "contained". They were no more than unsightly blemishes to be herded into certain parts of the town, confined to social leprosia. When, however, their number grew dramatically (between 1805 and 1842 a sevenfold increase in arrests was recorded), when it was seen that it was the new working-class who predominantly made up this total, then concern arose about how such behaviour might affect productive work and more importantly, about how it might form the basis for collective political action. This concern generated a new academic discipline. The question was not just about how the "dangerous classes" might be contained (a few more prisons would sort out that one), but about how the numbers might be significantly reduced.

It is no surprise then, to see whose side the criminologists are on in the contemporary fight against crime. They may not be in the front line, they do not patrol the streets, hand out prison sentences, guard cell doors, or typically assist at identification parades, but they can be found busily working away behind the lines, reformulating laws, advising magistrates, lecturing to prison officers. They can be seen in the mass media, telling the population how the struggle is going, reassuring the viewers that the war is being won.

It must be admitted that the criminologists' interventions are often

The great majority of criminologists are social scientists only up to a point—the point usually being the start of the second, "control of crime", half of the typical criminology course—and beyond that point they are really social workers in disguise or else correction officers *manqués*. For them a central task of criminology, often *the* central task, is to find more effective ways to reform law-breakers and to keep other people from becoming law-breakers.

If a man wants to make that sort of thing his lifework I have no objection; that is his privilege. I suggest merely that he not do so in the name of sociology, criminology, or any social science. I suggest that he admit he is undertaking such activity not as a social scientist but as a technologist or moral engineer for an extra-scientific end: making people obey current American criminal law.

NED POLSKY: *Hustlers, Beats and Others* (Chicago 1967)



humanitarian. They tend to oppose punitive and inconsistent magistrates, object to ancient and unhygienic prisons, to corporal punishment, to solitary confinement. Such humanity may be tinged with expediency. The conditions they fight against are not simply seen as an affront to human nature but also as factors which may raise the recidivism rate by allowing the prisoner a sense of outrage at his treatment, a feeling which may lead him to eschew any firm purpose of amendment. Criminologists, indeed, have a general reputation amongst more formal agents of social control for being permissive and even radical. This merely indicates how clearly we all recognise criminality as something deserving universal condemnation. We would hardly regard as radical the industrial sociologist whose support for the workers led him to suggest nothing more than less stringent punishment for those engaged in unofficial industrial action. He is readily outflanked by those on the left who would insist not only that such activity is explained by the class basis of our society but also that such action is to be championed for the cracks that it produces in the prevailing system.

A few criminologists might be found who would invoke a similar explanation of crime, but most would shrink from the latter position, that is, from advocating such behaviour as an antidote to the present societal state of affairs. They accept that we have an immoral society and are therefore not surprised when faced with such symptoms of societal sickness as crime and delinquency. They are sympathetic towards some criminals because of their belief in the injustice of the laws which render their behaviour criminal, although such sympathy appears primarily to be directed towards property offenders.\*

The criminal is seen as an unfortunate by-product of the system, whose wickedness will wither away in the ideal society. Change society and the nasty spots will go away, and in the meantime we must go on clearing up the blemishes in a way which is not qualitatively distinct from that advocated by those who view society as a just, humane, democratically organised system.

It may be that in the act of clearing up the blemishes, however charitably we set about it, however temporary we regard the activity in view of the imminence of revolutionary changes in society, that nevertheless in such activities we are tacitly helping to silence an important critique of society.

\*Anarchists may go beyond this position, attacking not only those laws which relate to property, but also those which invoke the protection of the individual from personal attack. Kropotkin observes: "If law enjoys a certain amount of consideration, it is in consequence of the belief that this species of law (that relating to the protection of the person) is absolutely indispensable to the maintenance of security in our societies . . . in spite of all prejudices existing on this subject, it is quite time that anarchists should boldly declare this category of law as useless and injurious as the preceding ones" (from *Law and Authority*).

## THE CRIMINAL AS A CRITIC

I didn't attend the Dialectics of Liberation Congress, so I don't know who David Cooper is referring to in the Pelican report of the proceedings, when he critically mentions a suggestion that "anti-psychiatrists should cut across the mythical, socially invented neuroses of their patients and deflect them into the emerging new revolutionary groups". Such a policy of deflection seems a very useful suggestion in relation to criminals. At the present time we take the offenders and place them in institutions which are often geared to making the inmates recognise their mistakes, to making them "know themselves" and to changing their attitudes. But, unless our conception of the criminal is that of someone fighting against the fundamental interests of a society we admire, we should surely seek to redirect his aggression, his anger, into political channels. Our therapy, our concern should surely be to raise consciousness of the possibilities for external change and not to insist on the necessity for internal personality change. Here is a large group of predominantly working-class people who refuse to take quietly a society which steals from the products of their labour, which insists that they undergo periodic bouts of unemployment, that they live in inadequate houses, which ensures that their children will be processed through an educational system in such a way as to be only suitable to perform a similar depressed and alienated role in society. We hear a lot about the fatalism of the working-class, about lack of consciousness, but when we find a group of individuals who are taking a hand in determining their life chances we tend to treat them with no more than a rather condescending liberal humanitarianism. There is indeed a danger that greater liberalism in penal institutions may provide increased opportunities for the inculcation of intra-punitive attitudes. When the screws are obviously authoritarian, when the door is bolted, when a machine gun is on the wall outside, society is visible. Here are the evident signs of its concern, signs which at least may serve to keep alive in the inmate a sense of his oppositional status to the established order of things which seeks to change him. Psychotherapy, group therapy, seeks either to bring in "neutrals" from outside or to hide away the more obvious indications of the power imbalance within which the prisoner is implicated.

It may be argued that by adopting such a viewpoint one is attributing a degree and type of significance to actions which they do not possess. When we read that students have broken the windows of

Given the perspectives within which delinquency and crime are almost always studied, it is obvious why Merton might regard them as "peripheral problems of social life" rather than fundamental social processes of central concern to sociology.

NED POLSKY: *Hustlers, Beats and Others* (Chicago 1967)



South Africa House, we immediately attribute political significance to the behaviour; we recognise the presence of a conscious attack upon an object which symbolises a despised regime. When however, we hear of groups of youths attacking schools, wrecking property, stealing cars, any attribution of significance, any attempts to regard such schools, property or cars as symbols of some powerful but despised group must be guarded. And it is here, in the area of vandalism, of sabotage, that there appears most possibility of arguing for some oppositional sense informing the actors. It is even more difficult to claim that attacks upon persons, that larceny, constitute political gestures. But I do not wish to claim that all or indeed much criminal behaviour is full-blown political behaviour. All that is required to support an argument for a new approach to the study of crime is a demonstration that such activities represent a dissatisfaction with the status quo. Anti-psychiatrists would presumably not wish to argue that the content of their subjects' hallucinations was a direct reflection of their alienation from society, merely that their general condition, their withdrawal behaviour, was associated with such a status. The same applies here. The gang that goes out and does the local warehouse is not a revolutionary group, but it is a group in opposition. To persuade its members that they should look to their own consciences for a resolution of their dissatisfaction is to syphon off discontent, it is to cool out individuals, to castrate potential critics, to take part in the mollification of the dangerous classes.

It may be further agreed that any latent critique contained within such criminal protests, is not at all against the nature of class society, but rather against the obstacles which are placed in the way of the working-class boy achieving high status within such a society; the aspirations of delinquents are related to economic self-advancement, to an imbalanced society in which they, rather than the present power-holders, have key positions. This is undoubtedly true in many cases, the Mertonian anomie paradigm which has dominated so much American writing on delinquency during the last twenty years rests on such a premise. This does not mean, however, that such a dissatisfaction is incapable of being redirected. Our concern when we observe dockers marching in support of Enoch Powell is to redirect their aggression, to point out that it is not the immigrant who is responsible for unemployment, for the Prices and Incomes Board, for the housing shortage. We can nevertheless derive some satisfaction from such a display of militancy even if we deplore its objectives. It is to be preferred to a passive acceptance, a Panglossian view that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Similarly with delinquents; they may subscribe to an authoritarian view of life, may be informed by achievement motivation, but at least they have tried to exert control.

The principal suggestion for criminologists which stems from such a viewpoint is to refrain from any support for the type of treatment which is aimed at increasing the individual delinquent's sense of his own

guilt. Any attempt to place the delinquent in a special category is also likely to result in the internalisation of guilt. Recent work on labelling theory has dramatically described the way in which delinquents come eventually to accepting the definition of themselves as special persons, a definition which is hawked around by magistrates, probation officers, and indeed any criminologist who ever sat across a desk from a delinquent and handed him a questionnaire to complete. Of course, there is something special about the working-class activist, but his special status is not the one attributed to him by the penal authorities, it lies in his greater reactivity to certain social conditions. Whilst he is imprisoned within his delinquent status, generalisation of his experience is impeded. He is just a Borstal lad, an old lag.

Apart from these penological implications, such an argument also suggests that the "causes" of crime need not preoccupy criminologists as they have done in the past. Of course there will be certain conditions which are more conducive to criminality than others, certain individuals who will be more sensitive to such conditions, who will react with different degrees of vigour, but the central concern is the meaning that the individual gives to his act. In the same way that the schizophrenic may be said to be telling a story in his behaviour about the meaning of the world to him, about his ways of dealing with it, so may the criminal be seen as containing within his action a comment upon the social relationships within which he is enmeshed, upon the dilemmas which he sees as confronting him. Whilst individuals stay locked within the system, bound by its laws and timetables, then we find it difficult to ascertain the subjective nature of alienation; any opposition or dissatisfaction with society remains latent. The law-breaker immediately says something about his world, however inarticulate or apolitical it may initially appear. It would seem that crime is far too important to be left to the criminologists.

Many an anthropologist has been able to advance the state of knowledge only by keeping faith with people who radically transgress the moral norms of his society, that is, by refusing to turn them in to colonial officials and their cops, so I fail to see why the criminologist shouldn't do the same. Of course, if someone really wants to behave toward the savages as a missionary rather than as an anthropologist, if he really wants to be a superior sort of social worker or cop or therapist rather than a sociologist, there is no denying him this right; but at least let him own up to what he really is and stop fouling the waters of science with muck about "the dual role of practitioner-researcher".

NED POLSKY: *Hustlers, Beats and Others* (Chicago 1967)



## Social Bandits

G.

**THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BONNOT GANG** by E. B. Mell. (Coptic Press, 7 Coptic Street, London, W.C.1, 1968, 2s. 6d.)

THIS IS A MIMEOGRAPHED PAMPHLET of 14 pages. Like many people, I have a reluctance to read mimeographed typescript, especially when it is smudgy and ill-typed. Such productions were unavoidable years ago when minority movements could generally do little better with antiquated duplicating machines handled by amateurs. I would have thought that nowadays any publishing concern, no matter how humble, could do better than this—indeed *must* do better than this, for it is uneconomic to produce stuff that will have a very small circulation because of its unattractive form.

The author of this pamphlet deserves a better circulation than he will probably get. His matter is of intrinsic and evergreen interest to the anarchist movement, and indeed to all academic sociologists as well. It concerns the relations between social revolutionaries and those who take to direct action as a means of living off the possessors of wealth—bandits in fact. The Bonnot Gang are of particular interest in that they appeared to be inspired by the anarchist propagandists of Paris in the early years of this century.

Mell seeks to clarify the different attitudes of Marxists, Blanquists and anarchists to the question of banditry. He discusses the Marxist concept of the “lumpenproletariat”, and here I think he is a little confused. The point is that Marx used the term “proletariat” in a new and historically inaccurate sense. The word derives from its Roman use; the “proletariat” were those who served society not by doing useful work like artisans, but solely by producing progeny while they lived on public assistance. It was the function of the “proletariat” to “proliferate”. The fact that Marx seized on an old word and gave it a new and strictly incorrect meaning when referring to those people who are wage-earners as distinct from beneficiaries from ownership of capital, made it necessary to refer to the “lumpenproletariat”, an emotive word implying slum-dwellers who do not work.

Mell is right in pointing out that the Bonnot Gang were not “lumpenproletariat”, although Marxist theory would class them as such.

Typically, bandits are people who by personal accident or by changing economic conditions find themselves impoverished—according to their own standards—but who are not willing to accept the dreary grind of the ordinary working man of low economic privilege. Bandits may come from any section of the social strata; their violent direct action is typically a response to a sudden cutting off of their economic and social aspirations. It is a reaction somewhat similar to fascism, which also results from a sudden collapse of economic standards, or a threat to such standards as may arise from organised labour. The ordinary ranks of the labouring poor seldom give rise to banditry—indeed capitalist society would soon collapse if the exploited and underprivileged reacted in this manner. Although gangs of robbers often contain the sons of unskilled labourers, they are generally led by middle-class misfits who have refused to knuckle down to economic privation, as indeed did Bonnot.

In this pamphlet, Mell does not cite his sources of information and so it is impossible to gauge how accurate in his detail or how original his research. This is a great pity, for having embarked on so interesting and fruitful a subject, one feels that he might have made a great deal more of it, even within the limits of a modest pamphlet. He comments rightly on the silliness of popular cultists who make what they can of romantic legends about the *bandits tragique* and the appalling Bonnie and Clyde, but sentimental guff aside, there are lessons important to anarchists in the realistic appraisal of such social phenomena. Mell might have developed his analysis further, rather than treating us to various titbits of information.

I have criticised this pamphlet because it is worthy of criticism. Among the welter of nonsense that is churned out by left-wing presses, often in quite attractively made up pamphlets, this is well worth obtaining. Some may regard it as a journalistic exercise on a well-worn theme (the Bonnot Gang are an old stand-by for series of lectures organised by anarchist groups), but the theme has yet to be pursued more thoroughly with the fresh approach and sophistication of modern anarchism which rejects the outworn ideology of Marxism.



# Kropotkin at this moment

PAUL GOODMAN

THE NEW INTEREST IN KROPOTKIN is part of the worldwide revival of anarchist action and thought, in both "private enterprise" and socialist countries. So Bakunin, Kropotkin, and the other anarchists were right after all: the real enemies have proved to be the State (whose health is war), overcentralised organisation, the authoritarian personality of people. The call is for grass-roots social structures, spontaneity and mutual aid, direct action and doing it yourself, education for self-reliance, and agitation for freedom. Marxists now talk a good deal about alienation and liberals have picked it up, especially "youth alienation", but this is what anarchists were always talking about, without neo-Hegelian trimmings. They knew it by human feeling and common observation. Closely studying the social history of rural communes and medieval towns, Kropotkin concluded that man did not have to be ruled.

Yet mankind being what it was, it probably has been necessary to experiment the obvious abstract recipe of "rational" central planning, in order to get a bellyful of it. Kant said that men always try out all the wrong ways before, perforce, they choose the right one. Writing in 1898, Kropotkin was far off base in his slighting estimate of the prospects of Marxian socialism! Indeed, for the first half of this century it seemed that the trend toward universal social engineering and a general shambles was irreversible. But the recalcitrance of human nature, that Kropotkin used to admire, has stubbornly begun to reassert itself and we shall not have universal social engineering. We may still have the general shambles. The bureaucracy and stupidity of the Great Powers are now no worse than when Kropotkin wrote his *Memoirs*, but their technical and organisation ability to do mischief is immensely greater. Patience is a salient virtue of political moralists, but the philosophers of the past did not have to figure with atom bombs and so forth.

When young radicals come across *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, they are surprised at how similar their peers were in 1875. Kropotkin's description of the generation gap is poignant—all the "older brothers"

PAUL GOODMAN's article was written as the preface to a new facsimile edition of Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, published by Horizon Press, New York.

had been, as we say, co-opted. Those who have done work among the dispossessed in Harlem, Roxbury, and Detroit recognise *V'Narod*, going to the people where they are and on their own terms, and they also recognise the ambiguities involved.

Some young people are miffed at the similarities and do not want to hear about them, for it is an article of faith among *moderni*—as they called themselves in 1500!—that nothing like themselves has ever happened. But these are the lively youth of every pre-revolutionary age, when the powers that be have become morally bankrupt and administratively incompetent. They sprang up before the Reformation, as *Sturm und Drang* before the French Revolution, as the *Narodniki* in Russia, and as our hippies and New Left. And it is not just an eternal return; something useful did come out of the previous upheavals, though we certainly need to do better.

Kropotkin's running critique of the system of formal education also continually strikes home. With a trenchant empirical observation he solves the precise dilemma that bedevils our most prestigious pedagogical theorists. Some hold that you can teach any proposition to anybody, whereas others insist that there is required a long prior training in intellectual habits, which the "culturally disadvantaged" do not have. Kropotkin says, "My experience is that when you speak to the Russian peasant plainly, and start from concrete facts, there is no generalisation from the whole world of natural and social science which cannot be conveyed to a man of average intelligence, if you yourself understand it concretely." But oh what a revolution in our school system that little clause implies!

But the chief lesson, in my opinion, that Kropotkin has to teach young people is how an authentic professional becomes a revolutionary. Today many of the best students believe that to be a professional at all is to be a fink of the System; and to be a scientist or artist is frivolous when there is so much injustice and suffering in the world. Kropotkin himself was an archetypal 19th-century scientist: a lone adventurer warmly co-operating with his peers in their voluntary associations, scrupulously dutiful to the scientific method, and blushing with pride when Mother Nature occasionally came across with an answer just for him. Of course he could not give this up—it was his way of being in the world. There is a pathetic hilarity in the story that, whereas other agitators could get out of town and escape the police, he had to stay and explain to the geological society his thesis on the Ice Cap. He had plenty of time to write it up in jail. His experience, however, was that just by trying to pursue his profession with courage and integrity, he found that there must be revolutionary changes in society. Perhaps the critical episode was his effort to do something for the agronomy and economy of the Siberian Cossacks:

When I returned with my report, I received congratulations on all sides, I was promoted. I got special rewards. All the measures I recommended were accepted—special grants of money were given. . . . The higher administration of Siberia was influenced by excellent intentions.



Everything considered, it was far more enlightened than the administration of any other province in Russia. . . . But it was an administration—a branch of the tree that had its roots in St. Petersburg, and that was quite sufficient to paralyse its excellent intentions and to make it interfere with all beginnings of local spontaneous life and progress. . . . I become convinced of the absolute uselessness of such efforts.

It was so that one became an anarchist.

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The New Anarchism is in, so to speak, a Bakuninist phase: the emphasis is on agitation, direct action, sometimes disruption to bring bad operations to a stop. Kropotkin, in his prime, belonged to a more mature anarchism that did revolutionary agitation as the day's work but was already "discussing", as Kropotkin calls it, the possibilities of anarchist technology, ecology, pedagogy, rural life, industrial management. It was just here that the Scientific Socialists thought of nothing and have accomplished nothing, despite their agitational success. They have merely carried on the arrangements of the old order, sometimes a little better, sometimes a lot worse. Our young anarchists have few such "discussions". They understand as well as Bazaroff the need for a new style of life, but it is hard to tell what the content of this is, except for interpersonal relations. Often they sound as if the high technology, after they have disrupted it, will grind on automatically, while they are supported like Indians on a reservation, with motorcycles and good hi-fi, occasionally hitch-hiking to a be-in in Golden Gate Park. Kropotkin's generation had a more interesting notion of freedom.

Yet it is only by the way that *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* is about anarchist thought and history; it is as a work of literature that it lives on. Except for the last section, which Kropotkin added later and which deals like a chronicle with matters almost contemporary, the book is a work of long reflection and literary imagination, a series of pictures vividly particular and tellingly typical, the poetry that is more philosophical than history. The episodes are chosen with great economy to give the essence, "a man in his times". Everything is what the hero directly experienced, as in a biography, yet he himself almost entirely vanishes into a sequence of responses to important social scenes: serfdom and the nobility of Russia, city and country life, the pages' academy and the Czar's court, adventure in the wilderness and the world of science, prison, escape to the West. It is a very artful performance, an individual life as pure social action. Yet it is undoubtedly ingenuous. The taste of it is like a sprig of peppermint or a stalk of spring rhubarb.

Anarchy is the political philosophy of skilled artisans and farmers, who do not need a boss; of men in dangerous occupations, like miners, lumbermen, or explorers, who learn to rely on themselves and one another; of aristocrats who can afford to be idealistic and who know

what is behind the show of power; of artists and scientists who respect the facts but are not timid about inventing something out of their heads. Kropotkin was all of these.

The psychoanalysis, the deep motivation, is embarrassingly obvious; Kropotkin could never have written it this way if he had known Freud, which would have been a pity. Beautiful Mama dies when our hero is a small child. Papa, who is of coarser clay, takes another wife who is cold and tries to expunge all traces of previous paradise. Only the serfs conspiratorially keep alive the warm sentiment of Mama. The boy is under pressure to become a warrior like Papa, but he bides his time, accumulates experience, and then goes his own way, to strike at the very principle of paternal authority, the State, the Czar himself. What is remarkable about the story in the case of Kropotkin, however, is that, blessed with intellect, boyish beauty, money, and luck, he altogether abjures resentment and envy, and seeks reconciliation. In the book this happens almost comically during the description of M. Poulain, the pedantic tutor brought in after Papa's remarriage. The passage starts with an account of idiotic authoritarian lessons and a taste of the birch-rod; but suddenly the child is rescued by his sister, and the author at once relents: "No sooner had M. Poulain discharged himself of his heavy educational duties than he became quite another man, a lively comrade instead of a gruesome teacher." From that point, on page 16, there is not a trace of ill-will in the *Memoirs* of Kropotkin, not toward anybody. About 400 pages later he explains his position as editor of a revolutionary periodical:

Socialist papers have often a tendency to become mere annals of complaints about existing conditions. The exploitation of the labourers in the mine, the factory, the field is related; the misery and sufferings of the workers during strikes are told in vivid pictures; their helplessness in the struggle against employers is insisted upon; and this succession of hopeless efforts exercises a most depressing influence on the reader. . . . I thought, on the contrary, that a revolutionary paper must be, above all, a record of those symptoms which everywhere announce the coming of a new era, the germination of new forms of social life, the growing revolt against antiquated institutions. These symptoms should be watched, brought together in their intimate connection, and so grouped as to show to the hesitating minds of the greater number the invisible and often unconscious support which advanced ideas find everywhere when a revival of thought takes place in society. . . . It is hope, not despair, which makes successful revolutions.

By and large, this is true. To keep going requires a thirst for paradise. Just to get out of a trap does not produce a lasting commitment. To wreak vengeance, or for the oppressed to take the place of the mighty, changes little. But of course this is the point of view of a natural aristocrat, who assumes that all men are potentially aristocrats.

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There is a curious doctrine of Will in Kropotkin, paradoxical for a philosopher who was so conscious of biological, social, and historical



forces. It is a much less arbitrary and "existential" kind of Will than in Bakunin or Max Stirner, but it is certainly more personal and psychological than historical determinists would allow. It is paradoxical; in my opinion, it is just about what the reality seems to be—among energetic and resourceful people.

Without doubt, the tonic objectivity of these *Memoirs* is protected by a certain amount of repression. The sexual reticence is extraordinary, far beyond the Victorian (public) standard. I count one disapproving comment on the fun and games at the pages' academy, and one disapproving comment on remarks about women that Michael (Bakunin) would have put down—that is all. On page 424 we are suddenly told about "my wife", but not a mention before. There is absolute silence about either his own religious beliefs, or the organised church, or the religion of the serfs. His literary references reveal the same diffidence toward irrational experience; he praises the classical Turgenev and the satirical Goncharov, but there is one glancing mention of Tolstoi and no mention at all of Dostoevsky. Except for horses to drive, there are no animals, although he speaks of them so lovingly and admiringly in *Mutual Aid*, where there is a political and scientific reason to do so. Indeed, though everything is spirited and feelingful, the single passage that is not active and objective, that is passionate, is the terrible cry when he is locked up and as if abandoned in the Fortress. I guess that John Dewey is the only moralist of equal intellectual power who is literally quite so cagey about self-revelation, at the same time as being perfectly open. It is a bonus of pragmatism. Being always concerned for the problem, one can disregard oneself. But what if oneself is the problem?

Conversely, Kropotkin has an obsessional lust to praise, and to have something to praise. The viability of mankind is hopefully a self-proving hypothesis. He gives us lists of his beautiful friends and enumerates their virtues and achievements.

For an American—writing in the summer of 1968—there is a particular poignancy to Kropotkin's occasional sentences about the United States. He takes it for granted that we are the free common people, whom he believes in. (We had recently liberated our serfs.) He mentions the happy dream of a United States of Siberia, presumably to be federated with ourselves. He points out that the dissident pacifist communities of the Dukhobors find "heartly support in the United States".

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**In next month's Anarchy :**

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