No Heaven for 'Hells Angels'

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&

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Ever since Marlon Brando portrayed the leather-jacketed leader of a motorcycle gang in "The Wild Ones," a squadron of free-wheeling, anti-social highway roamers has loomed as a symbol of menace to many small communities across the country. In recent summers major riots have broken out at resort towns when unruly crowds have disrupted a schedule of motorcycle races and forced the police or National Guard into action.

As social scientists and police consultants we became involved in the summer of 1965 in a motorcycle riot that never happened. The experience we shared with a police department may be instructive in coping with riot conditions that confront communities in the future, not only with motorcycle gangs, but in the public arena of social protest.

A national motorcycle race was scheduled for Labor Day weekend at Upper Marlboro, the county seat of Prince George's County, Maryland. The county, with a population of 500,000, is adjacent to Washington, D.C., and is partly suburban, partly rural. Upper Marlboro is a rural sector, but is only about 15 miles from well-populated suburbs.

The news media had reported all the gory details of the Weir's Beach riot on the Fourth of July which followed the National Championship motorcycle race near Laconia, New Hampshire. A police lieutenant reported that shortly after the Weir's Beach episode three motorcyclists, proclaiming themselves members of the notorious "Hell's Angels" of California, were arrested and jailed for disorderly conduct by town policemen in Prince George's County. Angered by being forced to bathe for a court appearance, they threatened to return over Labor Day to "tear up the county."

Learning of these events in a casual conversation with the lieutenant, and wishing to keep posted on the local situation, we spoke to the police inspector responsible for police action over Labor Day. He wasn't sure how seriously he ought to take these threats and rumors. Precious little was known about the Hell's Angels and how they were likely to behave among several thousand motorcyclists amassed for a big race. We offered to chase down the rumors, and bring the results of our inquiries back to the police. But two weeks of search failed to turn up so much as one Hell's Angel, though the rumors of invasion and destruction were persistent and proliferating.

When we reviewed accounts of several recent riots and disturbances in connection with recreational or sporting events, we noted several common factors that seemed significant in all of them:

- An influx of outsiders into a small town or circumscribed amusement area, where the number of outsiders was large relative to the number of local inhabitants and police.
- The outsiders were distinguished from "locals" by some common feature—an intense
interest (such as motorcycling), an age group (college youth), race, etc.

- The distinction between "locals" and "outsiders" was often made more visible by differences in dress, argot, and other expressive behavior.

The specific conditions under which exuberance and rowdiness exploded into rioting seemed to be the following:

- Recreational, service, and control facilities were "flooded" by overwhelming numbers of visitors who were left at loose ends. They were ready for any kind of "action."

- Ineffuctual, often provocative attempts at control and expression of authority were made by police or civic officials.

- A sense of group solidarity developed among members of the crowd.

Often the locals, including the authorities, contributed to the developing cohesion of outsiders by viewing the visitors as all of a kind; attributing negative class characteristics to them (dirty, rowdy, etc.); labeling them as "hoodlums" or "young punks"; and then treating them accordingly. The effect of opposition or attack in solidifying group cohesion is well documented. If the opposition is ineffectual as well, many members of the developing mob begin to sense their own potential power. (Several reports mentioned careful preplanning by a small cadre of dedicated instigators, who allegedly circulated rumors before the event and selected targets on the scene. Actual proof of "planning," as opposed to repetition of rumors, is difficult to obtain.)

In order to prepare for the special Labor Day situation ahead, we needed information about the organization of motorcycling both as a sport and as a way of life. Moving from one enthusiast to another, and interviewing at the local Harley-Davidson dealer, we made a number of discoveries. Motorcyclists come from all walks of life. The majority is employed, and need to be, since as much as $3,000 may be tied up in a "motor." The devotees insist that the size of the machine separates the men from the boys. Those who own enormous Harley-Davidsons and the large Triumphs or BSA's and who engage in competitive events such as races, "field events," and "hill climbs," see themselves as a breed apart from the "candy ass" owners of Hondas and the lightweights. For the former group, the motorcycle often serves as the fulcrum of social and even family life. They enjoy being able to take off any evening at a moment's notice and ride, say from Washington, D.C., to Atlantic City, returning as the sun rises. They travel regularly to field meets and races, usually camping overnight on the scene.

Like many hobby-sports, motorcycling has its formal organization, the American Motorcycle Association (AMA), and its "sanctioned" members. AMA clubs have tight rules and tolerate little deviance. Some non-AMA clubs are similar and may aspire to sanctioned status. Other clubs are available to those who enjoy a more relaxed and casual organization; these may require only that members not seriously embarrass the club in public. They tend to be more tolerant in their attitudes regarding noisy mufflers and styling, and less regimented during group expeditions. All get classified by the AMA as "outlaws."

Aside from these more or less conforming clubs, the "outlaw" class also includes groups of dedicated rowdies who pride themselves on their ability to intimidate and destroy. The Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club of California is such a group, as are the Gooses, from New York and New Jersey, or the Pagans, from the Washington area.

Spokesmen for the motorcycling "establishment" often attribute the sport's bad image to the "1 percent who cause all the trouble." The rowdies have proudly accepted "1-per-center" as an honorific epithet, and often have it emblazoned on their costume as a badge of commitment. The 1-percenter personifies the motorcycling hoodlum stereotype.
Regardless of their organization or status within the sport, motorcyclists agree on one thing—they all complain of police persecution. They also report being victimized on the roads by car drivers. Many respectable motorcyclists sympathize with the view the "rowdy outlaws" have of themselves as a persecuted minority.

ON THE ROAD IN MARYLAND

With regard to the Labor Day weekend itself, we learned that the schedule of events was more complex than we or the police had thought. Aside from the big race on Sunday, the "Ninth Annual Tobacco Trail Classic" (for the first time a National Championship event) at the Upper Marlboro track, there were lesser races at the same track on Saturday. At the Vista track, 14 miles away but within the same police jurisdiction, there were to be "field events" such as drag races and "riding the plank" on Saturday and Sunday and an AMA-sanctioned race meet on Monday. The sponsors of the Upper Marlboro races had also scheduled a Saturday night race at a track 30 miles away in the Baltimore suburbs, "to give people something to do and keep them out of trouble."

The Vista track had in the past operated as an "outlaw" track without AMA sanction, and most or all of the competitors and spectators had been Negroes. However, in 1965 it had just achieved sanctioned status, and its events were listed in the national calendar. A dance hall, popular with Washington area Negroes, was located in the track infield and would be operating every night of the weekend, so it appeared that a large proportion of those attending the motorcycle events at Vista would be Negroes. The crowd at the Marlboro track was expected to be between 3,000 and 6,000; a much smaller crowd was expected at Vista. Most motorcyclists we spoke to thought there would be a great deal of migration during the weekend from one track to another and among the various camping areas (assuming there were more than one), the taverns, and other recreation spots. Easy mobility is the essence of motorcycling.

Concluding that we enjoyed a special and privileged relationship with motorcyclists, the police asked us whether or not the race should be called off. We did not feel justified in taking responsibility for the decision, but joined in the deliberations. To cancel a public event on the basis of thin rumor alone—the Hell’s Angels threat—was a dangerous precedent to set, yet to jeopardize the safety of innocent people was unthinkable. The police decided to permit the race as scheduled, while making every effort to avert violence. (Our shift in role from outside consultant to partnership with the police at this point tied us much closer to the action and events of the weekend than would ordinarily be the case in the role of scientist-observer.)

Once the decision to permit the race was made, we developed a set of goals which we felt should guide planning, basing our thinking on the analysis of recent riots mentioned above and on a hurried and therefore unsystematic study of the social science literature. Collective Behavior, by Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1957) was particularly useful and supported our inferences from the riot accounts.

First, we encouraged sober planning for all the events of the long weekend. Naturally, advance planning was not new to the police department. Nonetheless we were grateful that the unsettled state of the "Hell's Angels" rumors, plus our refusal to make pseudo-authoritative pronouncements on the probable course of events, helped maintain some controlled anxiety among police officials. This limited anxiety went far to prevent a premature resolution of the planning process, either through panicky reliance on harshness on the one hand, or complacent relaxation on the other. Our goal was a plan with three major objectives:
anticipation of the kinds, numbers, and distribution of motorcyclists and spectators; the activities they would engage in; and the amount of localized roving to be expected; • the disposition of police officers and their instructions, both as to general attitude and specific actions to meet various contingencies;

- coordination of the several police departments concerned, including the state police, and the local police of nearby towns and counties to which the motorcyclists might travel in search of recreation.

Our second goal was to avoid a polarization of relations between the authorities and the motorcyclists. We directed our efforts to both groups. As we explored the "culture" of motorcycling, we tried to keep the police informed and interested in what we learned. We arranged a meeting between some local motorcyclists and police officials at which films of sport motorcycling were shown; afterward each group expressed its gripes concerning the other. Our educational goals with the police were:

- to show that motorcyclists are not essentially different from other citizens, and need not be treated as a breed apart; • to inform them that in point of fact motorcyclists are not a homogeneous class but come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some innocuous, some potentially troublesome;
- to impress upon them that indiscriminate harsh treatment of all motorcyclists would confirm the latter's sense of persecution, increase group solidarity among them, and go far toward creating the very polarization we wished to avoid.

In working with local motorcyclists, our objectives were:

- to involve the organized groups in the control effort, asking them not only to refrain from participating in or serving as passive audience to rowdiness, but to help actively in identifying potential trouble areas and keeping police informed of large group movements;
- to weaken the respectable motorcyclists' sense of solidarity with the "1-percenters" by reinforcing their concern for the deteriorating "image" of motorcycling and pointing out their vested interest in running peaceful races.

Our third major goal was to ensure that adequate facilities were provided for the visiting motorcyclists, with an eye to both containment and entertainment. Our objective was to inhibit the milling behavior that usually precedes crowd disturbances. Specifically, we suggested that adequate and convenient camping facilities were customary and essential at motorcycle meets. Also certain informal and rather dangerous recreations (such as drag racing and stunt riding in the camp grounds), which do not impinge on the non-motorcycling citizenry, are also customary and ought to be permitted. We had noted in the New Hampshire riots that the only camping area was 40 to 50 miles from the track. The campers were reluctant to make the long return trip after each day's racing, and some preferred simply to stay up all night. Thus they remained in the town of Weir's Beach long past the time when they might ordinarily have returned to secluded camping areas for an evening of drag racing, motor-revving and beer drinking-in mutually acceptable segregation from the resort citizenry.

Our fourth major objective was to monitor the events of the weekend and keep a continuous flow of intelligence coming into police command headquarters, so that the senior officer could make effective decisions. Here we served in something of a combined research and undercover capacity, checking out rumors, keeping current with the temper of various groups, clubs, and gangs among the motorcyclists, and observing fights or accidents as they occurred. We made a point of spending time in places where the county police could not routinely go.
HELL'S ANGELS IN THE WINGS

Rumors of the arrival en masse of the Hell's Angels of California persisted through Saturday of the three-day weekend and were never clearly proved or disproved. We learned that Hell's Angels were anticipated in resorts all the way from Ocean City, Maryland, 140 miles away, to the Pacific coast. Rumors circulated mostly among youth and motorcyclists that three scattered locations (a tavern, the race track, and a whole town) in Prince George's County were to be wrecked. We began to see that the Hell's Angels were assuming a mythical character. They had become folk heroes-vicarious exemplars of behavior most youth could only fantasy (unless swept away in mob activity), and legendary champions who would come to the rescue of the oppressed and persecuted. An older motorcyclist, witnessing police harassment of his fellows at a town outside Prince George's County, was heard to remark, "Just wait 'til the Angels hear about this when they come in tomorrow. They'll come tear this place apart."

The police never did accept the idea of actively involving local motorcycle clubs in the control effort, even though we offered to do all the leg work in getting club representatives together for a meeting. An exception was the large club that sponsored the Marlboro races. The inspector warned them severely that any trouble this weekend would greatly reduce the likelihood of the race being permitted next year. However, he emphasized that the department did not intend to discriminate in any way against motorcyclists. The inspector convinced the sponsoring club to hire uniformed guards for the race track. The club also assured us that camping facilities would be provided.

There was little advance coordination among the various police departments in the area. The state police announced a policy of "keep them moving," and said they would "get tough" with any rowdy-looking types they encountered. The detailed cooperation between departments we had envisioned, like involvement of the motorcycle clubs in police planning, was probably considered too far outside normal practice to be warranted by the situation.

Despite these largely negative circumstances, one particularly positive development stood out. At each police roll call prior to the Labor Day weekend, all the uniformed men were instructed to treat motorcyclists just as they would any motorist visiting the county. They were told that only a very small minority of motorcyclists were troublemakers and that only the behavior, not the style of dress, haircut, or bodily cleanliness was a matter of police concern.

On Saturday morning of the race weekend, we and the police were dismayed to learn that the sponsoring AMA club had reneged on its promise to provide public camping facilities. Apparently they wished to avoid the expense of renting portable outhouses, which were likely to be broken up for firewood in the course of the weekend. We were further disturbed to learn that early arrivals, some of whom were pretty ragged and rough looking, had already set up a squatters' camp in the large field usually rented for that purpose.

This created a tricky problem for the police. They could not legitimately enter the field, which was private property, unless the owner complained or a violation of law occurred which was visible from the public highway. If the police officially notified the owner, he would be bound to ask that the trespassers be removed, because of his liability for damages incurred by people who were on his property with his implicit permission. Eviction of the growing crowd of squatters would have meant removing a noisy, potentially troublesome group from a location remote from residences and businesses where the amount of property they could damage was limited. Furthermore, they were not, at that time, visibly violating laws. There was no way to predict where they would go if evicted, but obviously they would not go home so early in the weekend. The problem might simply
have been scattered all over the county, aggravating the difficulties of control while at the same time provoking resentment, which could have been turned against innocent citizens.

It was decided that notification of the owner of the field was not warranted and that there were tactical advantages in keeping the field open, since it seemed to be attracting and holding the rowdier element. So long as they were all in one place, surveillance would be simple and response to trouble could be quick.

The activities on the field were kept under continuous but unobtrusive observation. Police cars were continually passing the field, occasionally pausing near the entrance; the people on the field were thus kept aware of the police presence in the general area, but not so heavily as to arouse feelings of persecution. The 45-man Civil Disturbance Unit (CDU), trained in riot control but lacking experience in full riot conditions, had been mobilized and sent out on the road the night before (Friday). Only a few motorcyclists were seen in the county and the CDU was dismissed around midnight. The usual dance at the Vista track was held without incident.

From Saturday through Monday the entire force, including the CDU, was ordered on 12-hour shifts. The men were kept on the road except when responding to trouble calls, thus providing extra control for the normally heavy holiday beach traffic. We felt that the men would be able to respond more quickly to large-scale trouble if they had been concentrated in two or three central standby locations rather than dispersed over the county's 486 square miles. However, police officials judged that the disadvantage of a possible delay in such emergency mobilization was offset by the double payoff from the same investment in overtime pay-more extensive traffic control and riot prevention.

An elaborate communications system was set up, employing not only the police radio (monitored by newspapers and wire services) but also a civil defense band, which permitted more detailed discussion and open references to likely trouble spots. This privacy greatly facilitated unobtrusive surveillance. A special radio code was established so that squad cars using the police band could notify head-quarters briefly and in confidence of the presence of groups of motorcyclists.

On Saturday, only a few hundred spectators attended the scheduled lightweight and novice races at Marlboro. Across the highway those squatters, dusty out-of-towners, and locals who preferred the role of contestant to that of passive onlooker conducted their own impromptu field games. The entire center of the squatters' field, despite its ruts and hummocks, became a drag strip. Groups, clubs, even families had set up camp sites around the periphery of the field in a broken crescent.

Groups and couples who settled on the extreme ends of the crescent appeared to have expensive camping equipment and rather conventional dress. Dead center at the head of the drag strip, the most ragged troop of squatters set up headquarters in a large army tent, its center pole flying a red flag. Sullen young men and girls milled around this command post drinking beer and making menacing noises at curiosity seekers. Clusters of jackets marked "Hell's Angels," "Pagans," or "The Gooses," were seen. Some individuals sported a nose ring, a swastika, a Halloween wig, or gold cross earrings; many men wore their hair in shoulder-length manes.

A group of mostly short-haired locals, more or less neat in T-shirts and jeans, tried to introduce some order into the drag races. One tried to control racing by flagging each pair of racers to a start. He was successful for several hours but finally the enormous quantities of beer, hard liquor, and green wine consumed by participants undermined the authority he had established. Racers roared past him without waiting for the flag. He shouted for order, but few responded. Non-racers crisscrossed the drag strip, narrowly escaping collision.
The proximity of the self-appointed track superintendents to the encampment of rowdy long-haired outsiders and locals became abrasive. Accidents began to occur. Finally a fight broke out between a very wobbly Pagan and a helmeted, short-haired local. After punching the Pagan unconscious, the short-haired hero was successfully defended by his associates from being pummeled by the rest of the Pagans. The victor had the poor taste and bad judgment to sit triumphantly astride the hood of a truck, waving his beer can in a bravado challenge for all to see. Now all the rowdy groups joined in a confederation and charged en masse toward the short-haired locals. Just at that moment a drunken cyclist lost his machine to a rut in the track. His mishap was noted by police on the highway who dispatched an ambulance along with five police cruisers. The vehicles poured onto the field and fanned out in a half-circle around the casualty, thus coincidentally presenting the crowd with an array of flashing red lights. The unexpected show of power was so sudden and instantaneous that the would-be warriors at the head of the strip broke ranks and returned to their staging area. Unknowingly the police had put a stop to what might have been a bloody war, since the local motorcycle enthusiasts were far outnumbered by the combined force of Pagans, "Hell's Angels," and Gooses. (We put "Hell's Angels" in quotes wherever the reference is to participants in local events, because we have serious doubts that any bona fide members were ever present in our area.)

Following the withdrawal of police, 20 "Hell's Angels" and Gooses set out to replenish their beer supply at the Old Tavern nearby. Just as they started to throw their weight around in the bar and threaten the owner, a police sergeant and another officer entered the room. The group quieted down and waited for the action. Three cyclists moved to the window to assess the size of the sergeant's force; four cruisers were visible. The sergeant opened with, "I hope you all are behaving yourselves." He remembered from a conversation with us that motorcycle chains worn loosely over the hips rather than through belt loops should be considered weapons, so he asked, "What's that chain for?" "Hey, man, I lock up my motor with it." "Well, aren't you afraid someone'll steal your motor, not being locked up and all? You better come with me while we put that chain on right, son." The group tensed, then relaxed as the young man elected to go quietly and do as the sergeant suggested. Shortly after this low-key encounter the group roared back to the field and the Old Tavern was prematurely closed for the weekend.

At 11 p.m. about 75 cyclists were seen by one of our staff at a rock 'n roll beach resort in a neighboring county. The chief of police there had already advised the press of his intention to lock up any rowdy motorcyclists who showed up. He arranged for the state police to back him up. Twenty state troopers in riot dress and five dogs were lined up on the main street across from the crowd of motorcycle riders while six local policemen pushed and poked with night sticks, arresting several who took exception to their tactics. By 1:30 Sunday morning most of the motorcyclists had left town. Statements to the press by the chief greatly exaggerated the numbers present and arrested, thus giving an unwarranted notoriety to the evening.

By Sunday morning 300 motorcyclists had settled on the field at Marlboro. Those who had been driven from the beach resort were in a mean mood. Under the direction of the unofficial starter drag racing resumed at a more frantic tempo than on the day before. Across the highway a steady stream of spectators poured onto the track for the afternoon race. Few took notice of the accidents that were beginning to occur on the field.

At 2 p.m. a fire was set in a railroad caboose on a siding behind the field. Fire equipment and police responded quickly; no attempt was made to find the arsonists. At 3 p.m. a crane was started on an adjacent construction site and tools were stolen from its cab. At 4:30, coinciding with the "Tobacco Trail Classic" across the road, a man removed the license plates
from his dilapidated old car and set it afire. With another sportsman straddling the hood, the owner drove onto the drag strip and jumped free. The car rammed an accelerating motorcycle. Both hood rider and motorcyclist were thrown on impact, both suffering broken legs. A fire truck arrived to put out the fire amid jeers from spectators. A police lieutenant supervised aid to the injured, making humorous asides to cool the excited crowd and enable the ambulance to remove the casualties to the hospital.

About 6 p.m. the long-haired groups demanded that locals turn over the starting flag to a "Hell's Angel" who appeared to be one of their leaders. Fighting broke out but subsided immediately when one squad of the CDU (10 men) drove onto the field. This time the police had riot equipment visible—helmets, clubs, shotguns, gas masks. The crowd dispersed; the squad withdrew. Since tension on the field seemed to be building, command officers set up an observation post on a cloverleaf approach overlooking the field. At 6:30 the flagman and a delegation from his club came up to plead with command officers to clear the field of hoodlums; they threatened to bring in their own weapons if police didn't protect them. Since the delegation could not agree on who should be charged with what, action was delayed.

At 7 p.m. several men broke away from the milling crowd at the center of the field and ran to their machines. From the observation post, it was clear they were returning with bars, chains, and other weapons. The entire CDU was sent on to the field where they quickly assembled in riot formation. The inspector drawled out over the bull-horn, "All right men, you've had your fun, now it's time to go home." Before he finished his sentence motorcycles began to move out of the field. Within 20 minutes the area was clear.

Up to this time, the importance of containing trouble makers on the field was dominant in the minds of commanding officers. But if the crowd were allowed to remain overnight, fighting probably would continue, under the cover of darkness. Dispersing all the squatters while it was still light would, hopefully, send them on their way home. The alternative—isolating and removing the instigators and mob leaders—was complicated because the police could not remain on the field and because cyclists were unable or unwilling to serve as complainants.

Fifteen minutes after the field was vacated, 10 men and a girl were arrested outside the Old Tavern, where they had started to break windows. Within minutes, another 10, including the leading "Hell's Angel," were arrested as trespassers at a filling station where they refused to make way for customers. There was no further trouble in the county, at the Vista track, or at the beach resort, though an anxious lookout was maintained until early the next morning. By Monday it was obvious that the danger had passed.

Both the command officers and the county commissioner responsible for police matters were satisfied that the police had conducted themselves effectively and that the control local motorcycle enthusiasts were far outnumbered by the combined force of Pagans, "Hell's Angels," and Gooses. (We put "Hell's Angels" in quotes wherever the reference is to participants in local events, because we have serious doubts that any bona fide members were ever present in our area.)

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Both the command officers and the county commissioner responsible for police matters were satisfied that the police had conducted themselves effectively and that the control effort had been a success. They felt, however, that the situation had not warranted the extra expense and trouble. Estimates of cost ranged from $6,000 to $10,000, but certainly some of the overtime pay would have been necessary for a Labor Day weekend even without motorcyclists. The commissioner announced that he couldn't see why the county had "to put up with the influx of motorcycle tramps who camp out, drink and fight among themselves."

Like the commissioner, most of the police leadership was opposed to permitting the race next year. We refrained from offering unsolicited and premature advice on the issue of future races. The club sponsoring the Marlboro races was considering cutting the meet down to a one-day event and preventing camping altogether, in the hope that this would make the event more acceptable to authorities.

Since we were unable to maintain contact among Pagans, Gooses, or "Hell's Angels," we could not ascertain their reactions to police policy and procedure. We did talk to our acquaintance at the local Harley-Davidson dealership, which provides service and parts for many out-of-town motorcycles. He reported that for the first time in nine years of races he had heard none of the usual atrocity stories of police mistreatment of motorcyclists. The local short-haired motorcyclists who had been in the fighting on the field felt that police had exercised entirely too much restraint in dealing with that situation. They did not know, until we told them, that the field had not been rented this year.

Was all the concern, planning, and extra police activity justified? We think so. Would the Gooses, Pagans and alleged "Hell's Angels" have been just as peaceful anyway, despite their frightening appearance? We think not. Consider the forays against the Old Tavern, the crane, and the caboose, the incinerated car, and the brawling which broke out repeatedly on the field. If unhindered and undaunted, the hoodlum element sooner or later would have left the camping area and sought glory and reputation in new arenas, before new audiences. These seem to be people who need and seek the stimulation of collective action, excitement, and violence. Without it they become depressed and demoralized. They have an affinity for the romantic role of outlaw, which is perhaps the only status in which they feel they can stand out as individuals.

Four factors were critical in preventing the spread of violence:

- Most important was the general police policy of strength, fairness, and neutrality, which influenced all the tactics employed. Law violations were dealt with immediately and
firmly, but motorcyclists were not harassed or deliberately antagonized. The availability of overwhelming force, literally on a moment's notice, was demonstrated but not over dramatized. Thus potential mob leaders were deprived of the rallying point of "police brutality," and potential followers never developed the sense of mob power that results from evidence of police weakness.

- The decision not to interfere with the motorcyclists who camped and drag raced on private property, until extreme violence impended, was also of critical importance, for several reasons. In the field the potential troublemakers were all contained in an open area where all their activities could be easily observed. They were segregated by the broad highway and differentiated from the much larger mass of spectators at the track, and thus deprived of both victims and audience. The amount of property vulnerable to damage was relatively small. Finally, they were allowed to occupy their time with activities which were both customary and satisfying (drinking, dragging, showing off, etc.) while not annoying other citizens. This business of "keeping them occupied" is not trivial. Mob action, except in a catastrophe, is usually preceded by a period of "milling," exchange of fact and rumor, and movement toward consensus. During such periods mob leaders can seize the initiative in directing the crowd toward specific objectives.

- Another important factor was the continuous flow of intelligence both during the weekend and over the preceding weeks, important for helping break down police stereotypes as well as for its operational utility.

- Plain and simple good luck favored us on several occasions. Undoubtedly there was an element of luck in the fact that the "hoodlum element" chose to remain at the campground rather than roam the county. The factional dispute between the short-haired locals and the "l-per centers" may have been fortunate in that it kept the warlike elements busy and precluded any alliance between the two groups. It was especially fortunate that when it finally became necessary to clear the field, most of the rowdier motorcyclists left the county entirely.

As it turned out we successfully avoided a general polarization of motorcyclists against police and the citizenry. We tried to apply in this situation the specialized knowledge and theory of our field, and found it useful. The police, logically, focus on the apprehension of persons who violate laws, protection of citizens from the acts of such persons, prevention of specifically violative behavior, and the deployment of strength in accordance with those goals. As social scientists we focused on the collection of data, the analysis of differences and similarities, the understanding of group and individual behavior, and the communication and exchange of fact and opinion. (The clarity with which these distinctions are drawn is not meant to deny that there are policemen who think like social scientists, and vice versa.)

Though the events of Labor Day, 1965, in Prince George's County were of little national or long-term import in themselves, we consider the principles applied and the lessons learned to have far broader relevance—a significant practice for things to come.

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