Chapter 10

# Police Knowledge and Protest Policing: Some Reflections on the Italian Case

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One of the most delicate functions taken on by the police is the control of public order. Indeed, for people involved in demonstrations, the police represent the very face of state power (Lipsky, 1970; see also Muir, 1977). Direct interventions by the police to restore public order, moreover, put the police on the front pages of the press and increase the likelihood of public criticism (della Porta, 1995, 1997). It is likely, then, that because of this particular delicacy, the strategies of the police concerning the question of public order are multiple and ever-changing, so much so that important changes in the police organization often follow periods of political turmoil (e.g., Geary, 1985; Morgan, 1987; Reiner, in this volume), while a weakening in the repressive capacity of the state has been considered as a precondition for cycles of protest (e.g., Tilly, 1978; Skocpol, 1979; McAdam, 1982).

In Italy, as well as in other Western democracies, following the great wave of protest that came to a peak in the late 1960s, the strategy of control of public order has been profoundly transformed. While the right to public protest has tended to be broadened during this period, strategies of intervention have become distanced from the coercive model of policing that had predominated until then. During the course of the 1970s and 1980s, despite some setbacks and reversals, it is possible to trace a growing tendency to tolerate certain violations of the law that are now considered minor offenses. During these two decades, the public debate concerning police interventions into protest demonstrations followed a fixed scheme, between the left's "coalition for civil rights," which criticized any harsh repression, and the right's "coalition for law and order," which supported a tougher approach. By the 1990s, this situation seems to have changed. Whereas the movements of the left have little by little abandoned the most violent forms of protest that some-





times sparked a spiral of conflict with the police, violence connected with soccer fans and racist skinheads has grown. In particular, on certain occasions involving attacks on immigrants, the police have been accused—and not only in Italy—of being excessively tolerant, this time by the left.

A variety of conditions influenced the strategic choices of the police facing protest. The study of collective movements suggests that state reactions to challengers are influenced by specific characteristics of the political opportunity structure: in particular, the existing dominant culture and institutions (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995; Tarrow, 1994). The political "complexion" of a government is (or at least has been) another decisive variable in explaining strategic choices concerning public order. Another element intervenes, however, between the "reality" of the situation and police action: the perception that the police have of disturbances, of the techniques at their disposal, and of the requests that come from outside their ranks. These perceptions make up part of what can be called *police knowledge*, a term that refers to the images held by the police about their role and the external challenges they are asked to face. We may assume then that, as in other spheres of social life, the activity of the police to control public order is influenced, first, by the *professional culture* of the police, that is, by the images the police hold about their own role—or, put another way, by the "totality of assumptions, widespread among actors, relative to the 'cause' to which they must be committed" (Worden, 1989, 674)—and second, by the *environmental culture* of the police, that is, the totality of assumptions they hold about external reality.

In the course of my research, I have sought to reconstruct this *police knowledge* through in-depth interviews, following semistructured questionnaires, conducted with police officials in two Italian cities: Florence and Milan. This essay draws on illustrations taken from around thirty interviews,[1] integrated by close observations of certain police interventions in situations concerning public order, and interviews held with actors who are "challenging" public order. In the first part of this essay, I describe police officers' perceptions about the strategies available for reestablishing order, singling out four different models of police control. In the second part, I try to explain police choices on the basis of the police's images of the kinds of actors who create potential disturbances to public order, and the role of the police themselves.

## The Control of Public Order in the 1990s

Studies on the evolution of police styles have presented a complex image, describing at the same time a militarization of the police, but also a growing

attention to de-escalation, the increase of technological means for the use of force and at the same time the development of a sophisticated bargaining. How does the Italian case fit into this framework? What is the central model of control of public order in present-day Italy?

## The Police Force and Public Order in Italy: The Organizational Structure

In Italy, as elsewhere, an intervention to reestablish public order involves various institutional actors. At a local level, the political duty to maintain public order falls to the *prefetto* (who represents the central government at the local level), whereas technically the *questore* (the head of the police) is responsible. When potential disturbances to public order arise—when, in particular, a gathering of a large crowd or political initiative is foreseen—the *questore* orders the police to become involved, delegating an official to command the forces in action. The principal police corps that may intervene are the *Digos* (branch for general investigations and special operations, a political policing unit), and the *reparto mobile* (forces for rapid reaction). The plainclothes *Digos* have responsibilities for information gathering; the uniformed *reparto mobile* is available for forcible intervention. Whereas the *Digos* forms part of the *questura*, the *reparto mobile* is under the direct command of the national head of the police: the *questore* must therefore ask the head of the police to assign a certain number of men or women in uniform, who may be taken from various units of the city under the *questura*'s control, or from other units. In the sphere of public order, the *questore* also commands the carabinieri (militarized police), who are expected to cover half of the policing duties in the case of large-scale police interventions. In exceptional circumstances, the army may also be mobilized. In certain situations, the *squadra mobile* (mobile squad) may sometimes also intervene, a squad that is composed mainly of agents in civilian dress who are responsible for judicial policing, as may the *volanti* (flying squad), a uniformed patrol, and the *polizia scientifica* (scientific police), plainclothes agents and officials who are responsible for gathering evidence on possible crimes.

In the words of a Florentine official, a police intervention over public order is hierarchically organized, with police agents responding only to their direct superior:

> Every action concerned with public order . . . starts with the communication [by the organizers] to the *questura*, three days before the demonstration. On this basis the *questore* get informed on the demonstration, makes an evaluation of the route, the size and the type of the march, and then sends out orders on this basis that indicate the following: what type of demonstration it will be, who is directing the forces of public order, who is being given duties, the size of the force to be assigned, and possible special assignments relative to the particular demonstration. (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994)



Other actors, external to the police, may be involved in the management of public order, if only in a consulting capacity. For more significant interventions, the *prefetto* may make use of the suggestions of the Provincial Committee for Public Order and Safety, in which representatives of different political parties may participate in addition to the *questore* and the chief of the carabinieri. After hearing the opinion of the committee, the *questore* makes the order requesting the minister for a certain number of men and women from the *reparto mobile* and the carabinieri to be assigned. Only after this will the chief officers of the *reparto mobile* be contacted (Interview, Milan, October 10–11, 1994).

## Coercion, Containment, Consensus: The Use of Force in the Control of Public Order

The most prevalent perception among the police is that their presence is oriented primarily toward the *defusing of a situation*.[2] Nearly all the officials interviewed agreed on defining the strategy used in recent times as a strategy designed to seek a consensus through "dialogue" with protesters:

> On each occasion a dialogue is sought with whichever go-between comes forward. We always look to avoid incidents. All demonstrations, of whatever kind or type, are normally preceded by direct contacts with police headquarters or the officials of the *Digos* or other forces to agree on the course of the march, in order to know whom we should speak with, to see what kind of situation we will be faced with, to understand what the real issues of the march are, so that we can prepare a possible dialogue with the people who are organizing the demonstration. In this sense, the tactics, particularly during the 1980s, have changed the style of interlocution, that is, demonstrators do not find themselves in front of masked men with helmets and batons: there is always some attempt at mediation. (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994)

The choice of dialogue seems to have come with a limitation on the type of coercive tactics considered appropriate to face public order problems: the use of firearms is stigmatized; "tough" techniques (such as jeep charges or the water cannon) have fallen into disuse; the shortcomings of the baton charge and tear gas are often emphasized.[3] Recourse to a repressive intervention is, in general, considered to be a failure in policing terms. According to the officials, the primary objective of a police intervention in defense of public order is to avoid "upsetting the balance of the situation," and hence

producing disturbances to the peace. For this reason, especially when there are more radical groups of people within a larger peaceful demonstration, a strategy of "underenforcing the law" and "containment" prevails, which, however, takes on different characteristics according to the different actors that are "threatening" public order.

In spite of the often-quoted principle of "neutrality," by which the police claim that "the reaction of the police is always the same," in reality responses to a range of challenges to public order reveal diverse models of *protest policing*, each formulated with regard to the particular problem posed. As a young vice superintendent of the *reparto mobile* observed:

> Clearly, when we are talking about Leoncavallo, that is, demonstrations with a particularly high political element, then we always keep our distance. With the ultra [radical] soccer fans, the opposite is the case: we get right in among them. With the ultras, if you give them fifty meters, they start throwing stones at you. When we want to show our muscles, especially with the Leoncavallo people [a radical "autonomous" group], the policy of the *questura* in the last few years has usually been to send a massive and highly visible police presence, of a size such that it is made very clear that the balance of forces is tipped strongly in our favor. With such a visible presence, they can see that if they misbehave, we are going to be there en masse. . . . For the demonstration of May 1, we had a purely passive presence. With the workers on May 1, it's almost like it was our celebration, our presence is purely a formality, with the idea that we are there simply to demonstrate our own presence. Obviously, we are always alert, and on the spot (even if, maybe, more hidden), because you never know when someone might get into the crowd and cause a disturbance. However, we never put on our helmets on May 1; we just walk along quietly at the front of the march, with the utmost calmness. And it's really because there is no longer that sense of opposition with the workers' movement nowadays. (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994)

For large demonstrations organized by the trade unions or political parties, a *cooperative* model of managing public order seems to predominate. This is based on collaboration between the organizers and the police force, with policing oriented toward protecting, in equal measure, demonstrators and potential "targets of risk." As one official from Milan observed:

> Demonstrations by workers, civil servants, whatever, we're there for all of them. Also, because we are no longer a force opposed to them. In fact, people see us as workers ourselves, who are there to guarantee everyone's security . . . *we are not there to stop them from causing a riot, but rather we now accompany the demonstration to make sure they can demonstrate without being disturbed themselves.* (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994; emphasis added)

In these situations, the perceived danger is the infiltration of violent groups. A forcible intervention is considered to be inappropriate because it could



cause peaceful demonstrators to get involved. Thus, a policeman explained, for instance, the reason for the "soft" handling of a demonstration during the Gulf war:

> There were some stones, money, bottles, and so on, thrown at a church. . . . In the center of the demonstration, there was a small group from one of the social centers, with bad intentions. We were lined up in front of the church, fixed and immobile, and then these stones, bottles, and stuff are thrown. We didn't react in any way because these people, in the middle of a big demonstration of four to five thousand people, well, we would have immediately created a panic and disturbance among all the others. Or we might have got ourselves hurt, or others, confronting people who had nothing to do with it. For four people who were throwing stones. It wasn't the right time to intervene. You understand that to go and arrest a protester in the middle of a demonstration, even with an enormous deployment of officers, that would just create more disorder rather than restore public order. So the officials were right not to order us to arrest a protester who was writing graffiti on a wall; that is, those responsible for public order prefer a wall to be written on than a big disturbance in the streets. And, in my opinion, I think they are right. (Interview, Milan, October 18, 1994)

Peaceful demonstrators are seen in these cases as the police's best allies in the face of violence: "When the Milanese [radical] 'social centers' were protesting in the middle of certain other demonstrations, they were marginalized, not by us, but by the other demonstrators themselves! . . . our biggest help . . . were in fact the marshals of the demonstrators themselves" (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994). In concrete terms, the common interest is that the "peaceful demonstrators" take the head of the march: "If the head of the march is made up of peaceful people, whom we can trust, then the march unfolds normally" (Interview, Milan, October 18–19, 1994).

In contrast, a more *negotiated* intervention of the police characterizes more disruptive protests—roadblocks or rail blocks, for example—of workers, the unemployed, homeless, and so on. In these cases, the police see themselves as a mediator who must make visible a certain presence to the protesters, at the same time reducing inconveniences for other citizens:

> We try to plan alternate routes for the traffic, by collaborating with the head of the *vigilanza urbana* [traffic squad]; we thus try to avoid exactly what the protesters are aiming to do—that is, paralyze the traffic, create problems for everyone—by blocking the traffic coming in one direction or the other, deviating it for a while, creating alternative routes around the streets as far as possible. (Interview, Milan, December 27, 1994)

The police, intervening in this case in a "visible" way, often interpose themselves to avoid direct conflict between the demonstrators and drivers who

might try and force their way through the roadblock. The roadblock is thus tolerated, at least for a period of time judged sufficient to "express" the protest: "Generally, we find a way of mediating; that is, by telling them, 'OK, we won't intervene, if you're here for a quarter of an hour, we can tolerate the roadblock, but more than that, I ask you, no!'" (Interview, Milan, October 18, 1994).

A third model, which is based on a kind of *ritualized standoff*, appears to be the dominant approach to protests by the youth clubs associated with the autonomous groups. In many of the demonstrations by autonomous groups the forces of order are present in numbers judged sufficient to discourage any violence. Their equipment is, in general, "combat gear": with a helmet under the arm and a baton (just putting the helmet on can be a good means of dissuasion). Large cordons are deployed to defend "sensitive targets," and to prevent the march deviating from its planned route. As one officer of the Milan *reparto mobile* affirmed:

> With the autonomous groups, it is a question, let's say, of maximum attention. . . . You see, you feel, that at any moment something could break out. The way of approaching this, generally speaking, is always clear in this case, that if they are going past certain parts of the city, public buildings, or offices, and so on, they are all covered by forces of order to avoid them becoming the target of various attacks. (Interview, Milan, November 21, 1994)

Sometimes, however, the presence of the police might be less visible, as a way of "calming the mood" of the protest: "Quite often, and voluntarily, it is a good idea to hide ourselves. They don't see us, and so they stay calm. Because they see us as the ones who cause trouble" (Interview, Milan, October 18, 1994).

A fourth model is based on the *total isolation* of "troublemakers." It foresees a complete control over the area at risk and the movement of persons considered "dangerous" for public order. The principal application of this model of police control is during soccer matches, above all those that involve some kind of traditional rivalry between the fans:

> In my opinion, all in all the situation that creates the most worries for us, from the point of view of public order, is the soccer stadium. In the sense that you get so many people at an event like that. In Milan, that means seventy to eighty thousand people; in Bergamo, thirty thousand. They stay in the stadium, they meet up, they go wherever they want, on the underground, for example . . . for us, for sure, it's the hardest job we do. It's the most tiring work, it's the thing that takes the most time, because a day at the stadium begins in fact at 8 A.M., with the service that goes to check the inside of the stadium, to see if they have hidden any sticks or blunt objects, anything that could be used to hurt the opposing fans. That's eight o'clock in the morning, and the match is at half past three in the afternoon. . . . We have to meet up, assemble, get our equipment together, set off, and so on. And sometimes we finish at eight in the evening. And then maybe there is the escort for these people. We have to wait until the train leaves, see that everything is peaceful. . . . Often we are deployed to take the people from the trains. A train arrives—usually it would never arrive in the center of Milan; for security reasons it arrives at Sesto San Giovanni, making use of the fact that there is an underground station there—so therefore they take the underground, without stopping, and they are accompanied directly to the stadium, that is, in Piazzale Lotto. It's a kind of special train. The journey is quite a long one: thirty-five to forty minutes, with us in helmets standing in the underground. It's a heavy situation. Especially the return journey. You've already done six, seven, eight hours of service. (Interview, Milan, October 18–19, 1994)



As has been confirmed by our eyewitness observations at the stadium, a total isolation is maintained both outside and inside the stadium. Inside the stadium, the two groups of fans are kept apart, often by creating open spaces (segments of empty stadium seats) that separate the two potential adversaries. Police cordons form close to the fans of the home team and on the edges of the field. The officers are overtly equipped for the defense of public order, with helmets, batons, and protective devices. The police involvement is designed to prevent contact between the two groups of fans, although they do not stop the throwing of various types of objects (money, plastic bottles full of water, and objects taken from the toilets). The concern with separating the two groups of fans is also evident outside the stadium, both before and after the match. Here, police officers and carabinieri, present in large numbers and equipped for combat duty, collect the fans of the visiting team from the railway station and bus stops, surround them with a police cordon that closes the group in on all four sides, and escort them to the visitors' entrance, where the fans have to go through a brief search. At the exit to the stadium, the supporters of the visiting team have to wait until their rival home fans have been moved on. Before the doors of the guest fans' section are opened, the police create what one official defined as a *bonifica* or "reclaimed space," distanced from the spaces where the other fans and onlookers are standing. The guest fans are then surrounded by a police cordon once again, and reaccompanied to the trains and buses. In the case of the police intervention for the Fiorentina versus Roma match, which we observed at close range, one official later explained the reasons for an intervention that was criticized in some newspaper commentaries as too "heavy-handed":

> Here is why we need twelve hundred officers: it's necessary to cover all eventualities. There was an escort all the way during the train journey. . . . On the train there was also the escort from Rome, which accompanied them all the way to Florence, and here in Florence there was a large force of order deployed. . . . At the end of the match, the same thing—in general, the technique, even for matches where there is no risk but where there is a presence of visiting fans, it's always the same. First we let out the mass of local people (around twenty-five thousand spectators). We wait fifteen to twenty minutes, enough that the zone around the stadium begins to clear a bit. After that we do an operation to reclaim space with the officers that we have at our disposal, and we ask people to move away from the path that has to be made with the opposing fans; then we surround them and accompany them to the train or buses. In general, this is the technique that we use for operations at the stadium. (Interview, Florence, December 12, 1994)

## The Mediators of Public Order

The more "cooperative" the method of control, the more important a particular figure becomes: *the mediator*. The relevance of mediation, underlined continually in our interviews, has also been explicitly recognized in the highest ranks of the police. For example, in an information note of March 7, 1990, the head of police Vincenzo Parisi advised *prefetti* and *questori* to make "contacts with the organizers of the demonstrations in order to ensure that they unfold peacefully," suggesting, moreover, that they "avoid incidents and limit direct interventions to concrete cases of danger to public order and security, and where there is a need to avoid serious damage being done."

Other research on public order in Europe has already stressed the importance of the negotiation phase between the police force and demonstrators.[4] In Italy as well, the communication to the *questura* of demonstrations—a formal act required at least three days before the demonstration—is followed, in the case of the largest ones, by negotiations on the route of the demonstration, its duration, and how it will disperse. As one interviewee observed:

> For better or worse there is a great deal of work spent on planning. . . . We pay particular attention to the route that is going to be followed. . . . There is a lot of work done on the route, through informal contacts, at the level of "we won't go that way when you go that way"; in the end what's allowed is a small protest that won't degenerate further than that. There is a lot of work of this kind. There are persons, also on the other side, who . . . make direct contact with our senior officials. (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994)

The negotiation phase is presented as being oriented toward facilitating the realization of a common goal: the peaceful unfolding of the demonstration. When the participation of groups considered as a source of potential danger



to public order is foreseen, the police officials may make an agreement with the organizers in order to avoid any escalation. According to one chief officer of the *Digos*:

> We are also able in some way to give suggestions and ask for clarifications and give them help. We say, 'Look at these people who might create a bloody mess, excuse the term, either you isolate them or we'll have to think about doing it ourselves'; that is the technique we use. ***This works every time, because when a sizable part of the demonstration are workers, then it is in fact the workers who want everything to go well, otherwise the demonstration fails. These days, well, the degeneration of a demonstration is now seen as a failure of the demonstration itself.*** . . . you have to isolate the virus. (Interview, Florence, November 14, 1994; emphasis added)

Mediation activities can go as far as offering informal "services" to the demonstrators. In order to deal with all kinds of protest, from squatting to road blocks, the police may "use the intervention of social and political authorities" (Interview, Florence, November 14, 1994). The taking on of this role of mediator seems now to be a police routine in the control of public order:[5] "in certain cases—when, for example, demonstrators say that they want to speak with counselor so and so—in effect, we undertake this task through our own channels; we contact the secretary of these political figures and tell them that they have asked for them to get involved. Ninety percent of the time they come" (Interview, Florence, December 12, 1994). Moreover, since demonstrators usually want to make a certain audience aware of their problems, thus exerting pressure on the ruling powers—given that "in the end all these people here are interested in is the photographer arriving, or that the television people arrive; they make their interview or take their photos, then they pack up and go home" (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994)—police officers may assume an active role in contacting the journalists and organize a press audience, in exchange for a reduced disturbance.

Unlike other countries, however, in Italy the figure of the mediator, although present informally, has not been institutionalized. It is thus a role covered, according to the circumstances, either by the police official who is directing the operation or by the chief officer of the *Digos* present at the demonstration. Again in contrast to other countries, there is in Italy also a lack of official rules, and action is therefore based predominantly on individual initiatives by the police officers in command of the intervention. This informality brings with it a mixing up of roles that can have potentially negative effects. As an example, the *Digos* officials, who are responsible for negotiation, are the same ones who press charges; and the official of the *questura* is

the one in charge of possible cases of custody. Contrary to the British case, where the formality of the agreement facilitates a certain respect, the informal Italian culture may favor an opportunistic approach in which, particularly in situations of uncertainty, both parties might be tempted not to conform to the agreements they have made.

## Information Work and the Control of Public Order

Dialogue and mediation are accompanied, in the strategic conception of the police, with an important element of "control" of demonstrators through the collection of information.[6] The strategy that is defined as "dialogue" goes hand in hand with the development of certain *information techniques*, in particular those allowing for surveillance at a distance, such as television cameras in stadiums and interventions from above with helicopters during marches.[7] As regards the control of stadiums, one official explained:

> We are advising the use of cameras that have tremendously good zoom lenses for all sections of the stadium. You can really see a person's face well, with the possibility therefore of photographs and the registration of images at any moment in time. Thus, during the match there are two or three permanent operators; we have the chance to follow exactly what is happening . . . we can fix the image, then we can go and print the photo immediately. [Troublemakers] can be photographed immediately in ten seconds through a Polaroid system . . . now in some matches this system with video-cameras is allowed to be screened on the announcement board that they have at the stadium for results and advertisements. When there are moments of particular tension or brawls, the image is projected on the largest screen. We write on it: the police are filming you. Then they can see for themselves that we are filming them and underneath it is saying: these images will be taken, and examined as evidence, and so on. This might also work as a deterrent. (Interview, Florence, December 12, 1994)

The gathering of information with audiovisual technology is usable in the event that charges are pressed, but it is necessary that there be interventions prior to crimes being committed, in particular the identification of people who may participate in disturbances to public order. As another official observed, in the case of the soccer stadium, this form of control can be implemented through keeping records on file of those who buy tickets to follow their team in away matches:

> The matches that are particularly at risk are prepared in the minutest detail. As for yesterday's match, there was a considerable amount of work put in by the *questura* in Rome. Already from Rome it had been signaled in great detail who were the people leaving to come, they had been identified, given tickets—I am talking about official departures here, some of them come in their own cars. But for those on the train and the buses, that is the majority, nearly seventeen hundred people, they had been identified, given tickets, and signaled to us. (Interview, Florence, December 12, 1994)



Because it happens in advance of any crime being committed, this type of police intervention cannot be defined as a criminal investigation, nor does it have the character of prevention. It is instead oriented to make repressive action possible.

The trend toward an increase in intelligence work, which appears to be common to several countries, can be summed up in Italy with the peculiar conception of the *Digos* as an information service that operates above all in political terms. In distinction from the *squadra mobile*, which has the function of judicial policing for "everyday" crimes, the *Digos* deals with "political" crimes—that is, according to the definition given by its own chief officers, of crimes "known to have political ends"—and, in addition to the criminal investigations, it also has the function of information gathering, for which no authorization from the magistrature is needed.[8]

The "omnipresent" conception of the information-gathering powers of the *Digos* is reflected in its organizational structure, with sections specialized in the collection of information on the sources of social and political tension. For instance, in Milan: "The first section deals with political parties and trade unions. Then there is a second section that deals rather with movements of the radical left, the extreme left. The third section is the antiterrorist section. The fourth section . . . deals with movements of the extreme right, the radical right, you might say" (Interview, Milan, December 27, 1994). The gathering of information even about parties and movements that are perfectly legitimate is justified through a distinction—that frequently reemerged in the interviews—between "investigating" and "collecting information." The *Digos* thus portrays itself as a genuinely "epistemological" organ of the state. Its activity reflects a conception that has taken root over time, of policing oriented toward the total knowledge of a particular territory (see also Reiter, in this volume):

> In practice, we follow events, in a journalistic way, that is, with reports and memos, and also with research, news that is in advance of that which is given to the public, therefore with the same kind of input that a journalist might have. I deal with parties, institutional parties, and the political parties that are now registered, and all the trade unions. . . . ***The Digos, as part of a questura, is a kind of observatory of Milan and its region in the service of the minister of the interior, to know what is going on in the country in substantive terms.*** So, what do we do, myself or my colleagues? We go to find out about these parties. We go

> and attend meetings of the party sections, we try to develop relations with the trade unionists, with the members of parliament, with the local secretary, or with the representative of the local area. . . . I go to the branch meetings, I go to the party congress, I present myself as an official of the Milan *Digos*, I tell them who I am, and I am the person who is known to them, of course. For them, I am the face of the *questura*. . . . My work is often exactly the same kind of thing as the work of those whom I refer to as my journalist colleagues. (Interview, Milan, December 29, 1994; emphasis added)

Similar to this, and equally interesting, is the image presented by a Florentine official, who compares the functions of the *Digos* to those of a research center: "Our activity is about making reports on the progress of social, economic, political, and criminal events. These are reports that go the minister, that go to the *prefetto*. . . . You know, *we are the information eye of the Repubblica, without that meaning that we are questioning or fighting against what we see in the purview of law and social rules*" (Interview, Florence, November 14, 1994; emphasis added).

This model of control based on not making an immediate coercive intervention, together with the gathering of information that allows charges to be pressed with the magistrate, is an explicitly strategic choice that is reproduced through training and instruction at police school.[9] As one young officer of the Milanese *reparto mobile* recalls:

> They trained us to not repress all violations of the law during the demonstration, that's right, not in public. Various instructors on public order told us that to repress a violation of the law during a demonstration at which there are thousands of people present can cause the whole situation to degenerate. During the course, we followed a program that was designed by the Higher Police Institute, in which . . . there were a certain number of hours dedicated to the question of public order. On this subject, during the course on public order, it was in fact a great surprise and very confusing to learn that during demonstrations in which thousands or tens of thousands of people are converging on a certain street or square, it was absolutely forbidden to the police force to intervene in order to suppress open violations of the law. . . . In these cases, in order to prevent the demonstration from degenerating, the chief of service, the chief of the section in charge of the operation in the street, will have to look for these violent individuals, the people who are breaking the law, by identifying them so that we can pick them up later, instead of intervening then and there. Identify them perhaps with the help of the scientific police, with the right equipment, video cameras, and that kind of thing, individuate the people who are the authors of crimes, and look to arrest them later on, when the demonstration is over, perhaps when these people go home after they have been filmed by the helicopter or cameras or video recorder. (Interview, Milan, October 10–11, 1994)



Subsequent training is oriented toward reinforcing these instructions given during the police course.

## Police Knowledge and Police Strategies

### The Actors Who Produce Public Disorders: Bad and Good Demonstrators

Police reactions to demonstrations are linked to the knowledge police have about the disturbances, as well as their role and the role that other actors, notably political power and public opinion, play. The sociological literature on the police emphasizes the diffusion of stereotypes on the origins of disorders, and of those who are considered to be responsible for breaking the rules (Lipsky, 1970, 4). Some recurrent themes have been singled out in the police definition of potential troublemakers as mainly *young, "outsiders"* (immigrants, ethnic minority members, or "agents provocateurs"), deviants, and *disadvantaged socioeconomic groups* (Lacey, Wells, and Meure, 1990, 71). More specific to political disorders are the stereotypes related to "conspiracy" theories—such as the "masked man," the "rotten apple," or the communist agitator (among others, McClintock et al., 1974, 127–30; Kettle and Hodges, 1982, 20). One of the first questions that we asked ourselves, therefore, was whether similar stereotypes were held by the leadership of the police concerning people who potentially threaten public order. As we will see, our research uncovered a different classification, based on the twofold distinction between demonstrators who are either "good" or "bad" by nature (for a similar point, see Waddington 1994b; Willems et al., 1988).

The interviewees are in agreement, above all, on an image of profound change in the nature of challenges to public order. In the words of one official from the *questura* of Florence, there has been a *qualitative* transformation of the question of public order: "The problems of public order of the 1970s and early 1980s . . . were essentially problems linked to political demonstrations: by the Autonomia Operaia [autonomous workers], opposition groups, or the extreme right. The problems then were essentially connected with political protests of 'opposition,' whereas in this period now they are above all connected with sport" (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994). Nowadays, the principal source of public order problems "is the stadium, essentially, which accounts for 90 percent of the public order problems that we usually cover" (Interview, Milan, October 18–19, 1994).

According to a commonly held perception, in contrast to the past when

political *motivations* were uppermost, whoever creates problems of public order today does so because they want a fight. "Above all, it's young hooligans who throw themselves into these acts of violence for the taste of violence alone. . . . What they want to do is get in a fight either at the stadium or with the immigrants" (Interview, Florence, November 17, 1994). The perception prevails, therefore, of a distinction between "political" protest, seen as "positive," and "nonpolitical" protest, seen as "pure acts of vandalism, outbursts, violence pure and simple" (Interview, Milan, July 15–27, 1994). Hooligans do not have motives:

> It is the high-risk soccer matches that really put public order most at risk. There's no motive for it. It's just soccer hooliganism let loose, people going crazy for their team, their passion. They go there because they have to. *Above all, they enjoy a fight with the police. Because they want to challenge us. In other words, they want confrontation with public institutions, with the state.* (Interview, Milan, November 21–22, 1994; emphasis added)

The lack of "politicization" of public order problems gives rise to a particular problem, which was referred to frequently in the interviews: the difficulty of "predicting" the actions of the crowd. While politically motivated demonstrators, with their instrumental logic, are perceived as relatively easy to deal with, irrational hooligans are more difficult to control, precisely because of the lack of an understandable logic behind their actions:

> In the 1970s there were many demonstrations, all of them of a political nature—and for this reason easy to deal with in an instrumental manner. Whereas, let's say for about ten years now, demonstrations no longer have this kind of nature, they are simply demonstrations of intolerance, by people who, above all in the case of stadium violence, have found a way of releasing their own internal tensions. (Interview, Milan, November 21, 1994)

This is also true for a second group of troublemakers, apparently of a more political nature. A distinction between disruption that is comprehensible and genuine because it is "motivated" and the more dangerous violence that is "violence for the fun of it" is also used to distinguish among the politically motivated demonstrators, between "good" and "bad" ones (see also Waddington, 1994b, 112–13). Good demonstrators are above all those who protest for their own direct interests, often dangerously under threat: workers defending their jobs, unemployed people who cannot find work, people who have been evicted and cannot find a home, or people who live on a particularly busy and chaotic street. Bad demonstrators are those who protest about issues that do not concern them directly, and themes that are more "abstract" and easily "manipulated." Protests in the eyes of the police are also more legitimate the



more those who participate in them are directly concerned with the issue that they are mobilizing around:

> Nowadays, for the policeman who is involved in the protection of public order, but also in other duties, one thing is clear: he can recognize exactly the different kinds of people who go on demonstrations—maybe this wasn't true in the 1960s, but today it certainly is. And, I would say on many occasions, faced with people who have lost their jobs, and who are protesting in a calm and dignified manner, then there is even an emotional involvement with them, that is, we felt close to these people. We were there to protect public order because we had been sent there. *Therefore, we don't have a predetermined negative attitude against people who are protesting, because on many occasions people are protesting to safeguard a certain right or their jobs, which is essential in order to survive.* Nowadays, before we go out on a public order assignment, we often have a chat with our chief and in some cases with the leaders of the demonstration, during which, therefore, before we go out on service, we ask what are the motives and scope of the demonstration. *That is to say, we go out into service knowing who we are going to meet. We know whether we are going to encounter family men in the streets, or people who are likely to cause trouble.* (Interview, Milan, December 5, 1994; emphasis added)

In this case too, the instrumentality of the action gives predictability to the actors and pushes them to avoid escalation. "Just" motives legitimate forms of protest that were once considered illegal, through definitions that differentiate specific types of illegality. Thus, repeatedly, the officials interviewed underlined the difference between a peaceful obstruction of traffic and a violent roadblock:

> When we talk about roadblocks, we mean something different: these are when people put themselves in the middle of the road to protest, although, if you think about it, any demonstration is a kind of roadblock. No, with these people, what I mean is they take the trash can, they throw it down in the middle of the street, they make barricades; in that case, we are talking about something that is against the law. (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994)

The recognition of a certain legitimacy to a protest permits the justification of actions that are more radical, perhaps even involving a certain aggressiveness toward the police:

> One has to evaluate the mood of the demonstrators: For sure a demonstration by *cassa integrati* [people on unemployment benefits] who come to carry out illegal acts against the officers who are there to show their presence and manage public order—and I don't just mean acts of violence, but also mention other things that are much more widespread, which are generally not pursued, like spitting or verbal abuse—now, obviously these things could be pursued, but clearly they are made by people who are angry and exasperated . . . it must be

> seen in a, let's say, wider perspective; that is, *because the police officer at that moment has offered a service, in a practical sense, in fact a moral service, you might say, that is why we must try to tolerate, if you like, even the most angry demonstrations, because they might be people who have genuine motives for this. Certainly, the same behavior by soccer fans, or young people who just want to provoke us, that's a standing order, that is certainly a different thing altogether.* (Interview, Milan, November 19, 1994; emphasis added)

Not only the workers, however, but even the autonomous protest groups (anarchists) of the past—of the 1970s in particular—would now be preferable to today's protesters, according to current police perceptions, because of their "higher ideals":

> With these autonomous groups these days—we might even ask whether they really are "autonomous groups," because I used to know the autonomous groups of the past. And I know these people we have now. And in my opinion, they are two completely distinct and separate things, for generational and ideological reasons: once these people used to put themselves personally at risk and weren't afraid to put themselves at risk. They weren't afraid to go and take responsibility for their actions before the state, which they considered to be the principal target of their action. *Yet they were people that had a strong idea of social justice, even if they were perfect delinquents, by God! These others, however, I think of them more as hooligans.* The hooliganism of the soccer stadium, that's what it is. Their political ideology is purely nostalgic, because they have to prove something, I say. But they are completely anachronistic. *In contrast, the autonomous groups of the past, they were an integral part of society, because they were a movement that had very precise demands, it was something completely different. There was also a worker's movement that was particularly active at the time. . . . A lot of the people in the autonomous groups were people who would then go off to work in a factory. Some of them were also university students. . . .* What they were talking about, in effect, were values. *They wanted to make a revolution! Completely wrongheaded, but at least they were talking about something concrete. . . .* Nowadays, why do you think these people talk about social centers? Because it's a business, that's why! (Interview, Milan, November 24, 1994; emphasis added)

Moreover, the control of public order becomes more complex the less there is any structured *organization*. The control of stadiums, therefore, became more difficult when the traditional structure of organization of soccer fans weakened. As one interviewee observed:

> *If these groups of fans come together under a particular flag, or label, under a symbol of some significance, and if there are people at the head of this group who are recognized as leaders, let's just say it all makes our life much easier.* If, on the other hand, it can be seen, as has been the case in recent times—at least this seems to be the tendency—that there is a splintering of groups and gangs, our police work becomes more difficult. This is because these groups and gangs can move around and hide during the course of a season, and you then have difficulties in your police operations staying on top of these continual developments. *Whereas when the phenomenon was more structured and more stable, it was much easier for us.* (Interview, Milan, December 5, 1994; emphasis added)



Also, for the more political form of disorders, the interviewees underline the difficulties that derive from "unorganized" violence:

> Nowadays we do have difficult problems to face, and they are caused by exactly the same political fringes that are sprouting again; that is, today there is a return of the kind of violence that was always characteristic of the political extremes of left and right, but whereas before these people also followed a doctrine, their violence was organized; nowadays there is no longer this organization, there is no longer a school where they learn like anyone else how to exercise violence. *Violence today, therefore, can break out in isolated episodes, which are very violent, however, because sometimes not even they understand why it is happening. . . .* When they don't have that school for violence, then when someone decides to be violent and says "Today, I want to be violent," more often than not they don't control the violence that they set off, which is therefore an unpredictable violence; that is, a group that comes out into the streets nowadays might immediately use means and arms that we are not expecting, and we are therefore unprepared in the face of this kind of violence. . . . *Less organized groups are more difficult to manage: the best example of all that I have been saying is violence in the stadium, which is really very hard to handle.* (Interview, Florence, November 28, 1994; emphasis added)

## The Conception of the Role of the Police: Police of the Citizens or Police of the King?

The strategic choice about protest policing is related not only to the image of demonstrators, but also to police self-understanding of their role. In general, the police tend to present themselves as a neutral actor, constrained by the law. As we have seen, however, the police have a high degree of discretion in the use of their power, a discretion that the strategy of "dialogue" tends to increase. The police need therefore other sources of legitimacy. In historical studies one can trace two main lines of thought, more or less opposed to each another: one sees the police as a body created from below, or by civil society, the other as a body created from above, by rulers. Both of these conceptions have some basis in history (Robinson and Scaglio, 1987). In the creation of the police, the requests for security and protection by the citizenry were certainly important—above all, by those who were not rich enough to be able to buy these services on the private market. On the other hand, the institutionalization of the police as a function of the state was linked above all to moments of social tension, in which the state needed an instrument in order to

impose respect for its laws, even on those social classes and organizations that did not recognize themselves as under its rule. During the evolution of the police, the two functions of defending the citizens and protecting the order of the state coexisted, with a fluctuating dominance of one or the other according to different phases of history. The combination of the two functions creates a dilemma for the police, given that the defense of political order often alienates the sympathy of a good part of the citizenry, and this in turn undermines the police capacity to fight criminality.

To each of the two models, or functions, there correspond two modes of self-legitimation: a political legitimation in the first case, a social legitimation in the second. Conceptualizations of the role of the police oscillate between the two poles of the state police (*Staatspolizei*) and the citizens' police (*Bürgerpolizei*) (see Winter, in this volume). In Italy, ever since the formal creation of the police, the conception of "state police"—a function of the government—has dominated. Also in the first decades of the Italian Republic, the prerogative of public order and political control prevailed over the fight against criminality (Canosa, 1976). Various documents (for example, Fedeli, 1981; Medici, 1979) indeed portray a police isolated from the population and close to political power. From the 1970s on, nevertheless, there seemed to be a tacit emergence within the police of a larger consideration for the opposite conception of policing. In particular, the struggle against terrorism, seen as a national emergency, and the progressive legitimation of the political opposition contributed to a process of legitimation of the police "from below." In some of the interviews, a self-definition of the police as "people among the people," who "work for the citizens," "full part of the social fabric," a "citizens first of all" emerged. In the words of one interviewee:

> Nowadays the police are democratic, aware, and conscientious. There is an internal culture that many years ago didn't exist. The *questore* was an eternal father figure. Now, he is a civil servant like the rest of us, a high-ranking official with certain responsibilities. The mentality of the absolute authority figure has been lost; it's absolutely right that we are here in the service of everybody . . . now, there's more of a consensus, we are well integrated. (Interview, Florence, November 28, 1994)

According with the picture often presented in our interviews, up until the 1970s there was a sharp division between the police and the citizens. The principal turning point was in fact singled out in the 1980s, with the police and union reform. In the police perceptions, one of the most important effects of this reform was the rapprochement of the citizens and the police, and the resolution of those tensions that, in the eyes of many of those interviewed, were connected to the past "tough" interventions in defense of public order.



> As far as I'm concerned, from the point of view of social relations, for certain, the 1960s with all the battles in the streets and the killing of people, of demonstrators, *we arrived at the low point of relations between the people and the forces of order, who were thus seen in a negative way, as if they were operating with an iron fist*. This, particularly in Emilia, and the north, was felt as a real problem. The changes of 1981, with the reform of the police, aimed at reestablishing contacts with the people in which we tried to re-create, to found what were the basics of police work and its activities, looking to pursue more concrete activities, more in the social context, to go in the opposite direction and try and make the people understand that the point of police operations is that it is a service, developed to manage and guarantee certain values, such as individual liberty. (Interview, Milan, November 19, 1994; emphasis added)

The need for support in public opinion may explain police choices in the control of public order. Our interviewees admitted, in fact, the role that anticipating the reaction of public opinion has in the choice of strategies taken by the police leadership. For instance, the growing tolerance in police interventions seems related to the perception that public opinion would criticize police behavior if an escalation should occur. As a chief officer of the *Digos* in Milan put it, "*We don't want to see violence anymore*; the state now tries to avoid getting into physical conflicts with demonstrators, but instead tries to have control of the demonstrators" (Interview, Milan, July 15–27, 1994; emphasis added). According to one official with considerable experience in the management of public order, police response takes into account "who is creating a problem for public order. *You cannot adopt the same coercive methods if, for example, the Union of Blind People goes out into the streets and someone then starts behaving strangely, compared with two thousand Lazio fans who arrive as an organized group on a train*. . . . *You have to think about public opinion*" (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994; emphasis added).

The police in fact feel constantly "under fire" for possible errors—as one interviewee defined it: "We respond one way or another according to whether there is a decision to intervene or not to intervene. In the first case, people ask, Why didn't you intervene? In the second case, they ask, Why did you intervene if you could have contained what was going on?" (Interview, Florence, November 28, 1994). It is interesting to note that, in general, the less "political" the actor causing public disorder is, the stronger the perceived pressure on the police to "intervene":

> At the stadium, so often we hear people say, "Look what's happening over there! Go get involved! Intervene!" . . . so many times you hear "Isolate the trouble-makers," "Throw them out of the stadium . . ." In a demonstration, this is more difficult, but at the stadium I've heard them say this. Many times. Perhaps they want to see more decisive action on our part. And maybe criticize us later on for that. (Interview, Milan, October 18–19, 1994)

According to widely held opinions, the control effected by public opinion is achieved through the intervention of the mass media.[10]

> Public opinion is neither deaf nor blind. The citizens are people who face their own problems with public order and so you can't hope that the press won't see or hear anything. So then you have to weigh up the fact that certain interventions might even get you on to Japanese television—for example, what happened in Vicenza [where neo-Nazis demonstrated], they even showed it on the TV news in Germany. While if I start beating up the Jewish community during their march, well, probably I'll be on the air in Tel Aviv. (Interview, Florence, November 10, 1994)

From this point of view, our research seems to confirm in the Italian case the widespread perception of the press as a filter between the police and citizens—and therefore the importance of enjoying "good press," given that "if the citizen doesn't have faith in the police force, they won't even turn to us when they need us" (Interview, Milan, November 11, 1994).

Even when public opinion acquires a more and more important role, however, the police remain, at least to a certain extent, "king's police." And in fact, as Wisler and Kriesi documented in this volume, the political power often intervenes in the strategic choice on law and order.[11] In Italy, where various studies have documented a blind obedience of the police to the government of the day (among others, Canosa, 1976; Reiter, in this volume), our interviews have put into clear relief the important role that is still attributed to the ruling political powers in making decisions about which styles to privilege in the maintenance of public order. To cite just one example, concerning the decision to intervene in a public demonstration, an official of the *questura* of Florence observed:

> It depends a lot on the orders that come from above. . . . The center of the power is political, the minister responsible, and the chief of the police. We get the information on the front line; and then the *questore* relays what the situation is; he is the carrier of information, which means to say that it makes known what is happening on the ground, that, for example, in Florence a week from now the workers from Hantarex are going to occupy the motorway. And so he then asks the minister what to do: do we keep the motorway closed for an hour, with the repercussions that that can have nationally on traffic, or do we instead break them up immediately? (Interview, Florence, November 28, 1994)



Police choices in public orders are therefore influenced also by the actual and expected reaction from the political system. To end up appearing on the television news or in the newspapers because of a public order intervention not only risks losing the public's sympathy, as we have already pointed out, but also increases the probability of creating what the literature on the police defines as "in-the-job troubles," that is, problems linked to political and administrative investigations into their behavior:[12]

> There are things that we do, or certain mistaken interventions ordered by chiefs, that get censured by the administration. When we manage to contain a public order problem, well, then when public order is protected, that isn't much of a news item. When, on the other hand, public order is not maintained, either through some fault of our own or because the intentions of the protest are particularly extreme, in these cases, if there are brawls, clashes, violence, in these cases, then not only is it going to be in the press, but it will end up in a ministerial inquiry, it will end up with the political parties making parliamentary and ministerial interventions. There are always further consequences. There are always inquiries, that go this way or that way, that say you did right or you did wrong. (Interview, Florence, November 28, 1994)

Especially when "political" demonstrators are involved, the police acknowledge in fact a particular potential of "in-the-job troubles." As Waddington observed on the London case, "Protesters were regarded [by police officers] as archetypal 'challengers' or 'assholes,' that is people who are difficult to control because they are vocally knowledgeable of their roles. They were seen as having influential supporters amongst journalists, campaigners and MPs, who would join in protesting about any police action that might have been construed as infringing freedom of speech" (1994b, 51).

## Summary

The object of this study has been to reconstruct some of the aspects of police knowledge relative to the control of public order in Italy. As we observed in the first part of this essay, the strategy used during the course of the 1980s and to date appears to be dominated by three principles: avoid coercive intervention as much as possible, mediate with the demonstrators, and perfect the instruments for information gathering. This strategy is similar to the one adopted by other police forces in continental Europe, although, differently than in the Anglo-Saxon world, the practice of negotiation remains rather informal. Another characteristic of the Italian case is the weak presence of limits and controls on the activity of information gathering by the *Digos*, which, as we have seen, functions as an "epistemological" organ of the state, given its

role of collecting information on all the political actors and interest groups. Within this general sketch, we distinguished four models of control of public order: a model of *cooperation*, based on a collaboration between the police forces and demonstrators, and an inconspicuous police presence; a model of *negotiation*, based on a more active presence by the police, with the objective of mediating between the demonstrators and "nondemonstrators" who suffer the disruptive effects of protests; a model of *ritualistic standoff*, based on a more "aggressive" police presence, but often at a distance; and a model of *total control*, based on a massive presence and close involvement of the police forces. The principal example of the application of the first model is the large trade-union demonstrations: of the second, direct action by unemployed or homeless people; of the third, demonstrations by the youth social centers; and of the fourth, the control of soccer fans.

In the second part of the essay, we looked at the effects of police knowledge on public order control. The principal actors who provoke disorders in the 1990s are, according to a widespread perception of the police, actors who are moved not by political motives, which are considered to be "noble" ends, but by an impulse for "hooliganism" that reflects social problems—"good" demonstrators who protest with ends that are understandable, and "bad" demonstrators who are just "troublemakers." Among the former category are "workers," or "family men"—according to the definitions of those interviewed—who demonstrate in defense of their jobs or union demands, and who have both long experience in demonstrating and a noteworthy capacity of "self-control." Among the second category are soccer "ultras" and the young people from autonomous social centers, whose motivations appear at best "confused," and whose behavior often appears to be "unpredictable."

Police strategies are a function not only of the images the police have of the actors involved in a protest, but also of police conception of their own role. As far as the police are concerned, we found a growing search by the police for legitimation in the eyes of the public. In this sense, the Italian police seem to have acquired some of the characteristics of a citizens' police (or *Bürgerpolizei*)—at least insofar as the search for legitimation in public opinion is concerned. On the other hand, however, the organizational structure itself of the police, as well as their self-definition of their societal role, assign to politicians a larger degree of control than that accepted by the police in other countries. In this respect, the Italian police retain many of the characteristics of the king's police (*Staatspolizei*), characteristics evident above all in the acceptance by the police of methods of control exercised through the activity of information gathering about social and political actors.



Moreover, it remains an open question to what extent the new conception of police involvement based on "dialogue" has been internalized, and to what point this conception is still a pure reflection of requirements that have come from elsewhere. It is probable that to stabilize the evolution that has been observed during recent years, a legislative reform is necessary in order to redefine the tasks and duties of the police and the rights of the citizens in respect to these.

## Notes

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1. In the case of Florence, seven officials from the *questura* (police headquarters) were interviewed; in Milan, five officials from the *questura* and ten from the *reparto mobile* (police action force) were interviewed, in addition to the head of the center of study and research on the police, run by SIULP (the largest police trade union). The interviews in Florence were conducted by Donatella della Porta, those in Milan by Rocco De Biasi.

2. Similar tendencies are stressed elsewhere in this volume, not only about long-lasting democracies—such as France (Fillieule and Jobard), Great Britain (Waddington), and the United States (McPhail, Schweingruber and McCarthy)—but also about recent democracies, such as Spain (Jaime-Jiménez and Reinares). Moreover, on Italy and Germany, see della Porta (1995, chap. 3).

3. As regards tear gas, the police officers underline the technical limits of its use: atmospheric conditions, when there is a downwind; logistical conditions, which require escape routes for those trying to get away; and the general problem of the large numbers of uninvolved persons present. As for baton charges, two limits are indicated: first, although the point of intervention is, according to the police manuals, to stay compact and together, during the charge the officers enter into direct "combat" with the protesters, with the risk of injury; second, the baton charge creates the risk of "direct contact," with a consequent loss of control of chief officers over individual policemen (see also Waddington, 1991).

4. This point on the importance of negotiation for public order is also made in this volume by Waddington on Great Britain; Fillieule and Jobard on France; McPhail, Schweingruber, and McCarthy on the United States. See also Winter (1991); Fillieule (1995a).

5. By mediating with the political authorities, the police enter into a strategy of mutual exchanges with the demonstrators: "By doing favors, they expected organizers to offer compliance in return" (Waddington 1994b, 86).

6. Those interviewed were, however, in general against interventions aimed at "outlawing" groups that systematically provoke disorder and incite violence—a solution they judged to be counterproductive and antidemocratic.

7. On the influence of technological development on police techniques of information gathering, see also Donner (1990).

8. As far as interventions in demonstrations are concerned, personnel from the *Digos* participate in civilian clothes, and without any official identity badge. The presence of plainclothes officers among demonstrators has often caused arguments and criticisms about their possible role as "agents provocateurs."

9. The role of training in the diffusion of the protest policing style is emphasized in this

volume by McPhail, Schweingruber, and McCarthy. Also in this volume, Martin Winter suggests that this choice is linked to the debate on the police understanding of their own role.

10. On the relationships between media, protesters, and the police, see, among others, Sumner (1982); Murdock (1984); Geary (1985); Fielding (1991); Green (1990, chap. 3).

11. On this point see, for instance, Goldstein (1978, 1983); Reiner (1991).

12. As P. A. J. Waddington observed in his research on the policing of public order by the London Metropolitan Police: "Arrests were regarded by the police as the last resort, for they risked escalating on-the-job trouble by sparking a greater confrontation" (1994b, 54–55).

## Afterword

# Some Reflections on the Democratic Policing of Demonstrations

*Gary T. Marx*

Three decades ago when the American Kerner Commission (President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968) studied questions of the police and civil disorders, there was very little social science research to inform the analysis.[1] We have fortunately come a long way in our understanding since then, as the articles in this volume make clear. Within Western democracies, we have also come a long way in the institutionalization of a more tolerant and humane response to those forms of organized protest that stay broadly within the realm of nonviolence.

I first became aware of this ethos as applied to crowds in a conversation with a high-ranking member of the Chicago Police Department shortly after the police violence during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. He indicated how unprofessionally the department had behaved. He said that as a commander in a protest situation he is willing to listen, to negotiate, to tolerate minor infractions, and to keep a low profile. He felt strongly that saving lives should be more important than protecting property or symbols. He believed that demonstrations could actively help create, rather than undermine, political stability (at least relative to not permitting or responding violently to them). The extensive media coverage of Chicago police attacking protesters was a public relations disaster and such behavior made the police job much more difficult. At that time, his views were heretical and he left the police soon after, but in the decades since (as the articles in this book make clear), they have become widely shared among police leaders both in the United States and beyond.[2]

The views expressed by this officer contrast markedly with those found in totalitarian regimes, which blur or erase the line between politics and crime; any oppositional politics may be defined as crime. But they also contrast with