

Law - and - Order, Violent Crime, and Politics

by Phillip W. Weiss

There is a relationship between the breakdown of law-and-order, violent crime, and politics. All three are inexorably intertwined.

Violent crime is a social act; it does not occur in a vacuum. It involves at least two parties, the perpetrator, and the victim. It can be random or premeditated. Whatever the case, its goal is the same, which is to impose control on another person, without that person's consent. The imposition of control requires coercion, and coercion is actuated through violence. That makes violent crime both lethal and terrifying. Perpetrators feel empowered and victims traumatized. It induces fear and other emotions which render the victim dysfunctional and produces a ripple effect that impacts on the entire community in terms of lost productivity, utilization of expensive medical and mental health services, and resources expended to adjudicate the crime, all imposing financial costs borne by the public, which is the ultimate victim.

Indeed, it can be argued that violent crime is a form of fascism, and violent criminals are fascists even if they lack political consciousness. Nor is it correct to rationalize violent crime exclusively as a mental health issue. The sheer brazenness and audacity of violent criminal behavior is evidence of a level of mental functioning that is organized and capable of planning and performing these violent acts. This is what makes violent crime even more difficult to control and eradicate. It cannot simply be medicated away. There is no magic pill that can

transform a murderer, rapist, or robber into a law-abiding citizen any more than there is a magic pill that can transform a hardcore proponent of violence into a peace-loving Gladstonian liberal. The problem of violent crime is far more complex than that and the solutions much more elusive. But whatever its cause, violent crime includes a political component that policy makers may deny exists but cannot long be ignored, as the rate of violent crime surges and people continue to get hurt, terrorized, and killed.

Law-and-order alone does not deter a HUMAN predator from committing a violent crime, e.g., murder, rape, rob, plunder, extort, assault. Even when operating, law-and-order provides no guarantee that a human predator will not commit a vicious act of aggression. However, when law-and-order breaks down, criminal acts of violence acquire a legitimacy that transforms it from a vile anti-social act to a form of legitimate political expression. Thus, even the most degenerate murderer or rapist is no longer just a blood-thirsty predator but is reimagined as a victim of circumstances who is lashing out against an unfair and unjust society, which means against all of us.

This perception of the violent criminal as victim and violent behavior as an acceptable form of social expression is a common theme in many movies. For instance, in *The Godfather* and *The Godfather: Part II*, a gangster, Michael Corleone, is depicted as a hero who commits MASS MURDER in the name of family loyalty while the police and politicians are portrayed as feckless and corrupt. In *First Blood*, John Rambo, a profoundly disturbed Vietnam veteran suffering from PTSD who vents his rage that virtually destroys an entire town,

is depicted as a hero with legitimate grievances against society while the town's sheriff, who is doing everything he can to get Rambo, a human time bomb, to leave and to spare his town Rambo's fury, is depicted as an overbearing insensitive fool who is responsible for triggering Rambo's rampage. In *Bonnie and Clyde*, a gang, led by Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, embark on a multi-state crime spree that includes armed robbery and murder. These gangsters are depicted as likeable young persons who, despite terrorizing an entire community, are breaking the bonds of middle-class conventionality while the police, who want to stop this gang from causing more mayhem, are depicted as dull, hapless, and unduly cruel. In each of these movies, **POLICE OFFICERS ARE KILLED**. All three movies received numerous accolades and were hugely popular with the public. Hence, through these and many other movies of this genre, the mass entertainment media packages violent criminal behavior as something flashing and exciting, to be admired and flaunted, and law-and-order as something to be sneered at, rejected, and crushed.

The normalization of violence has serious and far-reaching consequences for society. It creates an impression and feeds an **ILLUSION** or **DELUSION** that there exists a large constituency of people who are anti-police, anti-law-and-order, anti-middle-class, and pro-violence. In response, unscrupulous politicians, interested in winning elections, carefully craft political platforms that denounce the police and ridicule law-and-order, and upon winning election adopt policies

that pander to this supposedly large pro-violence and pro-criminal constituency. These policies blame SOCIETY as the cause for violent behavior and violent predators as VICTIMS of an unjust society.

In the United States, the imposition of anti-law-and-order policies have eroded of the ability of the police to enforce the law, have transformed the role of the public prosecutor from intrepid defender of public safety to agent for social change, and have led to the enactment of laws that send an unmistakable signal to violent criminals that it is okay to act out with impunity. These policy changes have had a dramatic effect on the rate of violent crime, which is spiraling out of control and has placed the physical safety of every person in the United States at risk.

History teaches that a collapse of any nation is always preceded by a period in which there is a breakdown of law-and-order. This breakdown of law-and-order is accompanied by a rise in political activity directly challenging the authority of the police and the legitimacy of duly constituted authority. Soon, the social institutions upon which the nation depends for its existence cave-in to the pressure, flounder, disintegrate, and cease to exist. This happened in France leading up to the French Revolution, in Russia leading up to the Bolshevik takeover, and in Germany leading up to Adolf Hitler taking power. In all three cases, the collapse of these nations was preceded by a breakdown of law-and-order which caused the social institutions of these nations to unravel and fail, creating a power vacuum that was filled by fanatics, e.g., Jacobins,

Bolsheviks, Nazis, who were part of the criminal element that heretofore had been on the fringes of society and NOW GAINED UNLIMITED POWER. The result was the guillotine, the gulag, and the concentration camp, and democracy, liberty, and justice replaced by state-sponsored terror via the Committee of Public Safety, the Gestapo, and the KGB.

The point is this: every violent criminal act, no matter how whacky, degenerate or seemingly erratic, is not just an attack against a specific individual but is a POLITICAL ACT OF DEFIANCE against authority and against the society. To treat violent crimes as random isolated acts perpetrated by disturbed or maladjusted individuals, and devoid of any political meaning, is a huge mistake. Every violent criminal act is an assault against society and a victory for the forces of lawlessness which want to replace civilized law with the law of the jungle, in which might-makes-right and power goes to those who are most violent.

To gain a better understanding and appreciation of what happens when violent criminals gain political power, one need only to study the history of Russia under communist rule. Claiming to act in the interest of the working class, a small clique of vicious antisocial malcontents bent on imposing their hate-filled ideology of violence on an entire nation, AND THE WORLD, seized power and imposed a regime of terror that lasted seventy-four years. An entire nation was brutalized and damaged beyond repair. This is what happens when law-and-order breaks down.

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