

In the Office of Constable by SIR ROBERT MARK. (Collins, London, 1978), pp. 1-320. Cloth, recommended retail price \$15.95 (ISBN: 0 00 216032 3); *Report to the Minister for Administrative Services on the Organisation of Police Resources in the Commonwealth Area and Other Related Matters* by SIR ROBERT MARK. (Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978), pp. 1-79. Paperback, recommended retail price \$1.65 (ISBN: 0 642 91363 3).

There is a subtle change from the courts to the tax collector for the purpose of controlling society, and since the poor have always outnumbered the middle class and the wealthy, there is no hope of reversal of this process by conventionally democratic means. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 298)

Sir Robert Mark's autobiography reveals him to be very close to fascism. From start to finish his book is a continuous argument for more and more police power over society under today's conditions of world economic slump and turbulence.

As Britain's Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 1972-1977, his view of the police was one of unashamed omnipotence:

The police are therefore very much on their own in attempting to preserve order in an increasingly turbulent society in which socialist philosophy has changed from raising the standards of the poor and the deprived, to reducing the standards of the wealthy, the skilled and the deserving to the lowest common denominator. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 244)

Or as he impressed upon the police officer graduates at his last Passing-Out parade:

It puts you in a class apart. . . . during the crises inevitably caused by weak or misguided legislation, inadequate research and the subordination of reality to political expediency, it is for you, and you alone, to bear the strains until reason prevails. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 235)

In line with this philosophy Mark is a vehement defender of the absolute independence of the police as a force above and beyond the control of elected governments:

When socialists in the Commons and the House of Lords speak of a police force accountable to Parliament or a national police force, they are not thinking of justice. They are thinking of police as a tool of government. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 282)

Another feature of this philosophy is an open contempt for the legal niceties which are supposed to contain police power:

Let me make it quite clear that I am one of those who believe that if the criminal law and the procedures relating to it were applied strictly according to the book, as a means of protecting society it would collapse in a few days. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 51)

He readily admits that illegal procedures are often used against IRA suspects and that police bashings are common even in ordinary cases. He points out that British police were indifferent to the passage of the Labour government's Prevention of Terrorism (Emergency Provisions) Act 1974 which gave the police power to hold people for five days

without charging them or allowing them contact with lawyers or relatives. The police were already doing this illegally anyway:

The NCCL [National Council for Civil Liberties] were quite right in assuming that we would not let any legal niceties prevent us from dealing with terrorism and that we were therefore not at all that interested in what we thought was essentially a propaganda measure. (*In the Office of Constable*, page 173)

On police bashings, Mark says that if the Judges' Rules on interrogation were applied in courts with any real strictness "The effect would quickly be disastrous" (*In the Office of Constable*, page 55). He reveals that when he was a constable on the beat "Most of us carried, wholly improperly, short rubber truncheons made in a nearby Dunlop factory" (*In the Office of Constable*, page 28).

But above all Mark shows himself to be an extremely political policeman and very consciously anti-working class. For him the police are no longer concerned primarily with "crime" as it is traditionally perceived. They are instead the front line shock troops against class-based explosions set off by the economic crisis. The most serious problem confronting today's police is "the containment or absorption of social unrest arising from a number of factors, unemployment, political and industrial strife, racial problems, vandalism and hooliganism" (*In the Office of Constable*, page 244). He emphasises that in his view

The worst of all crimes is the furtherance of political or industrial aims by violence . . . (*In the Office of Constable*, page 307)

Elsewhere he describes such violence as being worse than murder.

Alongside this a central theme in Mark's book is a call to the middle classes. He declares that "good men should do something" about Britain's creeping egalitarianism which he says is undermining "the standards which hold society together" (*In the Office of Constable*, pages 298-299). Another disturbing aspect of the book is his advocacy for streamlining the mechanisms for invoking "military involvement in civil affairs" (page 220). Among other things Mark divulges that it was he, and he alone, who first ordered troops to occupy Heathrow airport at the height of the miners' strike against the Heath Government in January 1974, that he was a top-secret observer in a "tiny aircraft" when British troops first went into Northern Ireland in 1969 and that in 1970 he joined two very senior army commanders on a world tour to investigate methods of using the armed forces to back up the police in putting down civil unrest.

Such are the credentials of the man that the Fraser Government rushed out to Australia in the wake of the fatal bombing at the Sydney Hilton in February 1978. Within the unbelievable time of one month Mark submitted his *Report to the Minister for Administrative Services on the Organisation of Police Resources in the Commonwealth Area and Other Related Matters*. The *Report* was almost immediately accepted by the Government and it was used to introduce major changes to Australia's police, military and intelligence machinery. Not the least of these changes was the formation of the Australian Federal Police as Australia's premier police force.

Under the guidelines of the Mark *Report* the Australian Federal Police has, *inter alia*, taken charge of: specialist counter terrorist training and exercises; police Special Branch co-ordination; the mysterious Crisis Policy Centre which will use "military aid to the civil power" in times of emergency; the computerised National Crime Intelligence Centre; and the former Federal Narcotics Bureau (with all its new powers to tap telecommunications and use surveillance devices). The Australian Federal Police is commanded by Mark's former deputy Sir Colin Woods. In his book Mark praises Woods as "an experienced uniformed officer of outstanding managerial skill, great determination and the moral courage to do the job . . ." (*In the Office of Constable*, page 129).

In his *Report* Mark places great stress on the Australian Federal Police's role in relation to intelligence, the alleged terrorist threat and the military. For example he emphasises that:

Most democracies these days are more vulnerable to internal subversion than external attack. . . . It is essential that the police in a free society should take careful note of overt or clandestine activities which allow even the suspicion of subversion. Far from there being a need to justify a Special Branch, it should be made clear that any government unwilling to establish and maintain one is failing in its duty to protect these freedoms regarded as essential to democracy. (*Report*, page 19)

In "terrorism" he finds a justification for rapid intervention by the armed forces:

There is another less obvious reason why if terrorists have to be killed by the security forces, it should be done by soldiers rather than police. The arming of police should always clearly be seen to be for defensive purposes only. (*Report*, page 16)

His section on Military Aid to the Civil Power begins with an ominous declaration: "Military aid to the civil power can be an unnecessarily emotive procedure in free societies, especially those in which it has rarely been invoked" (*Report*, page 15). Later he instructs that

The position is quite simply this. In all societies the Army represents the ultimate sanction of force necessarily available to government in extreme circumstances. (*Report*, page 16)

All in all, Mark's writings are a chilling experience much recommended to all those who are concerned about the protection of basic rights.

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