Robert Schuman Centre

The Policing of Mass Demonstration
in Contemporary Democracies

The Policing of Protest in
Contemporary Democracies

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One specific aspect of state response to protest is the *policing of protest*, which we define as *the police handling of protest events* - a more neutral description for what protestors usually refer to as 'repression' and the state as 'law and order'. While the repression variable has been included in several models on the preconditions for collective action (among others, Tilly, 1978, in particular 101-6; Skocpol, 1979; McAdam, 1982), empirical research on the relationship between police and protest in Western democracies is still rare. There is, therefore, a significant gap to be filled in the literature with comparative studies on protest and policing; moreover, protest policing is a particularly relevant issue for a thorough understanding of the relationship between social movements and the state:

> The study of the ways police interact with other citizens is of primary importance for anyone concerned with public policy and the just resolution of contemporary urban conflict. Police may be conceived as 'street-level bureaucrats' who 'represent' government to people. And at the same time as they represent government policies, police forces also help define the terms of urban conflict by their actions. The influence of police on political attitudes and developments is fundamental because of the unique role of law enforcement agencies in enforcing and reinforcing the norms of the system (Lipsky, 1970: 1).

Police intervention has, in fact, a strong impact on protestors' perceptions of the state reaction to them (della Porta, 1995). Waves of protest, in turn, have important effects on the police, as Jane Morgan (1987) observed in her historical research on the police in Great Britain. Protest policing would appear to be, in fact, a key issue for the professional self-definition of the police. For the process of modernization and professionalization of European police forces in the 19th century, it was of decisive importance that the police should become the principal agency responsible for the safeguarding of internal security and public order, marginalizing thus the military in this role. As the example of post-war Germany illustrates, the way in which the police deal with protest in contemporary democratic societies seems to be a significant, if not dominant, aspect of their self-image (Winter 1996). The importance of these reciprocal repercussions highlights the need for an in-depth study of protest policing in a comparative perspective.

In the following, we shall propose some hypotheses on the origins, development and consequences of different models of police protest control. Part I presents a description of the long-term national styles and recent developments

in protest policing before discussing in a comparative perspective some hypotheses on the significant historical cross-national differences in protest policing and on the recent trend towards a 'softer' and more tolerant attitude in Europe. In part II we propose a model for the explanation of protest policing styles. Drawing on the research presented and on the literature on state responses to protest, we illustrate our hypothesis that protest policing is determined on a first level by (a) the organizational features of the police, (b) the configuration of political power, (c) public opinion, (d) the police occupational culture, (e) the interaction with protestors. All of these influences are filtered, on a second level, by (f) the *police knowledge*, defined as the police's perception of external reality, which shapes the concrete policing of protest on the ground. In a final part, we discuss the effects of the most recent trends in protest policing on the fate of social movements (Part III).

I. TRENDS AND CYCLES IN THE EVOLUTION OF PROTEST POLICING

In order to reflect on the consequences of protest policing we need to understand how the policing of protest varies: How can different ways of policing protests be characterized? Which cross-national differences can be identified? How did they evolve over time? Pertinent to a characterization of different ways of policing protests are the suggestions in social movement literature on the classification of the forms and nature of state control. Gary Marx (1979) distinguished repressive actions according to their specific aims: for instance, the creation of an unfavourable public image; information gathering; restriction of a movement's resources and limitation of its facilities; de recruitment of activists; destruction of leaders; fuelling of internal conflicts; encouragement of conflicts between groups; sabotage of particular actions. Charles Tilly's typology (1978: 106-115) classified political regimes on the basis of the degree of repression and 'facilitation' they manifest towards various collective actors and actions: *repressive* regimes repress many groups and actions and facilitate few of either; *totalitarian* regimes repress fewer groups and facilitate a wide range of actions, even to the point of making them compulsory; *tolerant* regimes accept a wide range of actions, but reduce the power of stronger groups; and *weak* regimes show a wide range of toleration with little repression or facilitation.

Police studies formulated a series of typologies about *police styles* in order to characterize the intention and impact of different ways of policing. For instance, Bayley (1986) distinguished police interventions as oriented towards mediation, separation, coercion or counselling. Black (1980: 130-2) defined various styles of social control, such as the penal style, the conciliatory style, the therapeutic style and the compensatory style. Muir (1977) described four types of police officer: the professional, the reciprocator, the enforcer and the avoider. Particularly helpful for the study of local police sub-units is the distinction between fire-brigade policing, local intelligence policing and community policing (Baldwin and Kinsey, 1982, Chs. 2, 3, 8, 9).

Drawing on these two approaches, it is possible to develop more specific and detailed categories for the study of protest policing. Some relevant dimensions are presented in Figure 1 (see also della Porta, 1995).

[figure 1 approx. here]

A combination of these dimensions describes the *protest policing style* (understood as a subcategory of *police style*) employed by the police forces at protest events. For instance, police who repress a large number of protest groups, prohibit a wide range of protest activities, and intervene with a high degree of force are employing a diffused, repressive and 'brutal' protest policing style. It has been noted, that the different dimensions tend to define two coherent protest policing styles, one more opportunist, tolerant, soft, selective and flexible, the other legalistic, repressive, hard, diffuse and dissuasive (Wisler e Barranco 1996).

Research on state-building and democracy indicates the existence of different *national styles* for dealing with challengers. States with an equilibrium of power among the different social classes (particularly among the monarchy, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie), first-comer nation-states and small states facing strong competition in the international markets developed integrative styles, while the other states were tendentially exclusive (see, for instance, Marks, 1989; Kriesi *et al.*, 1995). Moreover, experiences with authoritarian regimes tend to have long-lasting consequences on police style (see Reiter 1996).

With regard to traditional police styles, the 'civilized' British 'bobby' - unarmed, integrated in the community, and tendentially autonomous from

political power - has been contrasted with the militarized continental police, who live in barracks and are dependent on political power. Already in the 19th century the London Metropolitan Police was viewed by the liberal press on the continent as an example of what a police force should be. For instance, an article published in the German illustrated journal *Die Gartenlaube* in 1878 on 'the blue men of London' started, as any article on the London police in a German illustrated journal might have 100 years later, with the cliché of the friendly bobby giving directions to a foreign tourist (Katscher, 1878). It also noted the traditional 'low-profile response' o: the London police and their positive relationship with the public. Particular emphasis was placed on the accountability of every policeman, which thus assured that neither the single bobby nor the London police force as a whole was a threat to individual or collective liberty. Two lines of argument were generally used to explain these characteristics of the English police, as in the case of this article in *Die Gartenlaube*: on the one hand, the common law tradition in England in contrast with the Roman law tradition on the continent and, on the other hand, the origins of the English police in the tradition of *community policing*. However, as Robert Reiner (1996) shows, 'the ideal British police model was not a reflection of some natural, in-built harmony or order in British society and culture.' On the contrary, 'a low-profile, legalistic, minimal force strategy was encouraged because of, not despite, the bitter political protests and acute social divisions of early 19th century Britain'.

On the European continent the counter-model to this strategy was formed by the French tradition of a 'King's police', i.e. a state police dependent on and under strict control of the central government, charged with a very wide range of tasks, and originally standing as a synonym for the interior state administration. At the same time, the French example served as a model for the police forces in other European countries and was drawn upon during debates on the institution of the London Metropolitan Police as a scarecrow to warn against the liberticidal aspects of this type of law enforcement (Bunyan, 1977: 63).

Nonetheless, myths aside, there do in fact appear to be visible differences between the record of the English police and the continental police forces in the field of *protest policing* in relation to the the 'old' challengers, i.e. democratic and labour movements. On the continent, police action against challengers seemed to aim at defending not only a general system of power, but a concrete government. If combined, as was often the case, with a weak respect for civic

rights, the consequences of this modality for the policing of protest are easily imaginable. The *protest policing styles* traditionally dominant on the continent were more 'brutal', more repressive, more confrontational and more rigid than in England.

It should be noted, however, that significant differences also existed within the overall framework of the continental police systems, both over time and between countries, stretching from the French police of the Third Republic to the police system of national-socialist Germany.[1] After World War II differences continued to exist on the continent. Latin police styles, based on the unconstrained use of force, were distinguished from the Central-European style, characterized by respect for the *Rechtsstaat*. A comparison of Italy and Germany from the 1960s to the 1990s (della Porta 1995, Ch. 3) gave rise to the observation that consistently throughout this period the police handling of protest seems to have been more selective in Germany than in Italy. Since the very beginning, in fact, the German police tended to intervene only very sporadically in industrial conflicts, and repression was particularly focused instead on small political groups. On the contrary, in Italy, especially in the 1950s and early 1970s, police handling of larger groups, including the trade unions and the Communist Party, was 'brutal'. Moreover, the search for protest handling techniques capable of selectively addressing violent groups began earlier in Germany. While in Italy protest policing tended to involve a higher degree of force (at least until the 1980s), the German style was characterized by a greater dependence on intelligence (collection of information, etc.). The Italian police forces were also often accused by the left of having resorted to what protestors considered dirty tactics, such as a widespread and unconstrained use of *agents provocateurs*, the protection of the neo-fascists, and the direct involvement of the secret services in massacres and in plotting coups d'état. Similar charges were much less frequent in Germany, where the police appeared to be more constrained by a formal respect of the *Rechtsstaat*. Referring back to our dimensions presented in Figure 1, the Italian protest policing style during this 30-year period can be described as more 'brutal', more diffused, more illegal, more informal, and more artisanal than the German style.

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[1]   Lüdtke (1992: 17) sees the long-term changes in Germany since the 19th century in a process of professionalization and *Verrechtlichung* as well as a growing pressure for public justification.

For the decades since the 1960s, recent research pointed to a progressive assimilation of the different models of European policing, including protest policing. In Great Britain, a 'militarization' thesis developed, based on the premise that the British police were moving towards the militarized, continental model in the control of public order. The riots in several British cities in the beginning of the 1980s as well as the policing of the miners' strike later on have - according to this hypothesis - unleashed a new trend in the British police (Jefferson, 1990). However, not all police scholars in Great Britain agree on the presence of a trend towards 'militarization', usually understood as 'tough' policing. In research based on participant observation of numerous police interventions during public demonstrations in London, P.A.J. Waddington showed that the availability of legal and technological resources for paramilitary intervention does not automatically mean that these resources are actually implemented (Waddington, 1994; see also 1996). Quite to the contrary, he observed the prevalence of a tolerant style of policing.

On the 'continent', a contrary trend was singled out. Connecting police professional culture with the main frames about protest policing in Germany, Martin Winter's analysis of specialized police journals during the 1960-90 period shows a shift towards a growing acceptance of forms of direct action (Winter 1996). The debate on the military- versus civil-oriented character of the police overlapped in Germany with the debate on protest strategy, with the traditionalists claiming the need for a hard line against the 'anarchists' in order to 'state an example' and the reformists - among whom the reform-oriented police trade union - defending a 'soft approach'. While prior to 1968 demonstrations were largely identified with *Störung der öffentlichen Ordnung* and, based on a Le Bon approach, the potentially dangerous 'crowds' had to be controlled in a paramilitary way, in the 1970s the *Neue Linie* instead recognized demonstration as a basic right. After some roll-backs during the period of terrorism and the anti-nuclear campaign, the debate was dominated from 1985 on by the implications of the Brokdorf decision of the federal Constitutional Court. This judgement stated that 'the right to demonstrate must be protected', thus a *Bürgerpol'z* conception now tends to prevail.

Interpreted as parallel movements, the trends in England and Germany seem to confirm the progressive assimilation of the different styles of European protest policing observed above. Over time, cross-national differences between the European countries seem to have diminished. Recent research on protest policing in England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain (but also the USA)

brought forth similar conclusions (see Reiner, 1996; Waddington, 1996; Fillieule, 1994 and 1995; Fillieule and Jobard, 1996; Winter, 1992 and 1996; Jaime Jiménez 1996; della Porta, 1996; De Biasi, 1996; McCarthy, McPhail and Schweingruber, 1996). A general trend emerges regarding protest policing styles which, on the basis of the variables presented in Figure 1, can be defined as 'soft', tolerant, selective, legal, preventive, consensual, flexible and professional.

If this seems to be the common general trend, both in Great Britain and in continental Europe, protest policing within any given country can be seen to be selective, with a contemporary presence of diverse protest policing styles, implemented in different situations and directed towards different actors. For France, Fillieule and Jobard (1996) describe a paternalistic model of intervention (based on a 'soft' management of violent demonstrations). In the case of the farmers' demonstrations, in particular, both tactical and political necessities have often seemed to push the police towards tolerating certain episodes of violence. In other instances, however, the French police have shown an antagonistic attitude, resorting to a repressive policing style. Within the general trend towards a more tolerant style, della Porta (1996) singles out four different models of protest policing for Italy: a model of *cooperation*, based on collaboration between the police force and demonstrators, and an inconspicuous police presence; a model of *negotiation*, based on a more active police presence with the objective of mediating between the demonstrators and 'non-demonstrators' who are said to suffer the disruptive effects of protests; a model of *ritualistic stand-off*, 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 recourse to the first model can be seen in the large union demonstrations; of the second, direct action by unemployed or homeless people; of the third, demonstrations by autonomous groups of the radical left: and of the fourth, the control of football fans at the stadium.

On the basis of recent research, the three most significant tactical tendencies characterizing protest policing in the 1990s appear to be: a) underenforcement of the law; b) the search to bargain; c) large-scale collection of information. The strategy used during the 1980s and up to the present appears to be dominated by the attempt to *avoid coercive intervention* as much as possible. Law-breaking, which is implicit in several forms of protest, tends to be tolerated by the police. Law enforcement is usually considered as less important than peace-keeping. This implies a considerable departure from protest

policing in the 1960s and 1970s, when attempts to stop unauthorized demonstrations and a law and order attitude in the face of the 'limited rule-breaking' tactic used by the new movements manoeuvred the police repeatedly into 'no win' situations. This recent underenforcement of the law, however, highlights the large discretion of the police, especially if considered together with the selectivity of protest policing, i.e. the contemporary presence of different police styles, implemented in different situations and directed at different actors, as discussed above.

Secondly, in order to avoid disorder, complicated procedures of *negotiation* emerged. This tendency is not new. For the Germany of the 1960s, Martin Winter (1996) notes that, following public criticism of the 'hard line' adopted by the police, public relations efforts were increased and the support of police psychologists was institutionalized. Other research indicates an increasing formalization of bargaining techniques. For the United States, McPhail, McCarthy and Schweingruber (1996) document the sharp contrast between the general practices of protest policing in the 1960s, characterized by *escalated force*, and those of the 1980s and 1990s, characterized by *negotiated management*, which found significant expression in the development of a protest permit system. In his study of the London police, P.A.J. Waddington observed: 'The principal method of securing compliance was through negotiation with the organizer of the protest' (1994: 69). The official notification required for a demonstration, as set down by the Public Order Act of 1986, also has the function of bringing about 'reasonable negotiations'.[2] In the course of his research, Waddington noted a considerable bureaucratization and formalization of the entire procedure, with the effect of reinforcing obedience to the law. By way of example, standardized formulae were presented to negotiators for demonstrations which, despite the fact that there was no legal requirement, they were invited to sign as proof of good faith on both sides. Without matching the level of bureaucratization of the British case, other countries, including France, Germany and Switzerland, have witnessed the growing role of police officers responsible for 'public relations', acting as mediators between demonstrators and the forces of order.

Thirdly, the *collection of information* has received substantial attention by the police. The use of *intelligence* in the control of protestors is not a new trend.

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[2]   In fact, 85% of the marches observed were preceded by a negotiation, often a series of meetings, with an average of 55 days anticipation (Waddington, 1994).

In his book on the 'Red Squads', the specialized units employed against subversion that proliferated in American cities, Frank Donner (1990) suggests that there was a shift during the 1930s from traditional interventionist practices to 'intelligence'; that is, information gathering and surveillance, including the compilation of files and their aggressive use to damage the protestors. The role of the Red Squads was strengthened in the 1960s, when the FBI was thwarted by its own old conception of the left as 'communists' and by millions of dossiers of old - or dead - radicals: 'The core of the red squads operation', according to Donner (*Ibid.*: 66), 'was identification of anyone and everyone involved in protest activities. The names and associations of activists ... were recorded and filed. Lists and dossiers of subjects were coded, stored, indexed and disseminated to other intelligence agencies (federal, state, and urban). Police countersubversive agencies multiplied greatly as "intelligence" became a standard branch of urban police practice, even in cities where it had theretofore played a relatively minor role'. Technological advances allowed for an increasing level of control (*Ibid.*: 67).[3] In more recent times too, the availability of new techniques together with growing professionalization have been reflected in an ever-increasing attention to the collection of information - as may be seen, for instance, in the control of football crowds (see della Porta, 1996; and De Biasi 1996). The possible influence of this emphasis on information gathering as one element in a system of indirect control on the fate of social movements is a problem meriting attention.

This element of protest policing in the 1990s, in particular, leads to a consideration of whether or not we are confronted with a case of an automatically expanding bureaucracy. It can in fact be interpreted as a parallel to a development emphasized by police historians, i.e. the thesis that the retreat of the police force from its welfare functions was compensated by a progressive expansion of the security concept to ever greater risks, so that the new concept of police in practice also included the order of the whole society (Jessen, 1995: 31). Gary Marx observes that agencies that deal with intelligence gathering and the prevention of crime or subversion have an *inherent tendency to expand*:

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[3] Since the prime emphasis of the urban units was identification, photography became an operational focus. Technological sophistication in this field allowed for expansion in the area covered (from half a mile away) for an extended time (24 hours a day, thanks to infrared circuits). 'Like other aspects of the intelligence process, photography became an end in itself, a means of intimidating the subject' (Donner, 1990: 69). Other techniques of control included wire-tapping, electronic bugging and the planting of informers.

'[Their] role can be defined in such a way as to create an appetite that can never be satiated' (1979, 112). Referring to the control of protest in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, he adds:

> Factors that explain the origin of a phenomenon may not necessarily explain its continuance. Thus the origin of government programs for social movement intervention generally lies in events that most members of a society would define as crisis or a serious threat. However, the programs can take on a life of their own as vested interests develop around them, and new latent goals may emerge. Rather than social control as repression, deterrence, or punishment, it can become a vehicle for career advancement and organizational perpetuation and growth. The management and even creation of deviance, rather than its elimination, can become central (Ibid.: 114).

Control agencies would consequently produce political deviants. A similar point is raised by David Garret in a study of the FBI involvement against Martin Luther King. He suggests that the reasons for the FBI's 'deviations' are to be found in two concepts: autonomy - as the degree of independence of an organization from its formal superiors or other influential actors - and homogeneity (white men, with small-town backgrounds, parochial education and strongly conservative political views) (Garret, 1981: 224-5).

Although the general trends described can be observed in all countries under review, some differences remain visible in a cross-national comparison. The very terms of the British debate on 'militarization' suggest that the civilian character of the 'bobby' is more deeply rooted than critics tend to concede.[4] With respect to underenforcement of the law, the degree of toleration of law-breaking appears to be higher in countries such as Italy and France where the discretionary power of the police is greater, than in a country like Germany where legal constraints are more effective. The internal differences between French-speaking and German-speaking cantons in Switzerland, analysed by Dominique Wisler and Hanspeter Kriesi (1996), appear to confirm this trend. So too, the degree of formalization of negotiation practices show considerable variance: rather informal in Italy, more formalized in Germany, fairly formalized

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[4] For a 'continental' observer, the use of the term 'militarization' in this debate does not seem wholly appropriate. When we speak about a 'militarized' police force on the continent, based on historical examples, we are referring to a paramilitary, militia-type police force, with a hierarchical military organization, complete with battle training and deploying heavy military weapons, etc. Protective clothing, helmets, shields and deployment in closed formation would not be sufficient to define a police force as 'militarized'.

in Great Britain. Constraints on the use of information-gathering techniques also vary. The Italian case, for instance, seems to be characterized by a lack of limits and controls on information-gathering activities by the *Digos* (the political police), which functions as an 'epistemological' organ of the state, with the role of collecting information on all the political actors and interest groups and having a special direct relationship with the government (see della Porta 1996; for historical tradition, Reiter 1996). These remaining differences highlight the need for further comparative and focused research.

II. A MODEL FOR THE EXPLANATION OF PROTEST POLICING STYLES

How to explain the cross-national and infra-national differences in protest policing styles as well as their evolution in time? Figure 2 provides an outline of the different analytical levels that appear to be relevant in answering these questions.

[Figure 2 approx. here]

First of all, protest policing styles are influenced by the political system - in particular, by what researchers of social movements have defined as the 'Political Opportunity Structure'(POS).[5] If we examine the POS, a first analytical level refers to the stable opportunities in which a certain style of policing develops. *Institutional features* - such as police organization, the nature

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[5] In his pivotal study on political opportunities in American cities, Eisinger (1973) focused on access to the political system. Subsequent empirical studies considered additional variables, such as electoral instability (Piven and Cloward, 1977), the availability of allies and the tolerance for protest among the elite (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977), and the influence of the political process (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, 1982). Tarrow (1983) integrated these empirical observations in the theoretical framework for his study of protest cycles in Italy. In Tarrow's framework, the components of the POS are the degree of access to political institutions, the degree of stability/instability of political alignments, the availability and strategic posture of potential allies (Tarrow, 1983: 28), and - in a later work (Tarrow, 1989: 35; see also Tarrow, 1994) - political conflicts among and within elites. In the 1980s, several scholars referred to the concept of political opportunity structure in a number of case studies and cross-national comparisons, often adding new variables to the original set (in particular, Brand, 1985; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 1991; Rucht, 1994). For a review, della Porta e Diani, forthcoming, chap. 8)

of the judiciary, law codes, constitutional rights, and so on - may play an important role in defining the opportunities for and constraints on protest policing, as they set the conditions for the actual protest policing strategies. Moreover, aspects of the political culture, particularly those referring to conceptions of the state and citizens' rights, have similarly important effects (Brand, 1985; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 1991). Police studies have suggested that the very conditions of policing bring about the development of a particular *police culture*, including a series of stereotypes about disorders.

In addition to the relatively stable context, policing styles depend on a second, more 'volatile' set of political opportunities. Various collective actors, in fact, put forward their interests or opinions, forming what Kriesi (1989) refers to as a 'configuration of power'. First of all, the *government* defines some general lines on how protest should be handled. Moreover, social movements intervene on issues relating to citizens' rights and police tasks - they organize protest actions to denounce police brutality, they demand more democracy. Political parties, interest groups, trade unions and voluntary associations conflict or cooperate with each other on the issue of how to police protest. Like-minded actors take sides on the issue, forming on the one hand, *law and order coalitions* and on the other, *civil rights coalitions* (della Porta, 1994). The *media* are part of this picture, partially as a 'spokesperson' of one or the other coalition, and partially following an 'autonomous' logic.

The impact of the stable opportunities and the more volatile ones on *protest policing styles* are filtered by *police knowledge* - that is, the police's construction of external reality, collectively and individually - which we consider to be the main intervening variable between structure and action. The influence of institutional characteristics of the police, police culture, governments and public opinion on protest policing finds a concrete expression only in so far as it becomes part of the knowledge of the police. This level of analysis is all the more important when institutional actors enjoy - as is the case with the police - a high degree of discretionary power.

a) Institutional Characteristics of the Police and Protest Policing Styles

One of the institutional variables relevant to police behaviour is constituted by the legal framework, including legislation on constitutional rights (right of movement, right of expression), defendants' rights (preventive imprisonment, presence of one's attorney at interrogations, right of the police to

interrogate a defendant), and prisoners' rights (privacy, contact with the external world). The Brokdorf decision of the German federal Constitutional Court shows the extent to which legal decisions can open new spaces for protestors and restrict the range for police intervention (see Winter 1996). A contrary dynamic was created by the failure of the Italian Parliament to revise the fascist police laws, which remained on the books until the mid-1950s, effectively obstructing legal popular protest and facilitating a wide range of police interventions (see Reiter 1996). The final turning-point for a democratic policing of protest in post-Franco Spain came about in 1983 with the new law on meeting and demonstration rights (see Jaime Jiménez 1996).

A second institutional variable relevant to police behaviour is the organizational structure of the police. Particularly pertinant questions on the characteristics of police organizations refer to (a) *centralization* (How much power do decentralized units have? How powerful is the central government?) (b) *accountability* (Are there special bodies for protest control? special courts for police crimes? Do the police have the right to 'shoot to kill'?); and (c) *militarization* (How dependent are the police on the Defence Ministry? Do they live in barracks? Are they part of the army? How great is the emphasis on 'discipline'? What type of armament do they use? Are the police unionized?).[6]

The effects of these features of police organization on police styles appear to be contradictory, varying according to the historical-political context. According to Geary, *centralization* undermined the use of police forces as an employer's private army in Great Britain at the beginning of this century and led to a more impartial style of law enforcement (Geary, 1985: 123). The fact, however, that the centralization process was initiated at the same time as the Labor Party won the majority in some local councils also indicates that centralization can have different aims.

Opinions also differ on the effects of centralization on police *accountability*. In a study of the police and labour disputes in England and Wales in the first four decades of this century, Jane Morgan (1987) suggested that one effect of centralization is a reduction of the accountability of the police

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[6] Some characteristics of the secret services and the judiciary can also be of relevance to protest policing. For instance, the specialization of the secret services in internal versus external security and their relative dependence on the military are also important factors in any attempt to define the context for protest and protest policing.

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to the democratic bodies. To the contrary, P.A.J. Waddington, studying the British police in the 1980s, observed: 'Local control would not guarantee that the police would be employed in ways that liberal and radical critics would like' (Waddington, 1991: 134).[7]

Analyses of the effects of *militarization* on the police have similarly drawn contradictory conclusions.[8] In general, a militarily organized police force is considered to be more prone to brutality since it implies a hierarchical organization with 'blind' obedience to order. Looking at the evolution of the British police, however, P.A.J. Waddington noted that militarization, with its implication of stricter control on rank and file officers, could actually help prevent brutality. As he observed:

> When police are now deployed in public order situations they are no longer an assembly of individuals, but are formed into squads under a hierarchy of command akin to military formations.... As such, they are more formidable, giving the authorities a potentially much more powerful instrument for repression, if they choose to use it. At the same time, there is a compensating advantage for protesters in deploying police in this manner: they act as a disciplined body ... it means that greater control, supervision and, therefore, discipline can be maintained (Ibid., 136).

On the same point, Reiner (1991, 54-5) remarked:

> There is an important issue here which critics of the police have not reflected on enough. In violent confrontations, a "non-militaristic" response by police (i.e. without adequate training, manpower, coordination, and defensive or even offensive equipment) could mean that injuries will be multiplied. This doesn't just mean injuries to the police, but also to others who will suffer from undisciplined and excessive violence from constables who lose their cool or their courage.

Gary Marx (1972) also noted that a non-militaristic organization of the American police had probably contributed to their excessive use of force during the riots of the late 1960s.

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[7] Waddington added, 'Police in countries like the USA, who were under local political control and where citizens were protected by a Bill of Rights, saw *more, not less,* violence' (1991: 134-5).

[8] Jessen (1995: 30) recalls that a partial militarization of the police was the price to be paid for the retreat of the military from the arena of social conflicts.

Our own research indicates, first of all, that the problems of centralization and militarization take on different dimensions in old and new democracies. It can be stated that an authoritarian or totalitarian regime is inconceivable without a militarized and centralized police. In the periods of transition to democracy in Italy, Spain, and Hungary (respectively, Reiter, 1996; Jaime Jimenez, 1996; and Szabo and Szikinger 1995), reformist pressure was especially directed against these organizational features. This was not only because the dominant police model of the victors of the Cold War as well as of World War II was the Anglo-Saxon one, it was also because police decentralization and demilitarization were considered as necessary in order to ensure democratic accountability. As the example of Italy shows, failure to modify the centralized and militarized structures of the police forces emerging from an authoritarian or totalitarian regime can result in a circle of continuities, only broken by a complete generational turnover. The Spanish experience offers a more successful, if cautious, attempt to transform the Francoist security forces into a democratic police. The Italian police reform, which finally took place at the beginning of the 1980s, provides a further example of the contribution that organizational changes (such as demilitarization, recruitment of women police officers) can make towards an 'opening up' of a police force (see della Porta 1996).

The argument in old democracies seems to be conducted on a different level. The general trend towards a 'softer' protest policing style developed in all the countries dealt with herein, regardless of different levels of centralization and militarization of the respective police forces (although a high level might have had a retarding effect). The practical impact of different degrees of centralization and militarization on police deployment and intervention in concrete public order cases has not yet been the subject of comparative research. However, the contributions of Fillieule and Jobard (1996) on France and of Waddington (1996) on England suggest that militarization and centralization are important elements in influencing protest policing styles when the police, to use Waddington's expression, have decided 'to die in a ditch'. In this case a centralized police force with paramilitary capacities will be a far more formidable instrument than a decentralized and civilian one. As a body they may tend to intervene more aggressively, even though a centralized and military organization will allow the leadership to exercise greater restraining control over the officers on the ground until the moment of intervention. Comparative research is needed to ascertain whether the same mechanisms can be found in special militarized riot units within generally decentralized and civilian forces.

The trend towards greater uniformity among the different European police forces is also visible as far as organization is concerned. In their comparative analysis, Funk, Kauss and von Zabern (1980) singled out increasing similarities in the organizational models of national police forces. In particular, they described a process of growing *differentiation*, with the development of independent units; *specialization*, with a functional definition of the particular tasks these units must perform; and *professionalization*, with an emphasis on police formaticn and training, together with the diffusion of technological knowledge. The declining importance of a structural hierarchy and the deployment of organs specialized in improving police knowledge on external reality are the outcomes of greater attention paid to prevention. Increased police powers in the collection and storage of information made this process possible (*Ibid.*: 22-24). The effects of these trends on protest policing, however, cannot simply be defined in terms of more tolerant or more repressive tendencies. As far as centralization is concerned, differentiation and specialization bring about the autonomization of certain units, which enables insulation from political pressures but is also characterized by centralized hierarchies. As for accountability, while the formal openings of the police towards society may be broader, professionalization and specialization may reduce the possibility of external control. Finally, in terms of militarization, we observe a 'civilization' of the police, but at the same time there is also a development of specialized, highly professional, militarily-trained units to deal with disorders.

b) Police Culture and Protest Policing Styles

Although less formalized, the political culture of the different countries under review and the occupational culture of their police forces also constitute stable opportunities. Together with the organizational features, they provide the long-term underlying influences on protest policing styles. Kriesi applied to social movements the concept of national strategies of conflict resolution, elaborated in the analysis of industrial conflicts:[9] 'National strategies set the informal and formal rules of the game for the conflict' (1989: 295). Traditions are, in fact, embedded not only in laws but also in the political culture. Protest

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[9] Scharpf (1984: 57) defined this concept as 'an overall understanding, among those who exercise effective power, of a set of precise premises integrating world-views, goals and means'.

policing seems to be particularly sensitive to *the cultural understanding of civil rights and police power*.[10] In particular, the *'rootedness'* of a democratic culture seems to have important consequences on the reactions of elites to emergent challengers, and vice versa. Both in Italy and Germany the institutional and emotional legacy of pre-war fascist mass movements and their 'legal revolutions' was reflected - well into the 1970s - in a 'weak' acceptance of certain democratic rights. Similarly, real or imagined continuities with the fascist regimes generated a climate of distrust among challengers. Escalation often resulted from the state's lack of confidence in democratic protest combined with the protestors' lack of confidence in the democratic state institutions. Thus, protest was perceived as a threat to democracy by the institutions, and state reactions were perceived as a sign of fascism by the movement activists (della Porta, 1995: Ch. 3). Generally speaking, however, the post-war years in Europe saw a continuous development and strengthening of a democratic political culture, which influenced the police and contributed to the emergence of the new protest policing styles.

In the analysis of police behaviour, sociological research developed the concept of *police culture*. In seeking an explanation of policing styles, past research on the police - based mainly on ethnographic approaches to urban subdivisions of police at work - emphasized certain characteristics of the professional culture and, especially, of the operational culture widespread among officers. In his seminal work, Skolnick (1966: 231) suggested that the policeman understands his role as 'craftsman rather than legal actor ... skilled work rather than civil servant obliged to subscribe to the rule of the law'. Maureen Cain (1973) observed, in her research on the English police, that constables were oriented mainly towards crime-fighting, although only a minor portion of their time was devoted to this task. This explained why they considered 'making an arrest' as the main action of 'good policing'. Various studies have converged in indicating that, because of the very characteristics of their job, policemen develop such attitudes as a tendency to secretive behaviour and a lack of confidence in the external world (Rubistein, 1973; Manning, 1979; Holdaway, 1984).

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[10] For instance, recalling the negative political consequences of the police killing demonstrators in February 1934, Monjardet (1990: 214-5) suggested that the French police are still trained to consider demonstrator not as an enemy, but as a temporary adversary, and to avoid injuring or killing people.

Some characteristics of the police culture have been noted as facilitating repressive attitudes. Commenting upon Lord Scarman's suggestion (in his 1981 report on the Brixton riots) to give greater consideration to the police officer who must maintain harmony in the community, Benyon (1984) observes that the commonly-held *macho attitudes* among rank and file policemen leads them to privilege crime fighting - the excitement of big white cars and flashing blue lights (Reiner, 1982) - over peace-keeping. Analysing the policing of the British miners' strike in the 1980s, Sarah McCabe and Peter Wallington suggested that since police activity tends to be tedious (waiting for something that almost never happens), the protests of the 1960s and 1970s may have produced some *excitement* among police officers (McCabe and Wallington, 1988: 43). According to Lipset (1971: 29), the general job experiences of policemen 'enhance the possibility that whatever authoritarian traits they bring from their social background will increase rather than decrease.... In general, the policeman's job requires him to be suspicious of people, to prefer conventional behavior, to value toughness.' Policemen tend to see themselves surrounded by a hostile world which, especially in combination with certain organizational features like militarization, can lead to isolation from society and aggressive feelings against those who are perceived as "diverse".

Two aspects, in particular, of the police culture generated by the work experience of policemen have important repercussions on protest policing. As already mentioned, the police, although bound by the law, form an institution with great discretionary power. This fact is worth underlining not only for the institution as a whole, but also for the individual policeman on the beat. Historical changes, even the obligation to follow the legality principle and to report any violation of the law, did not in practice alter much the situation. Most police interventions and sanctions continued to be triggered by situative moments, prejudice, stereotypes and other imponderabilia and depended only to a lesser extent on the bureaucratic transposition of well-defined rules (Jessen, 1995: 32f.). The need to take on-the-spot decisions about whether to intervene or not makes policemen develop stereotypes about people and situations perceived as creating trouble or representing a danger. What is relevant about these stereotypes is that they become a kind of *guideline* for police intervention. A. and M. Brogden (1982: 242), for instance, revealed the role of police images of Liverpool's Toxteth district in defining the 'tough' policing of the area that eventually led to riots in 1981: 'In post-World War II years the district (known as Liverpool 8), had become allegorized in the demonic ideology of the local police. It was *the* problem area - the primary location of the "bucks". In 1976,

for example, the current Chief Constable had claimed that at some future date an "army of occupation" may be required to control it'. This image justified a 'pro-active' patrolling of the district, using such provisions as the 'sus' (which allowed for arrest if the patrolling officers believed that an individual was about to embark on a felony) and the 'stops' (a local by-law which permitted a patrolling officer to stop and search an individual whom he regarded as a suspect). As Brogden and Brogden commented, 'The vast majority of recorded stops involve the harassment of individuals against whom no charge is eventually laid ... The victims are selected for the stop procedures on the basis of stereotypes inculcated by force tradition, by occupational culture, and according to the guidance of police training manuals ...' (*Ibid.*: 245).

The long-term continuities in the conduct of policemen and the practice of policing resulting from these characteristics of police culture have been repeatedly stressed (Lüdtke, 1992: 20). Recent research, however, tends to view with increasing scepticism the notion of an immutable police culture. Styles of conflict management, though surely resilient to a certain extent, change with time. As was observed, for instance, in a comparison of state responses to the anti-nuclear movements, traditionally exclusionary states may adopt very flexible tactics in order to avoid escalation, while traditionally inclusive states may use repression (Flam, 1994: 345). Historically relevant events become turning-points: in learning from past mistakes, collective actors develop new strategies (della Porta, 1995, Ch. 3). Together with the transformation in the police environment, some features of the police's professional culture may also be changing. Such trends as a demilitarization of the police and their professionalization may be reflected in a higher class background, as well as in an increasing integration into society. Although policemen still tend to consider themselves as 'craftsmen', an increasing emphasis on training, and a shift in its content, may also have effected changes in the police culture. Cross-national differences in the development of these phenomena may be one reason for the existing cross-national differences in protest policing in the countries under review.

c) Governments and Protest Policing Styles

The evolution of protest policing may be influenced in the long run by stable institutional and cultural opportunities and constraints. The relevant changes over time suggest, however, that in addition to this stable context protest policing is also dependent upon the 'volatile' configuration of power. As Geary observed, 'Of course, constitutionally the police are supposed to be a

neutral law enforcement agency independent of political influence. However, there seems little doubt that the Government does influence the policing of industrial disputes both in terms of the overall approach and in terms of particular operational decisions' (1985: 125-6). In fact, the *degree of political control* on protest policing, which varies cross-nationally and over time, influences police styles. Political control on the police can, however, play in different directions. While several examples may be cited of conflicts between a liberal city mayor and his/her more conservative police in American cities, there are also several examples of political authorities requesting a reluctant police to engage in more repression.[11]

Shifts in the policing of protest - or techniques of repression - have often been traced to changes in the government's make-up. In his model of the determinants of repression in the United States, Goldstein (1978) considered the ideological position of the President as the most important variable. Several historical examples indicate that the policing of protest was an issue on which parties did in fact polarize along the traditional left-right cleavage. Left-wing parties, with vivid memories of state repression of the labour and socialist movements, tended to rally in favour of civil liberties; conservative parties, fearful of losing votes to parties further to their right, often advocated law and order. A comparative study of Italy and Germany (della Porta, 1995) shows that, in general, protest policing was 'softer' and more tolerant when the left was in government, whereas the conservative governments were inclined to use 'harder' tactics. In Italy the centre-left governments of the 1960s broke with the tradition of allowing the police to shoot at demonstrators. In Germany, the first SPD-FDP Brandt government (1969-72) developed a more tolerant style of protest policing and liberalized laws concerning public marches and citizens' rights. In his study on the policing of industrial disputes in Great Britain, Roger Geary attributed the shift from a 'hard style' to a 'soft style' of protest policing - a shift that he situated in about 1910 - to political considerations that constrained the behaviour of the authorities, in particular to the fact that 'the Liberals, in order to maintain a majority over the conservatives, frequently had to rely on the support of Labor and Irish nationalist Members of Parliament' (1985: 117). In the 1980s, a partial roll-back to a 'harder' protest policing was instead connected with the political choices of the conservative government led by Mrs. Thatcher (*Ibid.*: Ch. 7).

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[11] This was particularly visible, for instance, in the policing of the student movement in Berlin, when the police leadership intervened in the political arena and in the media, stressing the point that protest required a political rather than a police response (Sack, 1984).

It would, however, be inaccurate to claim that left-wing governments are *always* more tolerant of protest than conservative governments. Indeed, there seem to be periods in which the main parties do *not* greatly differ in their position on internal security policy (for instance, on Germany see Funk, 1990). One possible reason for this is that protest policing is, in fact, a tricky issue for left-wing governments. The comparative research on Italy and Germany referred to above (della Porta, 1995) indicated, for instance, that left-wing governments often have to face difficult law and order campaigns launched by the conservative opposition (as happened in Germany under Chancellor Brandt). It is especially when the left feels the need to legitimate itself as 'fit-to-govern' that it has to make concessions to the hard-line proponents of law and order. Such compromises not only inevitably disappoint social movement activists (usually to the advantage of the most radical wings), they also elicit internal criticism. Just as left-wing governments are not automatically lenient towards protest, so too *conservatives in power do not always implement repressive policies*. For instance, the swing from left to right in the state government amidst the turmoil of the Berliner squatters' movement in 1981 did not interrupt the negotiations for a political solution, although some incidents did escalate into violence simply because the squatters anticipated a harder reaction by the conservative government (CILIP, 1981).

As the case studies presented in this series indicate, government obviously retains a great potential influence on protest policing. The example of Italy in the immediate post-war period shows the extent to which orders from the central government can affect protest policing at the local level. In this case the government not only named 'the enemy', but also outlined the types of police intervention to be exercised and evaluated the results achieved (1996). For both France and England, Fillieule and Jobard (1996) emphasize the strong influence maintained by political powers, albeit with perceivable differences, on the question of when to intervene. Reporting on the criticism voiced by police officers on this interference, they propose to speak of *political antagonism* rather than *police antagonism* in those cases where the government, basing their decisions on political considerations, order an antagonistic police intervention. The influence of government on protest policing styles also makes itself felt in a more general way, as is shown by the existence of two protest policing 'lines' (one of Social-Democratic-governed Nordrhein-Westfalen and the other of conservative-governed Bavaria) in the Federal Republic of Germany (see Winter 1996). On the other hand, Waddington (1996), while underlining the influence of political power, also stresses the considerable degree of autonomy of the

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police, who in the case of an anarchist demonstration in Trafalgar square would not be compelled to 'die in the ditch' by the minister whose actions were perceived as arbitrary and partisan.

The recent development towards a 'softer' protest policing style seems to have gone hand in hand with a retreat of government from direct intervention. Recent research indicates two connected developments: in general, governments tend to leave the technical side of policing protest increasingly to the police, who on the other hand increasingly perceive their role in policing social and political conflicts as problematic, criticizing politicians for handing responsibility over to the police for situations which can be resolved only politically. Historically, the absence of instructions on protest policing from the political power has led to disorientation among the police, with contrasting consequences - in most cases tending more towards apathy than to aggressive activism. In serious public order events, the lack of such political guidance might lead to a dominance of on-the-ground emotions and to an escalation of the confrontation between protestors and police into a win-or-lose battle.

d) Public Opinion and Protest Policing Styles

Government choices on protest policing are sensitive to the pressures of various actors. Political parties, interest groups and movement organizations express their preferences on protest policing, addressing either their constituency, the public or the policy-makers directly. Their discourses are then filtered through the media, thereby influencing public opinion.

Protest policing is an issue on which the more radical actors often find alliances, leading to the formation of *civil rights coalitions*. For instance, in his research on the policing of industrial disputes in Great Britain, Geary stated: 'In the past the use of lethal force against defenceless working people had been counterproductive in several ways. Opposition from a broad section of political opinion could be expected and this often proved extremely embarrassing for the Government' (1985: 117). When the police is perceived as 'overreacting', a process of 'solidarization' is set in motion between those who are the direct target of repression and larger - and often more moderate - forces. The reaction in England to the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 offers a historical illustration of this point: 'For a time ultra-radicals and moderates buried their differences in a

protest movement with which many Whigs were willing to associate' (Thompson, 1968: 756).

Moments can occur, however, when the public (or a part of the public) ask for a 'tougher' intervention, and *law and order coalitions* arise. The 'majoritarian' - or more vociferous - public opinion of the day is, in fact, not always a 'liberal' one. Historical examples can readily be located in which hard-line policies were implemented in response to pressure exerted by law and order coalitions. According to Zwerman (1987), the 'harder' counter-terrorist policies of the Reagan administration resulted from the pressure of right-wing groups (such as the Moral Majority) on the national government. Thus, 'tough' police intervention may be criticized by some, while appreciated by others. A study on the impact on the public of the policing of the 1984-5 miners' strike in Great Britain showed that, while alienating the strikers, the police's hard line improved the image of the police among non-strikers (Green, 1990: Ch. 3). Phases of 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972) have often generated demands for 'law and order'.

The media enter this picture partly as a 'spokesperson' of one or the other coalition and partly with their own 'autonomous' logic. Media attention to social protest seems to have the effect of generating a shift towards more tolerant policing. In particular since the seventies, the daily press appeared as more critical towards 'touch' police interventions, and more pluralistic (della Porta 1994). As we are going to see, the mere presence of journalists, in fact, appears to have a de-escalating effect on the police, although the fact that this presence does not always discourage the police from a 'hard' style of intervention is testified by the very existence of media coverage of such interventions. There are also cases where the media become the promoters of law and order campaigns. One example is the coverage by the Springer press, especially the tabloid *Bild*, of the student movement in Germany, most notably in Berlin. Furthermore, appreciation of the influence maintained by the media and interested coalitions on protest policing styles in contemporary European democracies should not lead to an overestimation of their weight in general. Although studies on the police in transition phases to democracy show that the police are very sensitive and dependent on public support during such periods, the Italian case in particular also demonstrates the degree to which even in a democracy the police may use repressive policies, despite the opposition of a large and well-organized minority (Reiter 1996). This is especially true when the police enjoy unlimited government support and receive clear directives, i.e. if they know that the difficulties of the job, considerable if they have to suppress

a large minority, are outweighed by the possible trouble which could result if they fail to follow the government's orders.

Furthermore, there are indications that media coverage by its very nature can work as an agent of escalation. Certain characteristics of news production seem to generate a media 'bias' in favour of the police. As Murdock (1984: 78) observed, 'Contrary to the "high" and "low" conspiracy theories favored by some critics of the news media, the answer does not lie in interventions from on high or in the personal prejudices of journalists and editors, but in the routine business of news production and the practical and commercial pressures which shape it.' First among these characteristics is the fact that in news gathering journalists rely upon official sources - and among them the police are usually a preferred one.[12] Not only are police spokesmen given ample space in accounts of disorders, even the pictures reflect the police 'point of view' since, for security reasons, they are usually taken from behind the police. A second characteristic of the 'business of news production' that can produce a biased image of protestors is the rule that a 'good story' should focus on the dramatic and violent actions, involving large numbers of participants, and not on the incidents that originally triggered off such mass events: 'News stories are concerned with the immediate and dramatic, with effects rather than cause, with surface appearances rather than underlying processes' (D. Waddington, 1992: 177). Moreover, 'Topics and events are selected as headline news according to their news-worthiness. Hence the emphasis on the dramatic, unexpected and negative, the measurement of the significance of negative events in terms of damage to people and property' (*Ibid.*). Thirdly, like other actors, the press uses stereotypes that oppose rampaging crowds to sober citizens, that identify trouble-makers with hooligan youth, and that (as was the case in the coverage of the

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[12]   Several researchers have pointed out the special relationship between the media and the police. 'The police are news', writes Nigel Fielding (1991: 17). 'A substantial proportion of routine media output relates to crime, policing or police. Like the media, the police are there every day, reliably producing output, be it direct action, court cases and testimony, dealings with government, or press releases. It pays journalists to attend closely to every aspect of police business.' However, 'the journalists are aware that at least some of their readership do not like the police. Police practice sells paper just as well as police heroism' (*Ibid.*). If journalists select information on the basis of 'news value', there can be room for conflicts between the two sides. Fielding also agrees that escalation can be produced by journalists' 'over-use of sensational language. The terminology of crisis and conflict becomes devalued' (*Ibid.*: 18).

Toxteth riots) depict the black population as permanently alien.[13] The need to 'define the situation' can push the press to take the view that 'the protesters - the violent minority by their acts, the majority by their association - have moved outside the realm of politics and into the area of criminal activity'(*Ibid.*).[14]

While not dealing directly with public opinion and the media, recent research indicates a growing public stigmatization of coercive police management of political demonstrations and social protest. This is at least the perception by the police, as we shall see in more detail below. However, public opinion seems to be less tolerant of disruptive protest behaviour when other protest channels are available (Wisler and Kriesi 1996). Moreover, coercive policing is better accepted, or even advocated, if directed against violent protestors.

e) The Interaction Between Police and Protestors and Protest Policing Styles

Another variable which undoubtedly influences protest policing styles is the interaction between protestors and the police, a dynamic which is not restricted to single protest events. Individual incidents may have long-term repercussions on police attitudes towards protest. The police also seem to be equipped with an elephant's memory: the history of previous interactions with protestors is an important element shaping today's protest policing.

First of all, the prohibition of a demonstration can set up violent dynamics. Research on disorderly demonstrations in London over a period of

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[13] Media are also criticized for the 'copycat' effects they produce which helps spread disorders (although it is possible that contagion is also produced by a change in police attitudes). Moreover, 'the notion that riots are fomented by foreign agitators or people possessed of "alien" views and bent on undermining the "British way of life"' has been used [by the media] to explain almost every incident of public disorder since the Gordon riots of 1970' (Murdock, 1984: 83-4). See also Sumner, 1982.

[14] David Waddington lists six main characteristics of the media's representation of public disorders '1. Underemphasising, excusing, justifying police aggression, 2. Praising police "heroism", 3. Exaggerating, dramatizing violence, 4. Emphasizing "wickedness", "bestiality", "mindlessness" of dissenters, 5. Decontextualizing and depoliticising violence (denying its meaning), 6. Distorting, oversimplifying causes.' The effects would contribute to public disorders by '1. Failing to highlight/address grievances, 2. Denigrating/vilifying dissenters and their claims, 3. Labelling dissenters as "threat" to society, 4. Calling for resolute state/police/court response' (D. Waddington, 1992: 176).

100 years has shown that 'violence has tended to occur whenever protesters have been castigated as "subversive", "unpatriotic", or "communistic"; when their activities were likely to prove embarrassing to the government, monarchy or "national reputation", or when the demonstration was technically illegal, occurring in a defiance of legal prohibition' (D. Waddington, 1992: 29, emphasis added). The implementation of a prohibition to demonstrate is known in fact even to the police as a source of violent escalation (Wisler and Barranco, 1996: 7).

Certain police techniques can lead to escalation during interaction with demonstrators. The dispersal of crowds, for instance, is a delicate task. As P.A.J. Waddington observes, 'Effective dispersal of a crowd requires that the police should be able flexibly and rapidly to attend where there is any concentration. It is the recognition of this fact that lies at the heart of the strategy of "aggressive mobility" which informs public-order policing in most other countries, and is particularly associated with Continental and colonial policing system' (1991: 163-4). According to the same author, the main instrument of coercive police intervention - the baton charge - easily leads to escalation.

> The reason why baton charges are difficult to control is known colloquially in the Metropolitan Police as "the red mist". This refers to a potential cocktail of psychological conditions which diminishes any person's self-control, and from which the police are not exempt. Baton charges require officers to act aggressively in conditions of relative anonymity ... they may be wearing protective clothing with visors to obscure their facial features; and they will almost certainly be acting, not as individuals, but as a group. The target of their actions will not be other individuals, but an equally anonymous collective - "tl.e crowd", "Them" - who will have insulted and physically attacked "Us" - the police. Officers' anger and frustration will thus have been aroused, and a baton charge will allow retaliation in conditions which minimize individual responsibility. The violence that the police employ in response is seen, certainly by the police themselves, as justified - upholding the law - a feeling that inhibits restraint. Baton charge is also physically arousing because of the exertion involved. In striking members of the crowd officers are likely to experience pleasure, not because they are sadists, but because they will undergo a reduction in physical stress which is experienced as pleasurable and which will encourage them to repeat the aggressive action. Psychologically, these are conditions virtually designed to encourage aggression and violence. Added to this volatile mixture, the human physique makes it extremely difficult to strike in a manner other than that which will inflict serious injury. Whilst officers are instructed to strike people with their batons only on the arms, legs and torso, and are forbidden to hit people on the head, this is an unnatural action which is likely to be forgotten in the heat of the moment. The natural inclination is to strike downwards (P.A.J. Waddington, 1991: 177-8).

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Particularly in crowd dispersal, an additional risk of escalation derives from organizational dynamics. As Monjardet observed (1990: 217 ff.), there are at least three main mechanisms in police intervention that favour escalation: the dialectic of centralization and autonomy in police units, the difficulties of coordinating the different groups, and uncertainty about the aims of the intervention. Although a police force may have well-developed techniques for controlling large masses, it may be ill-prepared to isolate and control small groups operating within larger crowds (*Ibid.*. 233). In Italy and Germany (della Porta, 1995), certain much criticized 'hard' police interventions - that eventually led to escalation - occurred during peaceful mass demonstrations 'infiltrated' by small radical groups. In such situations, the handling of law and order indeed called for a difficult equilibrium between control of the radicals and respect for the rights of the moderates. Moreover, especially in Germany in the 1980s, claims of police brutality often followed the authorities' decision to deploy units from different states to police protest events. In these cases, lack of coordination and a poor knowledge of the territory may have led to the escalation of conflicts, even when a strategy of de-escalation had been planned by the police leadership.[15]

If the image of a 'weak' police - especially when 'promoted' by political entrepreneurs - can produce fear in the public and calls for more 'effective' repression, the impression of having been 'defeated' will also have important consequences within the police. These consequences go beyond immediate reactions like promises to take revenge, and extend to tactical and structural changes. In Great Britain, a perceived police 'defeat' during a picketing action in Saltey in the 1970s led to the organization of a system of mutual aid between the various local police forces as well as to the establishment of a National Recording Center. Later on, the visible weakness of the police during the riots of the early 1980s allowed for an increasing specialization and armament of the 'anti rioting' branches (Waddington, 1996; Reiner, 1996). As Geary (1985: 127) has observed, 'It's only after you have been seen by the public to lose at one tactical level that you can escalate to the next level.'

The history of interactions between protestors and police is of great importance in explaining protest policing dynamics. Such interactions are the concrete expression of the national strategies developed to deal with challengers,

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[15] On escalation and unforeseen consequences of police intervention, see also Monet (1990).

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as mentioned above. For the police, the history of their relations with specific protest groups constitutes an important element in decisions on tactics to be applied. For this reason, the impact of the virtuous circle of less and less violence on public demonstrations has to be stressed. These mechanisms, however, are already taking us into the category of *police knowledge*, to which we now turn.

g) Police Knowledge and Protest Policing Styles

As police research has often revealed, the police is a bureaucracy with a very high degree of discretionality. Several studies have addressed the question of police behaviour, explaining the different strategies adopted by police officers and/or police units. In particular, a 'situational' approach relates police choices to environmental characteristics, while an 'attitudinal' approach concentrates upon the individual preferences of police officers (for a review see Worden, 1989). Both approaches share the persuasion that (a) a large degree of discretion exists in police behaviour, and (b) there are systematic variations (see, for instance, J.Q. Wilson, 1968). As Manning observed, 'Policing tends to be shaped by adaptations made by actors to structural patterns, to *the reality they perceive, construct and maintain'* (1979: 48-9, emphasis added). For a full understanding of protest policing styles it is not enough to look at the variables discussed so far. We also have to examine *police knowledge*; that is, the police's perception of their role and of the external reality. For organizational features, police culture, governments, public opinion and interaction with protestors to have an influence on protest policing styles, their input has to be taken up by the police and transformed into knowledge.

Why do we refer to the police's perception of their role and of external reality as 'knowledge' and not just as 'images'? A first reason is connected with the great discretionality that the police enjoy as an organization and as individual officers. In a reversal of the mechanism typical of bureaucracies, which sees increased discretionary latitude at the top of the hierarchy, the rank and file policemen on the spot hold a very extensive 'power of definition' of the situation. Police officers intervene first of all on the basis of their appreciation of the situation, and only in the second place on the basis of rules and regulations (Jessen, 1995: 32f.). In this sense, the police's perception of external reality serves as the equivalent of the specialized knowledge of other parts of the

bureaucracy.[16] It is not subordinate to rules and regulations contained in written manuals, but is at least equally important for the carrying out of police duty, and is not restricted to certain shortcuts and tricks of the trade taught by experience.

A second reason for the use of the term 'knowledge' can be found in the range and depth of police knowledge, which is not limited to fleeting images, stereotypes and prejudices, but extends to the core problems of protest policing. To give an example, Waddington (1996) calls the policing of protest in democracies 'intrinsically morally ambiguous: protesters are not criminals, but citizens participating in the political process; ... any conflict between protesters and the police tends to be a battle of moral equals in which both sides are seeking the approval of bystanders'. Interviews with police officers show that they are aware, precisely for this reason, that protest policing is a particularly delicate task. As a British superintendent observed, 'In our society if we arrest a man for stealing everybody else says, "serves him right", but where you get into an area where you are arresting a man in relation to his work [i.e. during a strike] then there are emotions involved here that are not as clear cut to the average guy as they are with the ten commandments for instance' (in Geary, 1985: 127).

A third reason for the use of the term 'police knowledge' lies in the interconnection of perceptions of external reality. These perceptions do not remain isolated images, but form a body of knowledge. To take the example of a feature of the police occupational culture, namely police images about protestors and demonstrations: the distinction made by the police between 'ordinary decent protestors' and 'professional protestors', which will be discussed in detail later, reflects the institutional pressure, i.e. the political impact (Waddington 1996). It is furthermore based on instruction and on past work experiences, and also represents an adaptation of general stereotypes developed by the police on disorders and disordered behaviour. Moreover, it take into account the dynamics of police interaction with some specific groups--since 'Demonstrators' and policemen's images reflect each other. The image the demonstrators have of the police will have an impact upon the images the police have of the demonstrators' (McClintock *et al.*, 1974: 102). In the final score, it is influenced by the media and public opinion in general, but also by a reflection

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[16] Max Weber defined 'specialized knowledge' as the knowledge acquired via a specific education, and 'service knowledge' as the knowledge - available only to the functionaries - of the concrete events, necessary to control the administration (1922 [1974: 735]).

on the media coverage of demonstrations. With police knowledge, we refer then to the police's 'construction of the external reality' (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

The way in which police knowledge translates into a protest policing style has been discussed in more detail as far as police stereotypes are concerned. The process works for protest policing in the same way as for police work in general: 'The action of the police, as a force of social control, depends of course on the received order (authorized demonstration or non authorized demonstration), but also on the images that the policemen have of those very groups they have to police. ... Control or dispersion of the demonstrators will be more or less brutal according to this image' (McClintock *et al.*, 1974: 102). In his explanation of the brutal police repression of disorders during the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, Donner (1990: 116) observed that the police believed that an army of demonstrators had planned to invade the city (as some movement literature had boasted an invasion of the city of between 100,000 and 200,000 demonstrators, while no more than 5,000 came). They also believed the 'threats' disseminated by Yippies as a sort of theatre provocation to 'burn the city down' or flood the city sewers with gasoline or dump LSD in the water supply (*Ibid.*: 116-7).

Stereotypes about protestors may overlap with those of other groups usually included in the (socially constructed) definition of public disorders. In their analysis of certain examples of public behaviour understood as constituting public disorder and in response to which public order law was or could have been used (with particular regard to youth gangs, football hooligans, vagrants and travelling people, industrial conflict, and inner city riots), Nicola Lacey, Celia Wells and Dirk Meure noted the presence of 'recurring themes': 'These recurring themes, although not universal, seem to be ideas of the *young*, *"outsiders"* such as immigrants, ethnic minority members or "agents provocateurs", of those whose *lifestyle deviates from the norm*, and of *disadvantaged socio-economic groups* as being especially implicated in public disorder or as posing a special threat to it ...' (1990, 71, emphasis added).

In addition to 'old' stereotypes, some of which like the 'conspiracy theory' enjoy a surprising life-span and vitality, 'new' ones can emerge during waves of protest.[17] In Great Britain, in the 1970s and 1980s:

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[17] Other widespread stereotypes are those of the *'rotten apple'* and the *'communist agitators'* (among others, see McClintock, Normandeau, Robert and Skolnick, 1974: 127-30).

[the] developments in training and the social and political agitation that brought them about compelled many police forces to find not only new skills but also new stereotypes to supplant, for the uniformed officer at least, the "villain" of the early days. These stereotypes derive not only from their own experiences and mythology but also from the enemies put before them, from time to time, by popular fears, by the media, or by politicians. Thus communists, leftists and subversives of all sorts find their place in a hierarchy of awkward citizens who may have to be contained on occasion if their assemblies are thought to be unstable or threatening (McCabe and Wallington, 1988: 43-4).

Stereotypes about one form of public disorder can spread to others. Taking the example of Great Britain again, it was observed that the experiences of the 1970s in Northern Ireland surfaced in the 'framing' of the riots of the early 1980s, and then spread to the policing of the miners' strike. Commenting on the *Tactical Options Manual* distributed in 1982 to senior police officers in Great Britain - a manual that introduced manoeuvres of an essentially military character, redirected police methods from the individual-oriented tradition to that of the team, and from the reactive tradition to a proactive one - McCabe and Wallington (1984: 50) commented:

The style of policing reflected in the Tactical Options Manual was consciously copied from the crown control methods developed in colonial police forces (such as Hong Kong) and in Northern Ireland. The manual gives little indication of any variation in approach where the circumstances of the disorder are an industrial dispute, and it is clear that this question was incidental to the perceived need for the manual. While the 1981 riots may have been the principal catalyst to the drawing up of the manual, and perhaps future urban riots the main intended occasion for its practical implementation, in the event the first full-scale use of the type of maneuvers envisaged was during the miners' strike, most spectacularly during the confrontations at Orgreave.... The experience of the riots and the developments in organization and management which they forced upon the police were largely instrumental in making effective the police control of the coal-fields during the twelve months of the miners' strike (McCabe and Wallington, 1984: 48-9).

More recent research has indicated however that policemen have quite complex images of demonstrators. Helmut Willelms and his collaborators (1988) discovered that policemen have surprisingly little knowledge of protestors' motives. Nevertheless, the image of demonstrators was found to be a complex one, in which 'peaceful demonstrators' are set in opposition to 'hooligans'. According to the policemen, 'Peaceful demonstrators have a pragmatic interest, and a clear aim, for which they engage themselves with a lot of involvement and credibility. They make use of their basic right to demonstrate. Normally, they

are peaceful demonstrators ... with a direct interest in the conflict ... They are willing to discuss, they are well informed' (Willelms et al., 1988: 153). The violent hooligans, instead, 'are not interested in the topic of the conflict, but only in rioting, in reducing their aggression in the struggle with the police. They are described as destructive and misinformed. They travel from demonstration to demonstration, are probably supported and financed by wire-pullers ... In comparison with the peaceful demonstrators, they are a relatively small group, many of them are very young, and for this reason are easy to influence. Normally, they are not interested in discussions' (*Ibid.*: 153-4).[18]

The police distinction between 'good' and 'bad' demonstrators is based on their conception of 'legitimate' protest. Legitimate protest, linked to social problems and organized by people aiming to make themselves heard in order to solve the problems, is sharply contrasted to protests by 'professional demonstrators', who upset public order because they enjoy provocation and revolt. This distinction is taken up by P.A.J. Waddington: 'good' or 'genuine' protestors, who are interested in a specific objective that they mobilize around, and 'the opposition'. The former are considered to be in good faith and, in general, protest for good reason; the latter are trouble-makers. '"Genuine protesters" consisted of ordinary people who rarely protest, but felt strongly about a specific issue and wished to express their grievance. "The opposition" were the "rent-a-mob" of the extreme left, who protested about virtually everything, which, in police eyes, disqualified them from genuinely feeling strongly about anything' (P.A.J. Waddington, 1994: 112-3). Furthermore, those who the police define as 'genuine protestors' rarely cause any trouble, which would translate into an excessive workload for the policemen deployed.

In the Italian case, the police sees the principle actors producing disorder in the 1990s as motivated not by political beliefs - considered to be 'noble' ends - but by an impulse towards 'hooliganism', which reflects the existence of social problems (see della Porta, 1996; and De Biasi, 1996),. In fact, a distinction is made between 'good' demonstrators, who protest to achieve comprehensible ends and are well organized in their actions, and 'bad' demonstrators, whose objectives appear to be more confused and whose actions are disorganized. Among the former category are 'workers' or 'family men' - according to the

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[18] A third group is also individuated: a group that is ready for violence, but only under certain conditions. This group considers violence as a means to be used when peaceful protest is unsuccessful or as a reaction to what they perceive as police provocation.

definitions of interviewees - who demonstrate in defence of their jobs or in favour of union claims, and who have both a long experience of demonstrations and a noteworthy capacity to manage them. Among the second category are the hooligans and young people from social centres, whose demands are considered at best to be 'confused', and whose behaviour often appears to be 'unpredictable'[19].

The police pass their judgement on the degree of legitimacy of a specific protest form or protest group, a judgement which inevitably influences their reactions, without consulting manuals or waiting for explicit orders from political powers. As Nigel Fielding observed, 'Discretion is the enduring problem. Few mothers and children have been prosecuted for disrupting traffic while demanding pedestrian crossings, a very common protest in the 1970s and the 1980s. Obstruction and even conspiracy charges could have been applied, if the group were not one to whom the police judged most people to be sympathetic' (1991: 77). It should be emphasized here that as far as the police are concerned, strategies of 'containment' - which imply a considerable underenforcement of the law - also bring with them problems of legitimation. Officially, the police justify their role as being merely one of 'technical' application of the law. When strategies of non-coercive control of public order are used, the selective application of the law raises the need to justify a discretionary power; as a consequence, the image of law enforcement being of a purely technical nature is weakened. The development of technical means for gathering information serves to 'negate' the existence of a discretionary power, through the pressing of charges for crimes not immediately 'punished'.

Police knowledge intervenes as a filter on all the levels of Figure 2, not only for the occupational culture of the police from which the example of stereotypes discussed above was taken. The presumed impact of organizational features such as centralization and militarization on police officers' perception of their role fuelled police reform efforts in various countries. As far as the legal framework is concerned, the underenforcement of the law, singled out as one of the most significant tendencies characterizing protest policing in the 1990s, provides a clear example of the way in which police knowledge acts as a filter. For instance, in his discussion of the *Brokdorf-Urteil* of the German federal Constitutional Court, Martin Winter emphasizes that it was the reception of this legal decision by the police which gave it its impact on protest policing.

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[19] Similar observations emerge from the French case study (Fillieule and Jobard, 1996).

Police knowledge works in the same way in terms of the impact that the political powers have on protest policing styles practised in specific cases. Waddington underlines the degree of police autonomy even in the face of ministerial decisions, which in the case of the already-mentioned anarchist demonstration was revealed in the police response to what they perceived as the abuse of institutional power for non-institutionalized purposes. The impact of police knowledge, however, runs deeper. It is again Waddington who emphasizes that 'institutional power is refracted through the lens of how the police define their task'. The London police do not need a specific order to protect the memorial to Britain's war dead from desecration, their knowledge of the consequences for their image should it be destroyed is sufficient. In Germany, there are cases of *vorauseilender Gehorsam* ('obedience in advance') (Winter 1996). In countries like Italy, where the police have a tradition of political dependence, the efforts of the police are oriented towards perceiving 'which way the wind is blowing'. As indicated in della Porta's contribution, the governmental change in Italy in 1994 led to a period of extreme caution for the police as they waited for political directives on the management of public order.

The police are not only conscious of the presence of the mass media at demonstrations, but are also knowledgeable about the mechanisms of media coverage. According to a British chief constable, the growth of the media accounted for the decline of the baton charge as a public order tactic, since 'to read about a baton-charge does not have the same impact as seeing it ... The development of the media must have had a tremendous effect on tactical thinking. You can imagine the significance, suddenly literally millions of people are able to see for themselves what ha,pens. I'm convinced that's why baton charges are no longer used. You can imagine the public outcry if people saw on television the police baton-charging pickets' (in Geary, 1985: 129). Along the same line, a British superintendent added: 'So we are very much aware of the media which controls to some extent police action. So that action, when it's seen on the film, has got to be seen to be reasonable. If we act unreasonably, then yes, we could alienate the public, not in the issue, but in the way that we deal with them. ... We have got to protect our image' (*Ibid.*: 130).

To conclude this discussion of police knowledge, it is worth underlining that a study of this subject must confront certain difficulties, beside the fact that it is not only written knowledge which is being analysed. An analysis of interviews with police officers will show that 'the' police and consequently 'the'

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police knowledge do not exist.[20] The control exercised over the police by political authorities, for instance, is perceived differently on different levels of the police hierarchy. In the British case, the more attentive awareness of senior officers seems to have had a restraining effect on rank and file members. As one inspector observed, 'These senior officers, they are into this low profile, softly, softly, community relations approach, and let these strikers get away with just about every offence short of murder.... We ought to just once move in hard - that's all it would take and we'd have no more problems. These senior officers, well, they are too scared to do that. They are worried about questions being asked in Parliament, about their chances of promotion, about being criticized, about whether they'd have to explain to Scarman why they did this, that, or the other, about whether the Home Secretary would call for a report, etc., etc.' (in Geary, 1985: 125). Furthermore, the police themselves do not appear to reflect critically on their construction of external reality as knowledge, interpreting it as 'experience' and 'on the job learning'. Police knowledge is therefore probably shifting and possibly contradictory, different for different levels of the police hierarchy and for different police branches.

III. ESCALATION AND DE-ESCALATION: THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROTEST POLICING

We can turn now to the effects of protest policing on social movements, and particularly on protest tactics. The social science literature provides us with several hypotheses on this point. Some scholars have stated that a reduction in repression facilitates the development of social movements. According to Skocpol (1979), social revolutions are triggered by political crises, which weaken political control and the state's capacity for repression. McAdam (1982) also indicated that reduction in repression acted as a facilitating factor, specifically for the civil rights movement. A high degree of repression has often been associated with radical behaviour on the part of challengers. Goldstein concluded his comparative analysis of political repression in 19th-century Europe by observing that 'those countries that were consistently the most repressive, brutal, and obstinate in dealing with the consequences of modernization and developing working-class dissidence reaped the harvest by producing oppositions that were just as rigid, brutal, and obstinate' (Goldstein, 1983: 340). Kitschelt (1985: 302-3) hypothesized that an illiberal political culture will push

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[20] On this point see also Winter, 1996.

movements to adopt antagonistic and confrontational positions. A comparative research of the German and the Italian cases (della Porta, 1995) indicated that a more tolerant, selective and 'soft' protest policing style favours the emergence and diffusion of protest. Repression often produces a shift in the aims of the protest itself, as Edward Escobar noted in a study of the Chicano movement in Los Angeles: 'In a dialectical relationship, while the Los Angeles Police Department's tactics partially achieved the goal of undermining the Chicano movement, the police and their tactics became issues around which Chicano activists organized the community and increased the grass-roots participation in movement activity' (Escobar, 1993: 1485). The reaction to police repression is a change in the protest focus from the single issue to the meta-issue of protest rights.

Other scholars, however, have reported less clear-cut outcomes. In a review of studies on the American protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, John Wilson (1976) observed that research indicates at certain times a radicalization of those groups exposed to police violence, at other times their retreat from unconventional actions. Similarly, contradictory findings can be integrated into a more coherent explanation if one assumes a curvilinear relationship between the challengers' violence and the repressiveness of authorities (see Neidhardt, 1989).[21] In della Porta's comparative study of Italy and Germany (della Porta, 1995, Ch. 3), it emerged that more repressive, diffuse and 'brutal' techniques of policing tend to discourage the mass and peaceful protest while fuelling the more radical fringe. In Italy, for instance, radicalization processes in the social movements coincided with a period of harder repression, during which police again killed demonstrators at public marches. Moreover, the belief that the institutions were involved in a 'dirty war' worsened the relationship between movement activists and state representatives. Conversely,

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[21] The complex relations between repression and social movement activities can probably be explained if we take into account the fact that protest policing influences both the costs and (expected) benefits of collective action. First, state repression represents one of the most relevant (potential) costs of taking part in collective behaviour. Even if other costs and benefits are taken into account - and even if collective behaviour is not always 'rational' - the weight of the cost defined by state repression would be difficult to overstate. But the form of repression influences the same grievances that spark protest in the first place, for example, by creating 'injustice frames' (Gamson, Fireman and Rytina, 1982). Therefore, the more 'repressive' the state, the higher the potential rewards of collective action, since the 'punishment' of the unfair state would become part of the expected rewards, and the need to 'do something' would appear all the more urgent to some activists.

the relative absence of radical strategies in Germany during the first half of the 1970s reflected the reformist attitude of the social-liberal government and a tolerant, selective and 'soft' protest policing. In both countries, the highest levels of repression coincided with a shrinking of the more politically-oriented wing of the movements, a decline that indirectly helped the most radical behaviour to prevail - as was the case, in particular, in Italy in the 1970s. The lower degree of violence during protest events in the following decade corresponded with an increasing tolerance for different forms of protest.

A last question relates to the *reciprocal adaptation of police and protestors' tactics*. The relationship between protestors and the police does not have a unique causal determination: we have observed that protest tactics influence police tactics through interactive processes. For instance, the escalation of the anti-nuclear protest in Germany involved the ritualization of the conflict between an increasingly militant wing of activists and an increasingly aggressive police. On one side of the conflict, in fact, a militant group began to organize, appearing at the various protest events and pushing for direct confrontation; on the other side, the state police, bolstered by police units from different states, used massive intervention tactics. A similar ritualization of physical confrontations - on a larger scale - occurred between the Italian police and protestors throughout the 1970s. These interactive processes must be taken into account in explaining the dynamics of escalation.

However, as mentioned, the general trend since the 1970s and 1980s has been towards more tolerant policing, which tends to institutionalize protest. This de-escalation seems to be based on a 'virtuous circle'. The 'institutionalization' of protest and social movements provides an additional reason to foresee the prevalence of more tolerant behaviour - also on the side of the police - as we can in fact expect that the more instrumental movement would have a greater interest in maintaining the support of public opinion. In particular, this would be true of those movements that are more strictly affiliated with a political party. The labour movement in Great Britain offers a good example for this point. Geary observed, in fact, that the trade unionists he interviewed were 'highly sensitive to the political implications of industrial disorder' and attributed their sensitivity to their 'close identification with the Labor Party' (Geary, 1985: 120). As one trade unionist stated, 'Miners are not fools. They almost all vote Labor and they are aware of the effect trouble at the picket line would have on the election' (*Ibid.*: 123).

The fact that violent behaviour tends to be more and more stigmatized can however produce new cycles of more repressive attitudes. In the late 1960s, Allan Silver (1967), commenting on a general trend towards increasing stigmatization of violence, observed the risk of no longer seeing the possibility of a political solution for violent behaviour. Observing the reactions to violent forms of protest in the 1980s, it seems that Silver was right. To provide just one example, writing about the 1980 Bristol riot, Joshua and Wallace stress the refusal of the Home Office and the national government to acknowledge the political and social reasons behind the events. The main reaction was instead the 'armament' of the police with aggressive riot equipment (the shock had been the fact that the police had had to withdraw from the St. Paul's district during the riots): 'Then in the space of a few weeks riot equipment and tactics once considered unacceptable, i.e. crash helmets, new riot shields, new protective uniforms, and the use of police Land-rovers to break up crowds became the norm. CS gas was used and officially sanctioned, as were water cannons, plastic bullets, and armoured police vehicles as "a last resort"' (Joshua and Wallace, 1983: 127).

This mechanism may be re-enforced by some of the police tactics characterizing protest policing in Europe today: the dominant 'soft' and tolerant protest policing style can also provoke violent reactions in the long run. In fact, the de-escalating efforts of modern protest policing may backfire. Waddington's research has in particular illustrated the potential of control which can be achieved with this tactic, a form of control which may result in making protest invisible. Should the police yield to the temptation to 'over-control' protest, protestors might get the impression that their demonstration was useless because invisible, and change to more spectacular tactics in order to make themselves seen and heard. Similar reactions may be provoked by the emphasis on large scale collection of information, which is also characteristic of the general trend towards increasing control.

These last observations lead to the question: In which direction will protest policing in contemporary democracies move? Will the adoption of a 'soft', tolerant, selective, legal, preventive, consensual, flexible and professional protest policing style be definitive? It is not our intention to foretell the future, but the results of the research presented give certain indications on the basis of those changes singled out for the police in the process towards more tolerant protest policing styles. Not only the character of these changes, but also the nature of the continuities in protest policing can give us an idea on the

reversibility of the trend towards a 'softer' and more tolerant protest policing style.

One theoretical possibility for a reversal of the trend is constituted by a change of the environment. Our research has shown that the police in their dealings with protest will react to shifts in the demands from outside. If these demands come from the government, the police are likely to fulfil them, even if they remain unconvinced about their usefulness or effectiveness, although they might voice protest. As historical examples show, police forces will fulfil demands by the government, even without regard for their correspondence with democratic rights. With this we do not wish to imply in any way that there are indications that such orders might be given, nor do we want to question the fact that democratic principles are more deeply rooted in today's police forces than in earlier periods. In most European countries, in fact, the visible government input in the wake of the 1960s has been predominantly in the direction of greater respect for democratic rights and consequently 'softer' protest policing - and there are no indications of a development in the contrary direction. However, the nature of the relationship between police and government is such that if a government were to order a change in public order policies, the police would feel bound to comply.

At least of equal importance to government input for the development of more tolerant protest policing styles is the pressure of public opinion, which over the last decades has veered in the direction of a growing acceptance of a wide range of previously condemned protest activities. This shift was perceived by the police and translated into a different policing of protest. The fact that the police followed this trend at least partly of their own accord (for instance, the *Münchner Linie* in Germany in the beginning of the 1960s was developed and initiated by the police president of the city) shows that the police do not by their very nature nor always call for restrictive or repressive responses. Underlying this attitude is the fact that a failure to perceive the preferences in the public would have to be paid for by a loss of legitimation, a fact about which the police are very conscious. Any such loss could be compensated only by the government's willingness to shield the police from criticism and to back the stepping-up of coercive and repressive measures, a policy possible only to a

certain degree.[22] In the absence of such support the police would not 'die in the ditch' for any abstract notions about order, but try to accommodate the demands of the public. In the same way, however, this means that the police will try to accommodate eventual demands by the public for 'harder' protest policing.

By following popular shifts, the police show a capacity to learn. Changes and learning processes of the police are initiated by an analysis of problematic public order interventions, i.e. the police learn by analysing their failures. These learning processes, however, are always reactive (see Winter 1996).[23] In their tactical and practical preparation for interventions, in fact, the police seem to rely to a large extent on a body of past experiences. This indicates the continuing utility of studying the traditions of police forces for an understanding of present developments, concentrating research on the everyday practice of protest policing. Over the last decades, the police forces in Europe have proved to be capable of incorporating new experiences into their body of police knowledge, making the continuation of a 'soft' and tolerant protest policing style more likely. The importance of the body of past experience, however, seems such that it prevents the police from anticipating change. Tactical and strategic errors in confrontations with new movements and protest forms may trigger off a relapse into an antagonistic protest policing style.

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[22] Even in totalitarian states, the police depended on the acquiescence and collaboration of the population. The sheer numerical relationship between the police, especially the political branch, and the population would have made any kind of policing based on pure coercion impossible. The Gestapo, for instance, was not ever-present, and if it seemed to be all-knowing, this resulted from the propagation of a respective myth and was based on large-scale cooperation or collaboration. On this subject see the contributions to Paul and Mallmann (1995).

[23] This is one of the explanations for the hypothesis that the police never change, which to an exaggerated extent is represented by Lüdtke (1992: 21). According to him, the impulse to 'clean up' disorder fast and thoroughly led to the temptation of the maximum application of force. Considering this configuration, for Lüdtke the fundamental changes in the political systems in Germany between the end of the 18th century and the 1980s prove to be of subordinate importance for policing styles. So too, the gradual changes within the police - professionalization, *Verrechtlichung* and restriction to 'security' - failed to touch their policing at the core. However, in view of the changes in protest policing styles that have occurred, such a hypothesis seems too absolute and too theoretical. For potential protestors, the difference between the practice of protest policing in the 18th century and in the 1980s is fundamental and quite reassuring as far as their bodily integrity is concerned.

Notwithstanding the changes in protest policing over the past 30 years, there are also significant elements of continuity. The police remain the state agency for the protection of order and security, which they establish, if need be, by means of force. The range of options for intervention theoretically open to the police has remained basically unchanged. As underlined several times, the dominant protest policing style in Europe is selective, i.e. different police styles are used for different actors. In this way, 'brutal' and repressive styles have survived. These styles are connected with the same kind of stereotypes about professional disturbers of the peace, conspirators, and so on as before. The difference today is that these stereotypes and protest policing styles are now applied only to a small minority among the protestors, whereas historically they were used against large sections of the population, such as the members and associations of the working-class movement. It is this kind of continuity in the role of the police, in the range of options theoretically open to them, and in the mechanisms with which they individuate and label 'dangerous' enemies that constitute the most important indications for a possible arrest or reversal of the trend towards 'softer' and more tolerant protest policing styles.

When we talk about a possible arrest or reversal of the trend towards 'softer' and more tolerant protest policing styles, we do not mean to imply a return to a large-scale application of antagonistic, 'brutal' and repressive protest policing. We do believe, however, that a partial reversal of the restriction of antagonistic protest policing to ever smaller groups is possible. A hypothesis states that what seemed to be a long-term trend towards 'softer' policing in England was shown to finish in a U-turn back to 'harder' policing. As Robert Reiner (1996) argues, the dynamics of modernization explain why the 'soft' style which prevailed in the 19th and a large part of the 20th centuries will be substituted by a 'repressive' style. In increasingly heterogeneous and fragmented societies, particular protests or disorders are more likely to be seen as single issues and not as a potential threat to the overall social order. 'Conversely the police are seen not as sacred totems of a disappearing national consensus, but as more or less effective deliverers of practical, specific services, measured by the same calculus as any other business-like enterprise. Paramilitary capacity may be regarded as abused on specific occasions without undermining the legitimacy of policing as such, in much the same way as objects of protest have become a series of single issues, not emblems of whole ways of life.'

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Figure 1: Variables relevant in order to define styles of "protest policing"

"brutal" versus "soft"
referring to the degree of force used

repressive versus tolerant
referring to the number of prohibited behaviours

diffused versus selective
referring to the number of repressed groups

illegal versus legal
referring to police respect of the law

reactive versus preventive
referring to the 'timing' of police intervention

confrontational versus consensual
referring to the degree of communication with the demonstrators

rigid versus flexible
referring to the degree of 'adaptability'

professional versus artisanal
referring to the degree of 'preparation'

Figure 2: A model to explain styles of "protest policing"
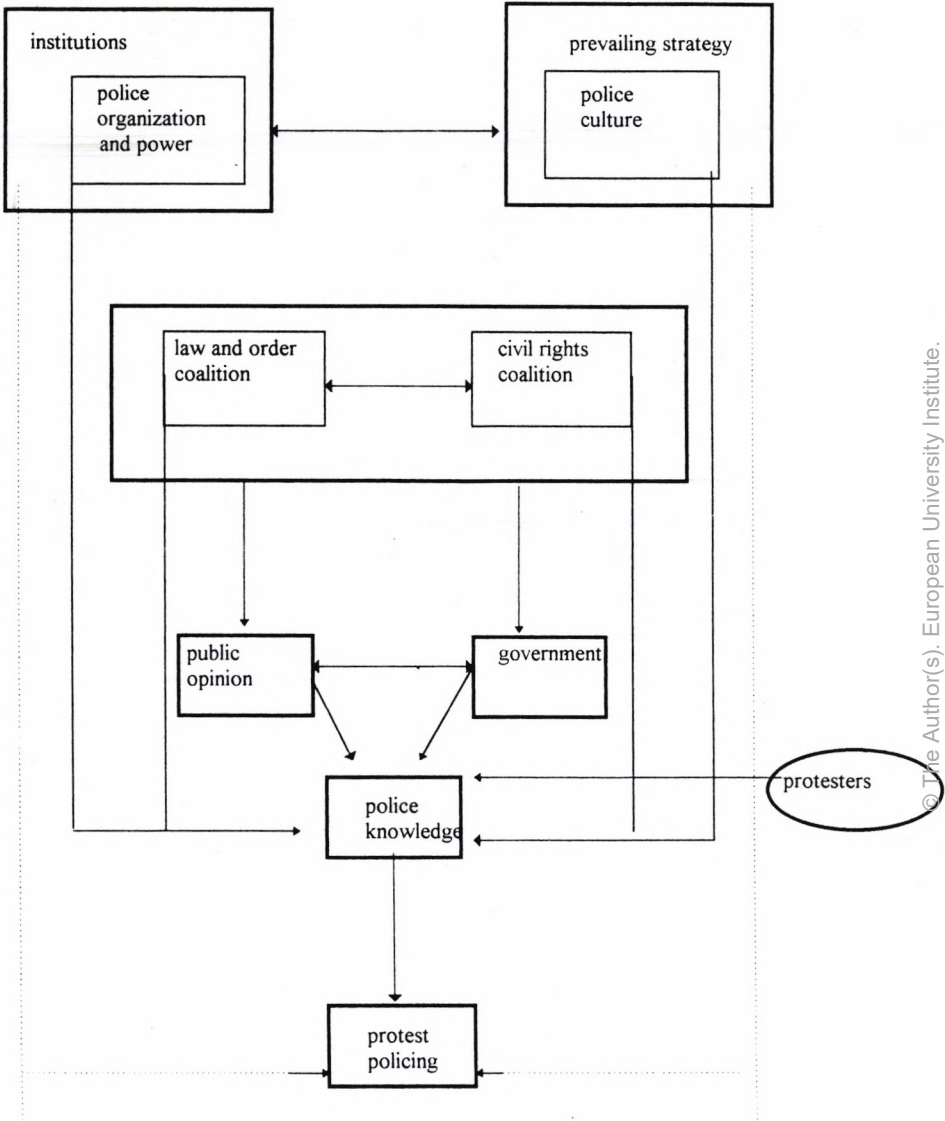
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