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Understanding the Basis of West Cameroon Police Service and Public Relations, 1961-1972

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Abstract

Police service and its concomitant community relations is cardinal in ensuring public tranquillity. Systematic measures and actions have been embarked upon by societies, institutions and national governments, over the years, to regulate social relations and ensure safety of its members as well as conformity to societal norms and values. Policing agents thus work in difficult and often dangerous conditions. Many serve far from home, intermittently deprived of family warmth while others are shot and killed in the line of duty. To many people, however, the institution has failed in its prima facie task of providing public security and as such, are viewed as peace predators and epitomes of unfettered corruption and abuse. This article contends that police service is quintessential to societal peace and a better assessment of police service should consider the ethics that orient the service. With the advantage of selected secondary sources and primary historical information in the main, the common notions about police service in society and the basic ethical principles and strategies that oriented the service of the West Cameroon Police (WCP) and relations with the public between 1961 and 1972 have been analysed to provide a platform for evaluating police work.

Keywords: German Colonial Constitution, Colonial Troops, Missionaries, Expulsion

Background

Security in West Cameroon (formerly Southern Cameroons) between 1961 and 1972 was assumed by the West Cameroon Police Force (WCP), the French-styled Gendarmerie and the Federal Security.¹ Prior to this, the territory was part of the German Protectorate from 1884 to 1916. Within

¹Consequent upon reunification between Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon to form a federation, hastened by the 11 February 1961 plebiscite, a police force was created for the State of West Cameroon complemented by the Gendarmerie and National Security institutions from the Republic of Cameroon who served as federal forces. This article however focuses on the West Cameroon State police institution whose origin, training and culture of service was dissimilar to that of federal forces.

this period, a police system, patterned after Peel's model² was introduced in Cameroon. After the signing of the Germano-Duala Treaty of 12 July 1884 and the drafting of the German Colonial Constitution of 1886-1888 for the German administration in Cameroon, the demand from missionaries' traders, explorers and administrators for security guarantees in their efforts towards penetrating the hinterlands and strengthening German rule in the territory was on the sway.³ The German government responded by creating the *Polizeitruppe*, a police force in the territory on 16 November 1891 to serve as the public security arm of the German Colonial administration.

The force, constituted of Krubos, Hausas, Dahomeans, Togolese, Sudanese and Kamerunians⁴ became inadequate to weather the storm of indigenous resistances to German rule.⁵ The Schutztruppe, Regular Colonial Troops (RCTs) for Kamerun was created on 9 June 1895 and charged with the task of preserving public order and security.⁶ The Police and the RCTs coexisted uneasily in Kamerun from 1895, enhancing German explorations, exploitation and pacification of the territory.

The mauling and expulsion of the Germans was carried out by a joint Anglo-French onslaught, assisted by Belgian troops who moved in from Belgian Congo. This military action resulted into the provisional partition of German Kamerun between Britain and France after an abortive attempt at instituting a condominium, proposed by France in the territory.⁷ The spheres allocated to Britain and France, became the League of Nations mandates under Britain and France, from 1922 to 1946 when the Trusteeship System was introduced and thereafter as Trust territories until 1960 for French Cameroon and 1961 for British Cameroons...Southern Cameroons that later became West Cameroon in 1961 was governed by Britain as part of Nigeria for purpose of administrative conveniences. Understandably, the policing of Southern Cameroons was an extension of British security arrangements for Nigeria.

Under British rule Bamilekes, Bamums (residing in Southern Cameroons), and recruits from Yola ethnic groups, and Southern Cameroonians were enlisted in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF)⁸ and posted to serve in the territory. That notwithstanding, reports from various Police Posts in Southern Cameroons between 1930 and 1959 indicated that the number of security personnel

²Most 'modern' police systems in the world were patterned after Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police of London. In his conception, the institution would be credible and relevant to the community if the following principles marked the force: the police should be under government control; have a military-like organisational structure and a central headquarter placed in an area accessible to the inhabitants; be made up of men who were even tempered, reserved and employed the appropriate type of discipline; officers who wear uniforms and display badge numbers so that citizens could easily identify them and, the police should not carry firearms but should receive appropriate training in order to be effective at work. See S. Bacon, *The Early Development of American Municipal Police: A Study of the Evolution of Formal Controls in a Changing Society* (Yale: Yale University Microfilms, 1969), 26.

³Eugene Zintgraff, one of the German explorers who penetrated the hinterlands through overland routes suggested after his first exploratory journey in Kamerun that the needed security challenge could be addressed by recruiting soldiers and labourers from the Western Grassfield. These soldiers could assist other Germans in penetrating the interior since the indigenous peoples who had knowledge of forest routes to inland markets were determined to prevent them. Also, Kurt Morgen who was commissioned by the German administration to explore the interior of Yaounde and the representatives of the Jantzen and Thormahlen firms who coveted the commerce of the interior witnessed cases of indigenous people resisting white traders in brutal styles. These experiences explained why the explorers, traders, and even missionaries become unrelenting in their demands for security forces to protect them.

⁴Harry H. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884 - 1914: A Case in Modern Imperialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 178.

⁵The Bakweri Resistance, 1891-1894, the Ewondo Resistance, 1895-1896, The Bulu Resistance, 1895 and 1898, The Bafut and Mankon Wars with The Germans, 1890-1891 and many other cases were instances of Cameroonian resistance to German Colonial rule, penetration and conquest of their territory. These clashes usually left behind several casualties

⁶Rudin, *Germans in Cameroons*, 194.

⁷Lovett Z. Elango, *The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon 1914-1916: History of a misunderstanding* (Limbe: Navi- Group Publications, 1978), 8. Elango's treatise provides an in-depth analysis of the Anglo-French condominium which dovetailed into the partition of Cameroon between France and Britain.

⁸Dinga Vincent Fokum, "The marriage of two Families" in *Sevir: Revue de la Police Camerounaise* (Juliet 1988), 30.

available to maintain law and order and the protection of persons was grossly inadequate.⁹ In this regard, the quest for an independent police force became part of the general discourse and struggle for statehood by Southern Cameroonians.¹⁰ On 1 November 1961 therefore, one month after the celebrations marking independence and reunification (1 October 1961), and in view of the departure of the British Grenadier Guards stationed in the territory to ensure peace and serenity before and after the February 1961 Plebiscite, the ex-servicemen, Cameroonian soldiers and policemen who opted to return to Cameroon from the NPF in the main, were constituted to form the WCPF. The total strength of the force was five hundred and ninety-one (591). This number increased over the years with the passing out of many from the Mutengene Police Training College (MPTC). Headed and seconded by a Commissioner of Police and an Assistant Commissioner respectively, the force was charged with the task of policing West Cameroon and in tandem with the French-styled Gendarmerie force and the Federal Security, ensured internal and external security of the Federation which lasted from 1961 to 1972.

To ensure success in this onerous task, the WCPF had to forge acceptable and friendly relations with the inhabitants for, in this relationship derived the legitimacy of police craft. The most common conceptual formulations for or against the relevance of police service in society hinges on the 'treatment' of 'community relations'. It is thus logical that an analysis of the deontological considerations that undergirded and oriented the WCPF service and rapport with the inhabitants of West Cameroon be prefaced by a somewhat cursory examination of the concepts that have emanated from an academic observation of police service over the years.

Common and Current Notions about Police Service in Society

Policing and security related concerns have never eluded any human polity. Historical knowledge from the regions of the world show that as soon as a people emerged from the primary stage of the family cell through the secondary stage of ethnic communities to organize themselves into a national society, one of the first goals was the organization of a security architecture to allay internal and external threats.¹¹ Though indispensable in traditional and modern societies alike, evident in the complex structuralizing of the service to address multiple security challenges, the concomitant introduction of modern methods of policing (new technology) with a slant on bettering 'community relations' so as to adequately police the population regarded as an incentive to effective public security, and the exigencies of democracy have instead scaled the relevance of police services to the society they served.

Bagayoko, in effecting a systematic categorization of security systems in former French colonies in Africa avers that the militarization of internal order resulted in a weakening of police forces in these states. He explained that police forces were often under-staffed and under-equipped thus rendering the institution ineffective in combating public insecurity. Under-paid, the security personnel were more frequently the most corrupt and the population viewed the institution as a threat or danger to the peace and order they conventionally preserved.¹² The basic logic behind this

⁹In 1934 for instance the District Officer for the Bamenda Division in a letter to the Commissioner, resident in Buea requested that the strength of the Bamenda detachment be augmented by three Constables because Police duties in outlying areas for some time have often resulted into the station strength being reduced to the barest minimum at the expense of station beats. In Mamfe Division, Sergeant H.N. Harcourt on behalf of the Divisional Officer also requested the Commissioner of Police, resident in Buea, increase the Mamfe detachment was just adequate and no more to carry on ordinary duties. With the absence of four or five men in addition to ten days of every month, Harcourt noted, it would be hardly possible to carry on. He noted further that there were times the station was so denuded of police that he had to use Native Court messengers to effect Protectorate court service and at other times had to delay for three days before sending out to investigate a crime as there literally was not a man to send. See Pb1959/1, Police Force Strength, File No. B.18/557, Pb 1959/1, Letter No. M.83 vol. 111/479, 17 July 1935, National Archives Buea (NAB).

¹⁰The political talks in Southern Cameroons that dovetailed into the creation of a WCPF and which was part of the wider debates for autonomy, was the focus of another article by authors entitled 'Political discourse on the Security Situation in Southern Cameroons 1959 – 1961: A Historical Appraisal'.

¹¹Pb (1968)1 "lecture on Police Services, their Organisation and Missions (their Role in Defence) given by the Director of Federal Security, National Archives Buea (NAB), Cameroon.

¹²Niagale Bagayoko, *Security Systems in Francophone Africa* (Sussex: Institute of Development Studies (IDS), 2010), 31.

thread of reasoning was overtly that public security was not guaranteed by a poor and corrupt police force. This climate of opinion was also accentuated by the fact that in Africa for example, police forces have often been victims of political misuse, treated as secondary to the army both in status and logistics. The corollary, in addition to loss of public confidence in the institution, has been the de-legitimization of the public police, recourse to private sources of security and protection like vigilantes' groups and company security.¹³ In Bagayoko's thinking the irrelevance, inferior status and consequent limitations in public service performance by the police is caused. Understandably therefore, the emasculation of the institution from politics and improvement on its logistics at par with other policing agencies like the Army and the Gendarmerie would improve performance and attract public panegyrics.

Closely connected to the views of Bagayoko was the theoretical stand of Ehrlich. To him, definitions bordering on the role of the police in any society should avoid the risk of esteeming too greatly their significance. Police craft in his conception was not the "thin blue line" that saved society from being inundated by chaos and depredation. The safety of persons and tranquility of society according to Ehrlich therefore rests on other factors. Hence, he acquiesced to the biblical maxim that "Except the LORD keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain" and argues strongly that society would not go to pieces even if the state exercises no coercion whatsoever, neither will it be saved even if half of its population takes on policing.¹⁴ Security in any society therefore would not be jeopardized with the absence or presence of security personnel because of the presence of an almighty arm overseeing the activities of earthly polities.

Perhaps the parochial, narrow and dim-wittedness of Ehrlich's definitional stance on police service derives from his inadequate knowledge of the operations of the Divine in the affairs of men. Though the Almighty created the earth and everything therein, He will always be in want of man to administer the earth. This administrative principle is enshrined in the understanding that – 'the heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.'¹⁵ This clarification espouses the fact that if human security is tied to the Divine then man is indispensable in bringing it to reality since the earth is man's jurisdiction. Policing agencies fulfil this role.

Bittner therefore, maintains that Ehrlich's opinion was quite misleading in its implications. Though he rejected the view that the health of any society lay at the mercy of the police, he acknowledged that the presence of the police made life in society safer and more orderly. To him therefore, the police were of "one cloth" with the society they serviced.¹⁶ This social contract however does not suggest that the police were flawless. In point of fact, policemen were quartered on the perimeters of justice and order in anticipation that their presence would dispel and deter the axis of darkness and chaos and by so doing, spare the inhabitants of society direct confrontations with the dreadful and the terrible. Bittner found in this task the reason for disparaging police service because those who battled against evil could not themselves lived up fully to the ideals they presumably defended. He thus advocated for the police but cautioned that the men were not void of frailties. They were ambivalently feared and admired but no amount of their services to the public could completely efface the fact that there was something of a 'dragon in the dragon slayer.'¹⁷ Hence the police institution was to be coveted but not without bearing in mind that it was a morally stained profession.

These conceptual formulations about police service undoubtedly emanated either from logistical deprivations that caricatured police service or frailties of the officers that alienated a cross-section of the public who placed the profession comparably at a footnote position in their scale of service preferences. This article does not argue for or against the relevance of police service in any community for this is irrelevant in modern society wherein the institution exists complexly and serves

¹³Ibid., 63.

¹⁴Eugene Ehrlich, *Fundamental Principles of the Sociology of Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 71.

¹⁵Psalms 115 : 16.

¹⁶Egon Bittner, *The Functions of the Police in Modern Society: A Review of Background Factors, Current Practices and Possible Role Models* (Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, 1970), 119.

¹⁷Ibid., 7.

in almost every state. Considering, that these formulations reflected the cause and consequence of police craft, the line of thought upheld in the paper, is that, a better assessment of police service to the public should be predicated upon the principles that orient their public relations and service from one society to the other. The principles that conventionally guided the relations and service of the WCPF with the inhabitants of West Cameroon will be considered in this write-up.

Deontological Basis of Police Service in West Cameroon

The police in West Cameroon, though administratively answerable to the West Cameroon government, cooperated among themselves and other arms of the state to serve the public. The structure, training, functions and work ethics of the police were oriented towards serving the citizenry. By implication, therefore, any assessment of police service in West Cameroon without considering the inhabitants as an essential variable was to be absurd and limited. The focus on police duties demanded peculiar characteristics from the law enforcement officers that was to enable them earn the respect of the people of West Cameroon.

Police officers were expected to master their stated functions and serve within the limits of laid down rules. Their prime and general duties were to prevent crime, detect and apprehend offenders, the preservation of law and order, protection of life and property and the enforcement of State laws and regulations with which they were directly charged. To ensure that these functions were adequately executed, the police force was divided up into different and inter-related sections as already discussed. The MWP moved in swiftly to maintain law and order when the need arose, the Capital Detachment assigned responsibility to various officers and detailed many to beat duties, the Department of Information and Crime, and the Motor Transport Department took charge of traffic problems.¹⁸

For the proper execution of this wide range of duties, police officers were conferred power to search, seize and secure anything believed to have been stolen or used for illegal purposes. They also had power to arrest, detain and search persons suspected to be engaged in anti-social and criminal activities. The utilization of these conferred powers, made the police officers to regulate assemblies and processions, ensured that road users did not endanger the lives of the people, took care of property that was lost and found, maintained law and order and above all guard against subversion and ensured the security of the state.¹⁹ With such powers, especially to arrest, every member of the force from the highest to the lowest rank who did not possess the basic professional skills was a danger to the public, the Police Force and the Government.

Against this background, any shortcoming on the part of a police officer verging on untruthfulness required proper restraint by the hierarchy, control or transformation into an honest and reliable member of the force. In situations where the actions could defame the force, the officer was reprimanded, transferred or removed from the post by the concerned disciplinary organ to avert harm being done to innocent people.²⁰ The police officer therefore was expected to be unique in character so as to win public admiration. Just as a doctor is judged by the accuracy of his diagnosis, a surveyor by the accuracy of his plans, a police officer was primarily judged by the way he conducted enquiries and in the investigation of crime to its logical end. He was a failure if, in his investigations, he failed to notice the obvious facts and draw reasonable deductions from them and to enable him act properly. Considering that police officers were also tested by the manner in which they conducted their investigations or enquiry, it was expected that in investigating a complaint, they should enquire first into the case, then test the complainant's story and if found to be true, to seek circumstantial and other evidence to support it.²¹

¹⁸Address by His Honour, the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, A. N. Jua, at the passing out parade of police recruits in police college, Mutengene, 1968, NAB.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰PB 1961/1 message of the Prime Minister to the West Cameroon Police Force: "Responsibility in the West Cameroon Police Force" 14 July 1965, NAB.

²¹Ibid.

This understanding was to undergird police relations with the public from the time the force was created in 1961. After four years of police service in West Cameroon, however, Commissioner Ntune in July 1965 remarked disapprovingly of their relations with the public:

Relations between the police and the public in this country cannot be said to be good, and it must be the immediate endeavor of every P.O [Police Officer] to cultivate as rapidly as possible an improvement in relations with the public.²²

According to the security thinking of the Commissioner of Police, relations with the public were not to be limited to the realm of sloganeering. It was to be practical because good relationship with the public was one of the most important contributions towards good policing. Driven by this need, the Commissioner directed that a special chapter in the Force Orders be devoted entirely to the ways and essentials of good relations with the public. The variables therefore which made up for good relations with the public are worthy of examination.

A key virtue that improved police relations with the public was character and conduct. A police officer was to possess an irreproachable character and conduct and his efficiency was evident from his knowledge of his duties and the outward signs of an alert hearing and a smart appearance. It was considered difficult for an officer of the force to maintain the public regard due him while his efficiency was in any way impaired with the public. This was because the public judged the efficiency of the service of the officers by the manner in which they conducted themselves and dealt with situations which occurred. The police secured good relations with the denizens by being personal good examples. By extension, personal police abilities were required for them to work in harmony with other forces in West Cameroon which carried out the same duties. Minister Muna felt that police exemplary character produced good relations generally in West Cameroon when he stated in July 1968:

Your good example will clean and strengthen the force. Your good example will enable public confidence to grow in the force. Your good example will make it easy for all Police officers to work in harmony with other forces of law and order, like the Gendarmerie and Army... just as the college has trained local authority staff, West Cameroon Government staff, and Federal staff, all police officers are expected to serve all Cameroonian citizens... Let us remind ourselves further that, so long as the duties of the police have to do with efficient prevention and detection of crime, the protection of life and property and preservation of public tranquility, these duties are similar to those of the Gendarmes and of the Soldier... It is only normal that all these forces work as comrades in arms, as collaborators with a common objective, and as fellow citizens who value cooperation and mutual understanding.²³

Another essential quality which was coveted by police officers and which ensured better relations with the populace was local and general knowledge. This knowledge was vital both for the good performance of police work and for the guidance of the public they were recruited to serve. A police officer who knew his area and had lost no opportunity of broadening his outlook in the wider field of general knowledge was in a fair way to command the public respect upon which much of his success was predicated.²⁴ It behooved police officers therefore to learn about their beat area or jurisdiction of service and to advantage themselves of the libraries available in some police divisions in West Cameroon so as to efface any intellectual depravity that would render them ineffective in the line of duty.

Furthermore, police officers were expected to be impartial and courteous. Considering that the law in West Cameroon was no respecter of persons, police officers who embodied the day-to-

²²West Cameroon Police Force Orders, July 1965, NAB.

²³Address by His Honour, the Prime Minister of West Cameroon at the passing out parade of police recruits, in police college, Mutengene, July 1968.

²⁴West Cameroon Police Force Orders, 1.

day administration of the laws were to be absolutely impartial, showing neither fear nor favour in carrying out their duties. A policeman had to bear in mind that it was his duty to help members of the public, no less than to apprehend guilty persons. The police was a servant of the public and consequently, he/she was expected to treat all law abiding citizens, irrespective of their social position, with unfailing patience and courtesy. According to Ntune, “courtesy is the most essential quality of all, and one which will smooth many paths. With it goes its complementary quality-good temper”.²⁵

A.N. Jua viewed impartiality of the police officers as a crucial part of police discipline and which was necessary for officers to be respected within the hierarchy of the force and without:

Every member of the force must offer the highest degree of conduct and good discipline and show himself at all times to be possessed of meticulous conducts behavior and the strictest impartiality. A member of the force must not lay himself open to disciplinary action or court action and where members of the force... lay themselves open to such action they immediately lose the respect and the confidence of their subordinates and their superiors. The question thus arises: How can such an officer carry out his duties properly? How can he expect the public to lay their trust confidence in him? How can he expect the public to co-operate with him in enforcing the law if he has shown himself incapable of abiding by it? Of course, we are all human beings and we can all err but there are various degrees in which a person can err, but a member of the force who errs to the extent that he places the good name of the force in jeopardy is a person who has not the public interest at heart.²⁶

From the above, it is understandable that if the police had to pursue good relations with the public, they had to win their confidence as well. The good will of the law-abiding public was quintessential in the successful execution of police duties. It was therefore absolutely imperative that police officials in West Cameroon covet, obtain and retain the confidence of the public in order to adequately police them. If members of the force were looked upon with respect, it was argued, as a friend and person in whom trust could be reposed, co-operation with the public would be eased. Where this cooperation was not enlisted, the police unavoidably bore the blame owing to the fact that it was by their being, conduct, efficiency and proof of impartiality that they attracted the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the law-abiding public. Considering that the only enemy the public had was the criminal who did not respect law and order, the only means the police had to defeat the enemy was by securing the complete and ready co-operation of the populace at all times since the criminal lived with them.

A courteous police officer also needed tact to liaise the relations between the police force and the public. To do this he was expected to be careful to avoid causing unnecessary embarrassment to any individual. The employment of tact enabled the public to comply with directions and thus the necessity of employing force, however slight, with its aftermath of complaints, was obviated.²⁷ During the six months training at the Mutengene police college, the fundamental principles of preparedness, wakefulness, vigilance, foresight, prevention and detection of crime were systematically ingrained into the psyche of the police students as the basis to successfully save the lives of the fellow citizens. That notwithstanding, the police officer enriched with such security virtues needed to have personal confidence. He should be honest, correct any shortcomings that could be displeasing to the public because though his primary task was to prevent crime and detection of the offender, he was to be judged by the citizens individually and the public collectively.²⁸ It was the police officers who were versatile in the mentioned virtues that actually erected for themselves, the police force and the nation a monument of national pride.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Responsibility in the West Cameroon Police Force” 4.

²⁷West Cameroon Police Force Orders, 2.

²⁸Press Release, No. 4876, 15 February 1966, NAB.

In essence, therefore, honesty and faithfulness, impartiality and incorruptibility, smartness and sharpness, discipline and courtesy, foresight and insight, cooperation and understanding were the “only qualities” which gave meaning to the *esprit de corps*, motto of the police force, and enabled the growth of public confidence in the WCPF. By extension, these qualities were to encourage other forces of law and order in West Cameroon to emulate what was good in the Police Force in a bid to effectively police the territory.

The premium attached to the police force by dint of their wide and delicate duties to West Cameroonians, made the police administration to mandate all police officers to pronounced and sign a declaration by oath in a manner which was most binding on their conscience. They solemnly and sincerely declared that they would be faithful and bore true allegiance to the Head of State and that they would faithfully serve the Head of Government and all the people, obey all orders of the Head of Government and all senior police officers.²⁹ After the oath, police officers were expected to carry out their duties faithfully. Hence it was not consonant with police ideals in West Cameroon for a police officer to abet or excite mutiny, cause or countenance subversion, sedition or any disobedience, hide information concerning subversion of any kind. They were not also expected to make false declarations, or to commit perjury just to ensure that an accused person was convicted.

Above all, they were not to receive bribe especially as bribery infects justice and undermines public confidence in any force. It was in this light that the WCPF imbibed the practice of ‘crying down credit’ common with the NPF in their operations. This was the practice observed during the creation of police stations. The Commissioner of police during such occasions, rallied the inhabitants of the area and in the presence of the policemen earmarked to serve therein, warned them to the effect that anyone who would give bribe of any kind to any of the officers, allow them drink or smoke in public while in uniforms, did so at their own peril. This indeed was the ethics and deontological disposition of the WCPF. They were also sensitized on the role and functions of the policemen so that they could not be easily manipulated by the officers.³⁰ This exercise established the basis of understanding and conviviality between the police and the inhabitants. It was still in an effort to ensure that the public was not estranged from the force that the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Muna, in 1968, intimated that the future of their career in the force would depend on how honestly they signed their Declaration and:

how faithfully and sincerely you serve your fellow citizens and our Government; it will depend on how honestly, sympathetically and politely you deal with members of the public; it will depend on how well you cooperate with fellow policemen, and with other arms of state and national security.³¹

It behooved the police officers of West Cameroon therefore, to learn how to be powerful without being oppressive and to be efficient without being officious in the execution of their policing duties.

Another means to forge good relations with the public was for police officers to avoid daily occurrences which could be harmful to the said relations. Nothing was more detrimental to good relations with the public than unduly detaining or delaying persons having business at a police station. They had to be attended to immediately on their arrival and except in cases of emergency, they were not to be asked to wait. This was cardinal and if public relations were to be obtained, sustained and improved, the practice of members of the public having to wait around stations until their complaints were heard, was to be eradicated with promptitude. In addition, persons who made complaints either on the beat or in the station were to be treated with full respect and civility³² so as to encourage the public to be free to access police public avenues (beat areas, stations and offices) to report issues bordering on security. This remained important because the success of police work was predicated largely on information gotten from the public.

²⁹Address by His Honour, The Prime Minister, 2.

³⁰Interview with Sylvester Wacham, 81 years, retired Policeman who served in the WCPF upon its creation in 1961, Ndamukong, Bamenda, 4 April 2019.

³¹Ibid., 3.

³²Ibid.

Inconvenience to the public was another contributing factor to defective relations that needed to be eradicated. Inconvenience was caused to the public when for example “A” reports to a station, either in the form of a complainant or as an informant a case which occurred in another station area. The station officer sends him away to the station of the area in which the complaint originated, taking no other steps to assist the complainant or informant. In this case, the informant would keep making needless visits to a station. Also, when beat men or police investigators fail to record statements of witnesses to a case on the spot resulting in the witnesses making day-to-day visits to the station as the case was being investigated, these visits usually justified on grounds that their cases were “awaiting developments, hence the routine “report again tomorrow” was bound to instill ill feelings in the public for the force.

Inconvenience to the public could also be caused when policemen became officious and so shout at the public unnecessarily and when assistance to a complainant or plaintiff was not given immediately. Again, when all ranks failed to maintain a sense of proportion in dealing with minor infringements of the law, the population would become reactive. In West Cameroon, persons who committed minor contraventions and traffic offences were not considered criminals and were not to be treated as such. Even though they broke the law, they were to be treated with courtesy and consideration and where a prosecution was initiated; it was to be by means of summons and not by arrest except the circumstance was such that the latter course was unavoidable.³³

Police Strategies to enhance Good Relations with the Public

While the considerations mentioned above were some principal essentials which could contribute to good relations between the police and the public, there were other means at the disposal of the police force which were conducive to good relations. The WCPF for instance, had women police as a constituent part. By 1965 there were four women police in the force; including one female Inspector of Police.³⁴ This segment of the police force was concerned with the welfare of women and children. It was estimated that the efficient dispensing of their duties that hinged on sensitizing and assisting children on basic security measures were naturally made by the population to become enraptured by the police.

The women police and the entire police force were also trained to administer first aid to injured or accident victims of the public. The administration of first aid was one of the few things that demonstrated vividly and clearly the true role of the police officer in his relation with the public. The more members of the force of all ranks who were qualified to give skilled help to injured persons in accidents and other emergencies, the better the chances of furthering goodwill and understanding between the police and the public.

Police sports and social activities were also useful in bringing the public into contact with the police in a non-official capacity and thus enhancing better understanding on both sides. For sports and games to enhance friendly relations with the public, it was essential for it to be done in the spirit of friendly rivalry rather than of cut throat competition. The absence of true sporting spirit and too much emphasis on winning the game rather than playing it for its own sake would make whole value of sporting events as an aid to good relation to be lost and on the contrary become a source of friction.³⁵ For the police to translate their sporting activities into veritable tools for fostering congeniality with the public, they ought to learn to be good losers and modest winners.

The recognition of these hiccups to police task and scrupulous observation of the forgoing points constituted the basis for a better understanding between the public and the police and improvement in the difficult and responsible task of the police officers - the preservation of law and order. Police relations with the public and service in West Cameroon, was guided by the aforementioned considerations and strategies.

³³Ibid., 3.

³⁴West Cameroon Police Annual Reports, 1965, 45. By December 1905, there were four women police in the West Cameroon police Force including one police inspector

³⁵West Cameroon Force. Orders, 2

Conclusion

The academic debates hinging on police craft and which questions the relevance of the institution in society emanates from the logistic limitations or deprivations on the institution. It also stems from negative idiosyncratic department of some police officers. This study has not legitimized or condoned police excesses in the line of duty owing to their comparable logistic inferiority neither is it an advocacy for the elimination of the policing institution on account of personnel misdemeanors. The article has provided the basis of WCPF service and relations with the public arguing the police work in the community is guided and should be evaluated through the lenses of its deontological principles.

Police officers who mastered the norms of their profession and executed their assigned task within the limits of laid down rules and conferred powers, cherishing the virtues of truthfulness, impartiality and courteousness stood a better chance of attracting public sympathy and empathy. It was the same for a police agent whose work evinced practical attributes like preparedness, wakefulness, vigilance, foresight and insight, smartness and tactfulness in liaising public relations. In addition to these, discipline, courtesy, team work and other qualities that gave meaning to the *esprit de corps* were necessary determinants of growth in public confidence in the WCPF necessary for successful policing.

The WCPF was also organized strategically to better address insecurity in West Cameroon. For instance, the women police department and police sports were carefully developed and organized to touch-base with peoples of all walks of life and allay public fear for uniformed officers. Admittedly, the assessed principles and strategies were expected to cause the population to be enraptured by the police, and thus provide the link needed to adequately police them. It is also worth noting that security officers who neglected the ethics and ethos of policing in the line of duty, and became officious, corrupt and lacking in civility, justifies the negative popular conceptions about police service. This will also have a heavy ripple and reverberating effect on the stability of the state and security hygiene in communities.

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