

PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS*

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A common characteristic of all events and situations designated as emergencies is that they call for unusual efforts by individuals and/or unusual commitments of resources by organizations and communities, often with little advance warning. Accordingly, when we treat a breakdown or a mechanical failure, an injury or a major disaster, a disruptive event or massive civil disorder, or any other potentially damaging circumstance as an "emergency", we do so, not because of the special and spectacular nature of the event, but rather because we anticipate or observe effects of a scope and intensity that lie beyond the capacity of routine remedies. The point, on which we rarely insist in everyday discourse, is that the emergency character of a situation inheres in the extraordinary and extreme demands made, demands that can be met only by a considerable amount of improvisation and that threaten to tax seriously the capacity of some organized behavior system.

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ELEMENTS AND STRATEGIES OF PLANNING

The above distinction between an emergency and the event or external circumstances that act as its precipitating cause is the point of departure for our discussion of planning. To plan means essentially to create a structure with prescriptions for dealing with a range of anticipated contingencies. Elements within the structure of any plan include: (1) an ordering of goals in terms of some scheme of priorities; (2) the allocation, within the framework of these priorities, of available resources to achieve these goals; and (3) the development of routines in anticipation of contingencies whose characteristics and requirements can be predicted. Allocations are made within a structure that defines and limits the area of discretion within which spur-of-the-moment decisions with far-reaching implications must be made. *The basic goal of planning for extraordinary circumstances, it can be stated categorically, is to prevent them from creating an emergency.*

Routines, as well as clear definitions of when they are to be applied, are more easily developed where the occurrences with which they deal fall within the range of normal everyday experience. In hospitals, for example, the handling of "emergency" cases follows routine procedures. A fire, though an emer-

gency for its victims, is part of a fireman's daily work. A community will develop plans for coping with "emergencies" when they occur. Thus mining towns are better equipped on all levels to cope with situations that constitute a disaster. The extraordinary circumstances develop into what we have called an emergency only if inefficiencies, shortages, impending breakdowns, and so forth disrupt the usual means for coping with them.

Advance preparation and planning to improve performance in what may become an emergency reflects either a specific or a general strategy. A *specific* strategy presupposes that the major elements in the situation can be predicted in advance. Hence a plan will identify the objectives to be achieved, allocate priorities, prescribe the risks and costs to be incurred, and fix the appropriate procedures. In addition to anticipating as much as possible the precise contingencies within the situation, there must be routines for the quick and effective communication of information so that the needs and the resources to meet them can be quickly and accurately assessed and fitted into the order of priorities. Finally, there will be advance rehearsal of procedures deemed to constitute adaptive responses to those elements that can be anticipated. Any specific strategy involves a prior commitment and hence imposes some degree of rigidity.

A *general* strategy, by contrast, is geared toward flexibility to cope with the very elements that cannot be predicted in advance. Here the emphasis in planning is on a general priority of goals, with the allocation of resources and the means of achieving specific goals left to the discretion of those in the best position to judge. Measures embodying a general strategy are above all designed to stimulate resourcefulness, either by training in the solution of novel problems or by providing special incentives for innovation and initiative. The most troublesome task is to coordinate the adaptive responses spontaneously made by individuals and subgroups with one another. Lack of con-

trol may lead to complete breakdown at the community level, even while subgroups are effectively reacting to some of the unanticipated elements that caused the emergency.

THE EMERGENCY AS COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

Plans for operations under extraordinary circumstances, when influenced by social research, have usually taken the disaster as a model. Hence the focus has been on how to organize and effectively plan for rescue and other activities specific to the cause, nature, and impact of the disaster, the two-fold goal being to improve performance while preventing, limiting, and overcoming any disruptive behavior. In this respect a great deal of practical experience has been accumulated by groups whose members (like those in the various protective services, the medical and para-medical professions, and certain volunteer organizations) normally participate in so-called "emergency" operations. We could not possibly summarize all the lessons to be drawn from their experiences, and this paper will make no attempt to deal with the technical aspects of these operations. The approach is different. The perspective is analytic rather than prescriptive. Specifically, it endeavors to come to grips with some general problems relevant to planning and to do so within the theoretical framework of collective behavior. (This perspective is further detailed in Lang and Lang, 1967.)

Collective behavior is that field of sociology which deals most explicitly with the sequences and patterns of interaction that emerge in problematic situations of all types, emergencies being but one illustration. A situation is problematic insofar as the conventionally shared expectations break down and participants therefore lack adequate guides for orienting their conduct. Specifically, the presence within a situation of novelty, attrition, crisis, choice, competitiveness, conflict, or any com-

bination of these, contributes to the problematic, and collective behavior in these circumstances is inevitably bound more closely to what participants feel and directly experience at the particular moment than in situations more completely structured. These same elements of novelty, attrition, crisis, choice, competitiveness, and conflict can also contribute to the partial breakdown of structured activity in extraordinary circumstances. Each of these elements and its bearing on the planning of emergency operations will be discussed below. Responses under these conditions, before routines are re-established, are viewed as collective problem-solving.

From this perspective, let us probe a little more deeply into the conceptual distinction between an emergency and the event or extraordinary circumstance that acts as its precipitating cause. Any emergency caused by an external event (for example, a flood, a blackout, a Presidential assassination) can be further aggravated by ineffective problem-solving activity, whose disruptive effects pose additional problems – especially if the behavior of individuals or collectivities interferes with a remedial response. In other instances, however, the emergency is solely a function of the disruptive behavior itself. Civil disorders, traffic snarls, or hysterical epidemics can precipitate an emergency with the activities taken collectively, rather than some external event, as precipitating cause.

It may be useful to view the two types of emergencies – the one where disruptive behavior enters as a dependent variable, the other where it functions as an independent variable – as two successive phases within a sequential chain. This follows on the simple postulate that all disruptive behavior can be related to some set of antecedent conditions, even if their bearing on the behavior is not directly visible. For example, reports on what caused civil disorder in the Watts district of Los Angeles, which clearly brought on an emergency, identify a wide range of events whose

cumulative effects, operating over time, provoked the outburst. Emergency operations obviously did not deal with these causes because, at the time, their exact nature was not clearly recognized and they could not, in any event, have been eliminated by decisive action on the spot. In other instances, however, the time sequence within which events occur is greatly compressed, the precipitating events highly visible, and the disruptive behavior likely to cease with decisive remedial action aimed at the removal of the cause, as in many kinds of disaster.

In the second phase, the behavior itself rather than the precipitating events stands out most clearly. The assumption here is that some disruptive behavior is characteristic of every emergency because the type of collective response to be made is itself problematic. Thus every emergency involves individual behavior, mass behavior, and organizational behavior* that are in some way responses to the underlying problem but that may at the same time contribute to the disruption of routines.

We turn now to the problematic situations that underlie all collective behavior and spell out some implications they have for the type of response to be anticipated under extraordinary circumstances. Taken up in order are: the importance of the degree of *novelty*; the effects of the extreme nature of the demands that, in different contexts, can culminate in *attrition or crisis*; and, finally, the implications of a variety of conflicts involving *choice, competition*, and mutual antagonism (*intergroup conflict*) that are at least endemic in any emergency.

*Allen H. Barton, in his seminal article, "The Emergency Social System", in George W. Baker and Dwight W. Chapman, *Man and Society in Disaster* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 224, points out that these three aspects of response constitute the major foci of recent disaster research.

THE DEGREE OF NOVELTY

Not every emergency is novel. Some emergencies — like hurricanes on Eastern ocean coasts, cave-ins in coal mining towns, or breakdowns in New York City's subway trains — are so recurrent that many participants have had prior experience with similar situations as either victims or rescuers and hence know what to expect and what to do. At the other extreme, there are events so extraordinary that no precedents can be found in the experience of those affected and no adequate organizational routines can be developed in advance to cope with them. The degree to which any emergency involves novel elements creates problems of defining the nature of the event, of what the appropriate response should be, and of the first in relation to the second. These have implications for behavior on the individual, the mass, and the organizational level.

On the level of individual behavior, inaction and inappropriate responses are more often encountered when the event is unprecedented. One kind of maladaptive response, identified as the "disaster syndrome" (Wallace, 1956), is exhibited by many survivors of major disasters who manifest extreme indifference and apathy, even after the first shock of impact wears off. The occurrence of the syndrome also hinges on the extreme degree of stress suffered, the suddenness of the impact, or the severity of the loss, against which the apathy is a defensive reaction.

However, the degree of novelty probably affects the likelihood that effective psychological defenses against stress and loss have been developed. Thus the "disaster syndrome" is less often observed where the extreme circumstances are more or less familiar. In World War II London, when raids and expectations of bombing raids became routine, humor served as an important protective device.

Inaction may be inappropriate because the special nature of the circumstances is not

recognized. During the "Great Blackout" in the East in 1965, people tended to respond as they would to any sudden power failure; many of them did not turn to their transistor radios, hunt for candles, or do anything to prepare themselves for what proved to be a long night of darkness. Yet inaction is inherently neither inappropriate nor pathological. In the same blackout (so a Cornell researcher found) travelers entrapped in stalled subway trains followed an old and familiar routine by suffering the breakdown in glum silence, waiting for the trains to move again. "Virtually no communication emerged within the subway cars, even after transit workers made their way into the tunnels to describe the situation to them." (Columbia University, 1965).

Some kinds of inappropriate responses to false cues do not occur as an individual matter but depend on reinforcement en masse. Mass retreats or mass evacuations where objective circumstances evidently did not warrant such action invariably have been sparked by one or several persons whose behavior affected others so that immediately thereafter flight became general (Marshall, 1974). In a novel situation, where many participants lack the background to assess what is going on, the tendency to misread cues is accordingly greater. In these same circumstances, interactions among masses of people can produce improbable rumors. The less familiar the event and its probable effects, the more these will be believed.

Knowing where to turn for reliable information helps scotch some rumors. The role of transistor radios in keeping participants informed about the overall situation has been noted in such diverse events as the military uprising in Algiers, the Poor People's March on Washington in 1968, and the 1965 blackout in the East. However, media coverage can have contrary effects, depending on how the news carried is interpreted. On-the-spot radio coverage of civil disorders can help to inform would-be recruits to unruly mobs where they should go to stir up trouble.

Novelty also can leave officials and heads of key organizations uncertain as to how to respond. The most frequent failure is a delay in committing personnel and resources to emergency operations. Once committed, however, the actual imminence of the emergency can easily be exaggerated. This has particularly tragic consequences when police forces are moved into action and, misreading the danger inherent in the situation, use excessive force on peaceful demonstrators whose real intent is poorly understood. The well-chronicled shooting at Sharpeville in South Africa (Reeves, 1961) stemmed from an inability of police forces to cope with the novelty of peaceful organized protest by natives against a new and more restrictive pass policy.

Advance planning must therefore take account of the unanticipated and novel elements that inevitably occur in any set of circumstances sufficiently non-routine to create an emergency. Organizations cannot plan specifically for things they do not know will occur. However, the *appearance* of novelty can be minimized (so far as the mass of participants are concerned) if, in the dissemination of information, familiar and relevant, rather than extraordinary, elements are stressed. General provision for the rapid and accurate assessment of the total situation at some central point is, of course, imperative. But precisely because an occurrence appears novel to most people, ways must be found to make it appear as manageable. This means, among other things, (a) proposing specific things people should do, especially acts that have immediate practical consequences, and (b) incorporating volunteer activities that spring up within the total community effort by providing resources, information, and recognition.

ATTRITION

An emergency that is prolonged quickly loses its novelty, and attrition begins to be-

come the major source of breakdown. Attrition is a gradual wearing down, a weakening of the motivation to support unusual effort. Some element of attrition is bound to be present in all but the most short-lived emergencies. This is because the special effort required cannot be sustained indefinitely at the required level of commitment without some breaks in efficiency. Hence the persistence over time of an apparently irremediable difficulty, or of a prolonged threat or deprivation, progressively leads to apathy and other forms of demoralization, in which private goals begin to gain ascendancy over the cooperation effort. During such long-lasting difficulties as epidemics, chronic unemployment, prolonged bombing raids, and persistent threats of a major catastrophe, attrition will produce side-effects that are disruptive of group efforts over the long run.

The effects of attrition in an individual are manifest in a variety of ways. Let us first take the case where a continually threatening possibility fails altogether to materialize. Measures designed to keep the threat focal will not suffice to maintain vigilance, because the threat ceases to be real. On the other hand, continuous operations under extreme conditions, where the threat is constantly reiterated by everyday occurrences, gradually erodes the motivational supports on which the capacity to withstand severe stress is founded. The progressive failure of emotional adaptation is evident in increasing irritability, hostility, and other "startle" reactions, because direct confrontation with the possibility of personal loss or injury can no longer be avoided (Janis, 1962). Strong social inhibitions facilitate the conversion of the accumulating effect into psychoneurotic symptoms, with their open expression in clearly deviant behavior as an alternative should these constraints lose their efficacy.

Attrition becomes a mass phenomenon when these effects occur in many individuals all at the same time. In the case of a persistent

potential threat, the sense of danger comes to be minimized by a growing collective disbelief about the actual possibility — as for example, the illusion that war is impossible (actually “unthinkable”) because our weapons are too destructive. By the same token, the cumulative irritability aroused in circumstances that involve extreme danger or unusual effort is sometimes converted into a collectively shared hysterical belief that interferes with effective remedial action directed at the real source of difficulty. Collective beliefs can also be expressions of growing irritability and provide justifications for its displacement in hostile action against visible and available targets.

Attrition is, at the same time, an organizational phenomenon. Its progress can be indexed by a rise in various kinds of deviancy after periods of cumulative stress. To cite an illustration: military psychiatry recognizes that neuropsychiatric casualty rates of units follow certain patterns (Glass, 1975). There is a gradual but steady climb once the days of continuous combat exceed a tolerable limit. More sudden increases occur after a unit has suffered heavy casualties or when the unit commander begins to “crack up.” These rates are group phenomena and their effect is cumulative. There is a progressive erosion of the interpersonal and formal organizational controls by which deviant tendencies are kept within tolerable limits.

In planning, one recognizes that there are peaks of efficiency and that, once these are passed, neither extreme vigilance against a possible threat nor extreme effort to overcome an extraordinary situation can indefinitely be sustained. Most generally, such an observation implies the need for explicit provisions to prevent unavoidable deviance from having adverse effects on the motivation and performance of others. Such provisions include a system of rotation and relief that finds acceptance because it is in accord with norms governing the allocation of risks. At the same time, there must be special channels for

removing deviants and giving them less demanding roles that at the same time offer opportunities for therapeutic activity. Extreme disciplinary sanctions lose their efficacy after a while; caution must be used in their application and due regard paid their acceptability among personnel facing an identical situation.

A closely associated problem is that of projecting the correct situationally oriented role-models. Playing up heroic action during a disaster, when such action has little utility, can have disastrous results. The limitations of heroism were brought home to Negro leaders who, in Watts and other areas, exhorted rioters to go home only to find themselves objects of the crowd’s wrath. Nor did the heroic escape role, which the press is so prone to play up, help the POW interned in a strange and hostile country where racial characteristics precluded the possibility of successful disguise (Biderman, 1963). Less dramatic acts must be given their due importance. Thus tips on taking care of one’s own feet, broadcast during the New York transit strike, were more helpful than the dramatization of individuals who had traveled unusual distances, a feat that most people could not have matched or sustained over the long days of the strike.

CRISIS

Extraordinary demands during an emergency create a crisis, when the point is reached at which they strain the capacity of some organized system to make an adequate response and the system is on the verge of breakdown from the overload. Whereas attrition is a process of unavoidable deterioration operating over time, the crisis, by contrast, identifies a point at which demands begin to exceed capacity and the success of an operation is jeopardized. Difficulties in mobilization may mean that the point of crisis comes early in an emergency. Often, however, the point of crisis is reached only after reserves have been depleted and attrition has undermined the effectiveness of

the control structure. The symptoms of a crisis situation are the sense (a) that things are getting out of hand, because of confusion, failure to establish effective communication, and non-coordination of activities; (b) that resources are being depleted and will not suffice; and (c) that the time available for remedial action is running out.

The concept of crisis can only be applied to a behavior system, that is, an individual or an organization. There is nothing corresponding to the crisis on the level of mass behavior. A sense of crisis provoked in an individual by a fear of failure rather than by a personal loss or injury usually leads to emergency mobilization (Basowitz, 1955). On the organizational or community level, disaster, riots, strikes, etc. are sometimes not treated as emergencies until they have reached the crisis stage, even though the whole point of emergency operations is to prevent the crisis from occurring by providing mobile reserves to be committed as needed.

Planning to prevent a crisis has a built-in danger: uncertainties in the external environment that cannot be predicted or controlled result in an overconcern with the problem of internal order. The new rigidities so created can interfere with a fully adaptive response.

This concern with internal management exerts pressure to adopt specific strategies and elaborate regulations to deal with every conceivable emergency situation. Detailed procedures, though useful up to a point, can lead to an over-rehearsal of roles that is apt to stifle initiative and reduce the capacity for innovative action. A study of a tornado has pointed to the inappropriateness in an unanticipated emergency of medical activity governed by habits and practices designed to treat the type of emergency case that is routine in normal hospital operations. Best able to adapt to the extraordinary demands of the situation were physicians with prior front-line service. They were more ready to disregard and deviate from standard practices (Baker et al., 1953).

Organizational resources and effort may also be deflected from external contingencies into record-keeping, which assures its managers that all is in good order, or into creating a public image, which is to assure the agency the "social credit" needed for further fundraising activity. An analogy with military inspections, close-order drill, and parades seems hardly far-fetched.

To forestall a crisis, there may also be a hoarding and husbanding of resources in anticipation of future contingencies that never materialize. This sometimes keeps supplies and personnel from being committed where most needed. The greater likelihood, however, is for an over-reaction out of the feeling that the crisis point has been reached. In cases of threatened civil disorder, the temptation to take pre-emptive action is hard to resist. Here, the attempts to avoid a crisis have sometimes precipitated a greater crisis, as for example, when operators in Glen Echo Park closed down their amusements, fearing their facilities would be overtaxed, resulting in riotous behavior and considerable property losses.

CHOICE

Emergencies are by nature choice situations because they require quick decisions among alternative courses of action before their full implications can be assessed. This type of choice situation gives rise to internalized conflict, the intensity of which has situational and sociological determinants. Thus internalized conflict will be more intense where the situation contains no clear guidelines for making a choice or where conflicting group affiliations contain sets of obligations that are incompatible with one another. Most routine situations contain little choice. There is an accepted preference ordering of the various alternatives with regard to their desirability and potentially conflicting obligations are successfully compartmentalized in time and space. Thus relatively fewer dilemmas arise in the normal course of events.

The origin and nature of such internalized conflict during a disaster has been fully detailed by Lewis M. Killian (1952) and we can do no better than take his inventory as a guide, adding some categories of our own.

Perhaps the most far-reaching reasons for such conflicts are primary group obligations whose demands compete with those stemming from membership in a secondary group. Primary group membership imposes obligations of a pervasive character and extends to all areas of activity. The obligations attached to membership in secondary groups are most impersonal and, therefore, do not have this pervasive character. Consequently, many persons who participate in emergency operations as members of a secondary group, if not reassured about their families, experience considerable conflict over the primacy of their obligation that lowers their effectiveness as participants in rescue operations (Form and Nosow, 1958).

A second type of conflict is between action based on personal knowledge of what is most needed and directives from higher quarters. The limits of discretion are not easily established in advance. On the one hand, a person responsible for local operations is in a better position to assess its requirements than his officially designated superior far removed from the scene; on the other hand, the tendency to exaggerate the needs of the local situation is irresistible for those too closely involved and thus unable to maintain their perspective.

Another source of potential conflict involves the short-term requirements of the immediate situation versus more long-range social objectives. Such conflict is certainly not unique to emergency operations, but the sense of urgency in extraordinary circumstances tends to shorten time perspectives. There may be impatience about the slowness of officials to adopt certain steps out of a concern for the legal implications or the fear of setting precedents. Action to restore public order and

prevent damage has to consider the lasting residue of hostility that any excessive use of force, no matter how justified, can leave among its victims.

The relaxation of institutional patterns creates conflict between primary values oriented toward people's life, health, and general well-being and secondary values oriented toward property, status, legality, and so forth. When primary values are endangered, secondary values lose some of their salience. Yet, conflict arises even about whether people should be urged to abandon their homes and seek personal safety or whether they should be encouraged to participate in the effort to preserve them from a fire or flood, even at some personal risk. The violation of property rights to decrease the suffering of victims is still another version of this conflict. The employees of a concern may be compelled to resolve conflict between their loyalties to the "company" and their obligations to "fellow workers".

Another source of conflict is between identification with the community and identification with some partisan or extra-community group. This may be seen also as conflict between the goal of maintaining and restoring order versus the goal of pressing some partisan claim. Lewis M. Killian (op. cit.) invokes the example of the telephone workers who temporarily called off their strike. When union leaders declared the emergency over, they came in for considerable criticism from local townsmen as a result of which many union members resigned. Parallel conflicts occur between partisan leaders who seek to use civil disorder to press their claims but who come under criticism, irrespective of the intrinsic merits or justice behind these demands.

A final form of conflict exists between the alternatives of playing a heroic role that gains a certain amount of glory or of continuing to pursue what is a mundane but nevertheless essential occupational role. The problem of appropriate role models for emergencies has already been discussed.

No amount of advance planning can eliminate all these internal conflicts. However, the clarification of priorities among competing demands together with an assurance that vital needs, such as the safety of family members, are provided for (or will be provided for) can probably reduce disorganization due to such conflicts. The important point is that goals not officially recognized in emergency operations at least receive consideration as elements that may influence the success of any plan.

COMPETITION

Competition is here treated as an ecological form of conflict among populations for scarce resources and for survival. It involves conflict en masse. A reward structure in which the gain for any person must necessarily be at the expense of another favors an individual rather than a cooperative response to the problem (Mintz, 1951). In the competitive situation, the problem for the individual is simply one of finding the most rewarding among available alternatives. But on the level of mass behavior, the problem becomes how to maintain a reward structure in which the undesirable consequences implicit in a convergence of individual choices can be kept from foreclosing alternatives, the availability of which would increase the gain for all.

The most common manifestations of ecological conflict can be traced to competition. Its implications are greatest where the convergence so produced has cumulative effects. Thus, physical convergence creates bottlenecks that interfere with escape and rescue operations. During World War II, civilians fleeing before the German advance deprived the French army of roads they needed to bring up reinforcements with which to stop the invader and gain time to forestall the apparently inevitable military collapse (DeLong, 1956). Similarly, the behavioral convergence of choices on an object is capable of creating serious shortages, the very thing against which

scare buying and hoarding by individuals is meant to protect. In 1948, when the Russians in sealing off West Berlin also cut off its major water supply, fears of shortages led to an overuse of water by people who filled their tubs in the eventuality that the faucets might dry up. The precariousness of the water supply notwithstanding, Berliners were officially encouraged to continue to use water just as they had before, and as the water kept on flowing consumption returned to normal levels just before the reserves were depleted (Phillips Davison, 1958). In this instance, the emergency was overcome by imaginative action. A reward structure favoring an individual solution was prevented from becoming competitive.

Convergence is always a possibility as long as people have the capacity to move and to act. Nor would it necessarily be desirable to eliminate it altogether. The focalization of activities and of attention on an area where an emergency has arisen encourages the concentration of resources and services. While much has been written on sightseers and looters, who add to the difficulty, the convergence of the news media to the scene of nearly any emergency lends encouragement to local efforts. The glare of publicity also holds promise that any glaring violation of norms or any failure in emergency operations will immediately be exposed. Ample on-the-spot news coverage by the electronic media likewise relieves somewhat telephone circuits that might otherwise be overloaded with callers who seek information. Some undesirable side-effects of such coverage have already been mentioned.

A plan to prevent convergence during an emergency has as much chance of success as a plan to stop the morning rush hour from materializing. Steps can only be taken to minimize its potentially harmful effects by channeling movement, rather than blocking it, by providing assurances that certain kinds of non-routine actions are unnecessary, and by dramatizing positive examples set by public leaders

and others. The point is to seek control at critical points — for example, rounding up of gangs, agitators, and disorganized elements patently taking advantage of a confused situation — in order to set a proper tone and prevent changes in the collective definition of the situation.

CONFLICT

By conflict we mean those open expressions of antagonism between organizations or individuals who act as the representatives of organized groups. Certainly the element of conflict, when present, contributes to the unpredictability of responses. Conflict has its own dynamic. Latent distrust and prejudice, when they erupt into active enmity, can create an emergency and the escalation of fear, hostility, and suspicions in the course of conflict, to magnify the original cause of dispute so that both violence and treachery come to be condoned and serious efforts at negotiation can only follow after an open test of strength.

Where violent conflict itself is the cause for the emergency, as in instances of large-scale rioting, participants in operations to restore order almost inevitably become a party to the conflict and are not simply the guardians of law and order. Police operating as rescue units or firemen in the act of extinguishing a fire have found themselves objects of mass hostility. Attacks on fire equipment are a rather recent arrival on the American scene, but firefighters have long been favorite targets of riotous crowds composed of the most abjectly poor inhabitants of the larger cities of the Orient. When parties seeking to re-establish order do not move in quickly and with clearly superior force, their very presence can contribute to the kind of reactive interaction that culminates in an escalation of animosity.

Civil disobedience and public disorder are the likely means of conflict when effective channels for the airing of grievances are un-

available, whether from inability to articulate one's demands or because the dominant party is unwilling to enter into serious negotiations. It does not follow, however, that meetings during the heat of conflict always operate as safety valves to cool off tempers. Such meetings have often misfired because inflammatory remarks before a susceptible audience can further stir up hostility.

Emergency operations may involve a variety of conflicts such as those between the several organizations already in existence, between ad hoc committees especially formed for the emergency and well-established organizations, or between several individuals or groups who are competing for leadership. Conflict may also erupt between different segments of the population whose members believe themselves subject to differential treatment. The intensity of such conflicts is often exaggerated, and they manifest themselves chiefly after the peak of the emergency has passed and assessments of performances are made in terms of praise and blame. Their effect during actual emergency operations themselves seems largely a matter of less than full cooperation.

A prime consideration in moderating the inevitable conflicts that do occur is the maintenance of contact with already established leaders of organizations and at the grass roots level to assure that the intent of any measure is thoroughly understood. The point to recognize is that an emergency outfit whose activities are not fully acceptable to the population they are meant to serve is never fully immune from attack. However, the potentially positive role of leadership in preventing animosity from escalating into conflict, containing its spread if it should erupt, and bringing it to a halt needs a more careful consideration than it has so far received.

SUMMARY

The preceding has briefly dealt with some elements in problematic situations as they

relate to emergency operations. Each one of these elements contributes to the kind of problem-solving pattern that emerges. The element of novelty refers essentially to the unprecedented aspects in every emergency. If they are minor, reactions to the emergency take on many of the characteristics of a routine operation. In contrast to novelty, which may or may not be present, attrition and crisis have reference to the extreme nature of the requirements. Some distinction between attrition effects, which have a cumulative effect over time, and the nature of a crisis, which is the point of proximate breakdown, is necessary to explain why after a crisis has been successfully weathered a lowering of efficiency may nevertheless set in.

Choice, competition, and conflict are elements in the interaction rather than of the events to which emergency operations must respond. The different levels at which conflict occurs – internal conflict, ecological conflict, and conflict among organized groups – permit us to deal conceptually under a single rubric with the consequences of any strategy followed in planning.

Finally, this analysis of emergency responses draws our attention to the limitations of any specific strategy for coping with extraordinary circumstances. The nature of these events defies the imposition of any prior structure. Hence, all planning must be flexible and contingent, with planners and participants kept aware of the emergent elements responding to the situation. A useful differentiation between specific contingencies that can be anticipated and general possibilities for which those in charge of emergency activities should be on the look-out seems essential. Above all, thinking about emergencies must not be allowed to deteriorate into doctrinal reassertions of proce-

dures that are likely to contribute more to an anticipatory sense of security than to effective innovation when confronted by the press of events.

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