

## **CRIME PREVENTION: A COMMUNITY POLICING APPROACH IN RUSSIA<sup>1</sup>**

In a "war on crime" the use of repression alone is no panacea. Putting one's faith in a policy of crime prevention would be far wiser. It is also clear that crime prevention, especially community crime prevention, is impossible without the active support of the police, particularly in the form of community policing. The goal of the police in a war on crime must refocus on the defense of society through community crime prevention.

The main obstacles to achieving this goal include the legal nature of community crime prevention and community policing, the mechanisms of interaction between the police and the public, limitations on interventions into private life, and the lack of efficiency of crime prevention. To address these tasks and problems in Russia, this chapter focuses on the present situation in Russia; briefly addresses basic theory on crime prevention; outlines the concept, history, and reality of crime prevention in Russia; and discusses contemporary mechanisms and the future of crime prevention.

### **CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA IN BRIEF**

Russia, or the Russian Federation (RF), came into existence in 1991 after the breakdown of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Under the USSR, what is now Russia had been labeled the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. The Russian Federation is over 17-million square kilometers in size (greater than 6.5-million square miles). It consists of 21 republics, six Krai (individual administrative territories), 50 provinces, one autonomous area (Chukotsk), and two cities under federal administration—Moscow and St. Petersburg. The population of the Russian Federation has grown from 102.9 million in 1951 to 148.2

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million in 1996. Seventy-eight percent of the population live in the European part of the country and 22 percent in the Asiatic sector (west Siberia, east Siberia and the Russian Far East). The population is 47 percent men and 53 percent women. In 1995, 73 percent of the people were living in urban areas and 27 percent in rural areas (Russian Statistic Annual, 1995:17).

The population is composed of a variety of ethnic groups. Russians make up 83.5 percent of the population, with Tartars composing 3.8 percent, Ukrainians 2.5 percent, and Chuvashians 1.1 percent. Each of the other groups represents less than 1 percent of the total population.

### **Social, Economic, and Political Situation**

Since the break-up of the USSR, Russia has faced serious challenges. Gorbachev's *perestroika* was a necessary attempt to save the power structures through a process of reform. Khrushchev and others have made similar efforts in the past. Each, however, has ended with the actual or political death of its propagator, and has been followed by a period of stagnation.

Gorbachev's reforms turned out to be the most radical, although many of these (such as *glasnost*, the multiparty system, the release of states occupied by Stalin, the lifting of the Iron Curtain, and the granting of the right to hold private property) did not turn out to be fully satisfactory. Even today, symptoms of socioeconomic catastrophe remain untreated. Power is retained by the ruling class. Corruption, commonplace in Russia, has grown monumentally in all establishments and organs of power. The militarization of both economics and politics continues. Interethnic conflicts have given rise to mass murders. Nationalist, anti-Semitic, and neofascist groups have formed and met with no resistance. The war in Chechnya is terrifying evidence of the neototalitarianism.

The ever-growing economic polarization of the population, visible in the stark contrast between the poverty-stricken majority and the "new Russians" (a

criminalized, nouveau riche minority) is a source of very real social conflict. The difference between the incomes of the 10 percent least prosperous and the 10 percent most prosperous was 1:4.5 in 1991, 1:8 in 1992, 1:10 in 1993, and 1:15 in 1994 (Financial News, 1992; Social and Economic Situation in Russian Federation, 1994:139). However, there are hopeful signs. For example, the economic reform now under way in Russia (that is, the transition from a planned state-run economy to a market economy) is, beyond a doubt, progressive in nature.

The redistribution of property is occurring both legally and illegally (the latter accompanied sometimes by bribery, murder, or threats). Technological backwardness and the incompatibility of the native production and service spheres have manifested themselves in the course of reforms. As a consequence, the staff of industrial plants and enterprises appear inferior — unqualified and marginalized. The disintegration of the services sphere and of the social infrastructure has caused further difficulties for the population. Moreover, a great number of people are not paid for long periods of time (often many months). The endeavors of science, education, medicine, and the arts have no support, and struggle to exist, much less progress. Finally, the government permits mass human rights abuses, particularly in military and penal institutions where tyranny and torture dominate. Confirmation of this travesty of justice can be found in international research compiled by Amnesty International and in documents generated by Russian writers (Abramkin, 1996). It is not surprising that the socioeconomic and political situation in the country has led to a growth in crime and other types of deviant behavior.

### **Crime in Russia**

The incidence of crime in Russia has soared from 987 per 100,000 population in 1984 to 1,618 in 1997 (Crime and Delinquency, 1992; Crime and Delinquency, 1997; State of Crime in Russia — 1997, 1998).

TABLE 13-1 TRENDS OF CRIME IN RUSSIA 1985-1997  
(INCIDENCES PER 100,000)

	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997
All registered crime	989	817	1098	1463	1888	1863	1551
Premeditated murder (with attempts)	8.5	6.3	9.2	10.9	19.6	21.4	18.7
Grievous bodily harm	19.9	13.9	25.0	27.8	45.1	41.7	29.8
Theft	324.7	251.1	512.1	837.3	1065.2	924.6	681.9
Robbery	29.9	21.0	51.0	68.8	124.3	94.7	69.9
Assault	5.8	3.9	9.9	12.4	27.0	25.4	21.3

*Source:* Crime and Delinquency (1992 and 1997).

A brief decline between 1986 and 1987 was due to the influence of positive social and political changes that *perestroika* had had on the consciousness of the people. Following this honeymoon period, various social and political crises caused the crime rate to rise again. The increase in violent crime is particularly significant. The rate for premeditated murder (with attempts) rose from 8.5 in 1985 to 19.8 per 100,000 in 1997. Similarly, the rate for serious bodily harm increased from 19.9 in 1985 to 329.8 per 100,000 in 1997. Such an explosive growth in the level of violent crime reflects the severity of the social crisis. Data from medical statistics are more dramatic. The rate of death by murder in 1990 was 14.3. In 1994 it was 32.6 (Russian Statistical Annual, 1995). The growth rate of robbery also accelerated—21.0 in 1987, 127.3 in 1993, and 75.6 in 1997. Assault increased by 6.5 times between 1987 and 1997 (3.9 to 23.1) (see, Table 13-1). The fall in the crime rate during the period 1994-1997 was not due to real positive change, but to "new" policies adopted by the police authorities that work toward a mass cover up of the registration and recording of crimes. In St. Petersburg, according to the results of a survey of victims, 12 percent of the respondents reported having been victims of crime in 1991, but by 1994 the figure stood at 26 percent and in 1995 it was over 30 percent.

## **The Russian Police and the Justice System**

The organization of the police of Russia, known as the Militia, was first set up a month after the state coup of October 1917. The current directives, functions, and structure of the Militia were laid down in Russian legislation entitled "On the Militia," passed on April 18, 1991. The Militia operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) of the Russian Federation, along with the internal army, specialized police forces (for example, railroad, air, and river police), the fire safety services, penitentiary personnel, and others. The Decree of the President of the Russian Federation transferred the Russian penitentiary system from the MVD to the Ministry of Justice. The internal army is responsible for dealing with internal conflicts, rebellion, disturbances, and riots. The directives of the Militia are to provide citizens with personal safety, to stop and prevent crime and civil law breaking, to solve crimes, and to secure civil order and safety within society. The size of the Militia in 1995 stood at about 540,000, and that of the internal army at about 278,000.

The Militia is organized into two main subdivisions — the Criminal Militia and the Militia for Civil Safety (that is, public order) at the local level. The Criminal Militia includes the Detective Service, the Economic Crime Prevention Service, scientific-technical specialists, operational investigators and others who supply material for criminal investigation, and the Economic Crime Prevention Services. The civil Militia includes the Duty Service, the Service for Securing Civil Order, the State (government) Automobile Inspectorate (GAI), the Security Service, divisional inspectors, temporary detention guards, the crime prevention service (which includes the Inspectorate for dealing with juveniles), and various other departments. The Criminal Investigation Service is a separate unit under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Militia is given far-reaching powers, including the right to enter — without a warrant — the living places and other premises of citizens, the premises of companies, organizations and official departments (excluding those of foreign

diplomatic representatives), and to conduct searches on transport facilities and to search not only the baggage but the actual person of citizens. The law "On the Militia" regulates the terms and procedures for use of physical force, special methods (rubber truncheons, tear gas, water cannons, armored cars, and others), and firearms. The specific principles guiding the actions of the Militia are supposed to be lawfulness, humanism, respect for human rights, and *glasnost* (openness or transparency). As with restrictions of force, Militia actions often violate all of these principles, with concrete examples of such violations being regularly reported in the Russian and foreign media.

### **THEORY OF CRIME PREVENTION: A SHORT SURVEY**

Crime prevention is one of the elements of social control over criminality. Social control is the mechanism of self-organizing and self-preservation of society by the establishment and maintenance of a normative order. Two basic regulators of individual behavior produced by society are social values and the norms appropriate to them. Both values and norms are transferred by various methods. Two basic methods are encouragement and punishment.

There are various forms of social control (for example, formal and informal, internal and external, direct and indirect) and numerous patterns (Black, 1976; Davis and Anderson, 1983). Different social institutions (from the family and the school to the police and prison) carry out the functions of social control. In general, social control can be reduced to the fact that society, through institutions, sets values and norms, provides for their transference by socializing individuals, encourages their observance, and punishes their infringement.

Social control over criminality often includes a call for a "war on crime," armed with both reprisals and crime prevention. Society has tried all means of reprisal, including the death penalty and torture. Criminal behavior, however, has not disappeared. At present, the conventional wisdom holds that there exists a "crisis of punishment," that is, a crisis of criminal justice and a crisis of society's control over

criminality, including the control of police (Albanese, 1990; Barkan, 1997; Davis and Anderson, 1983; Donziger, 1996; Hendricks and Byers, 1996; Rothwax, 1996; Sumner, 1994). The National Criminal Justice Commission of the United States advocates shifting "crime policy from an agenda of 'war' to an agenda of 'peace'" (Donziger, 1996:218). Barkan (1997:542) advises society to "reduce reliance on imprisonment and to put more emphasis on community correction."

Modern western policy for the social control of crime includes

- Recognizing the irrational and inefficient use of reprisals ("crisis of punishment")
- Changing the strategy of social control from "war" to "peace" or "peacemaking" (Donzinger, 1996:218; Pepinski and Quinney, 1991)
- Searching for alternative (nonrepressive) measures
- Giving priority to crime prevention

Crime prevention is understood as the combined influence of society, institutions of social control, and individual citizens on the causes of crime that result in the reduction of criminal behavior, leading to desirable changes in the social structure and to the prevention of potential crimes. The priority of prevention was precisely stated by Montesquieu and then repeated and advanced by Beccaria (*On Crimes and Punishments*). Voltaire named the prevention of crime "true jurisprudence."

In modern literature, three levels of prevention are distinguished. Primary prevention entails influences on the environment, ecology, economics, and sociopolitical conditions of life with the goal of improving those conditions (the Russian term is "general prevention"). Secondary prevention involves the maintenance of security measures, influences on "groups at risk," and the elimination of circumstances that encourage crime (the Russian analogue is "special prevention"). Tertiary prevention is "individual prevention" (Russian criminology). The whole concept of crime prevention is much more reasonable, more democratic, more liberal, more progressive, and certainly more pleasant than "struggle" and reprisals.

But, is crime prevention feasible and efficient? Attempts to prove efficacy raise several other issues and problems. First, what is the object of prevention, if many criminologists do not know what such "criminality" is? Second, prevention influences the causes of crime and circumstances that engender crime. But who really knows what these causes and circumstances are? Third, it is not surprising that there are no convincing data on the efficiency of different prevention activities. In one analysis, Graham and Bennett (1995) assemble a large amount of material about different prevention programs. However, they do not prove the effectiveness of the programs. Finally, there is serious danger of the degeneration of prevention into the infringement of elementary human rights. Steinert (1995) compared the "instrumental rationality" of prevention with Auschwitz, and wrote in 1991, "I see the whole idea of prevention as part of one of the grave mistakes of this century" (see, Albrecht and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 1995:5).

Despite the foregoing criticism, one cannot totally discount the feasibility of prevention. In fact, there are several reasons for its support. First, the processes of organizing and stabilizing the daily life of a community are prime objectives for society. Second, society will, by and large, react to crime, and prevention is always preferable to after-the-fact reprisals. Third, the set of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention measures should improve social conditions, create a more humane atmosphere and, as a result, serve to reduce inhuman actions. Finally, secondary and tertiary prevention measures are capable of protecting, especially at the community level of crime prevention, specific persons and potential victims, and of rescuing them from possible encroachments.

### **Concept and History of Crime Prevention in Russia**

Marx and Lenin repeated the words of Montesquieu about the priority of crime prevention in comparison to punishment. The priority of prevention is part of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. But how the concept was realized in practice is another story. Khrushchev reanimated the idea of prevention, and at the Twentieth



Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956, he advocated making crime prevention a priority. This directive was repeated at the Twenty-first Congress in 1959: "It is necessary to undertake such measures, which would prevent and then completely exclude the occurrence of any offenses, any harm to society. The main idea is prevention, upbringing." The program of the CPSU was accepted at the Twenty-second Congress in 1961, which declared that major attention "should be paid to prevention of crimes." Khrushchev saw in crime prevention the panacea for "antisocial" activity. He believed in the efficacy of prevention and promised to shake the hand of the last criminal in the USSR.

A liberalization of punishment was observed during the "thaw" when Khrushchev reduced the number of persons condemned to imprisonment (the majority were transferred to labor collectives for "reeducation." The rate of registered criminals (per 100,000 population) was reduced by 19 percent between 1961 and 1965 (Crime and Delinquency in USSR, 1990:12). The priority of prevention was cited in all the party documents. At the Twenty-fifth Congress of the CPSU in 1976, the idea of a complex approach to the prevention of offenses was proclaimed. But, with the ending of the thaw, repression of criminal and administrative justice returned, and the overall crime rate, suicides, alcoholism, and drug use began to increase.

New positive tendencies were observed during the period of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. The number of persons sentenced to imprisonment decreased, and the number released from criminal liability with the application of alternative measures of "public influence" increased (Crime and Delinquency in USSR, 1990:12). At the same time, the crime rate fell by 16 percent between 1985 and 1987. The modern period (*post-perestroika*) is characterized by a return to a repressive policy and the growth of all kinds of criminal behavior, suicides, alcoholism, and narcotics use.

The party declarations were demagogic and the idea of complete "extermination" of criminality in "socialist" ("communist") society was Utopian. But those ideological

clichés allowed scientists to develop theoretical and methodological bases of prevention, and to put them into practice.

The view of western criminologists that, in the USSR, there existed only two concepts of the causes of criminality — "the relics of capitalism" (relic theory) and the "influence capitalist of encirclement" (influence theory) — is not valid. While those were the basic ideological and propaganda positions of the CPSU and the Soviet state, other modern sociological concepts were developed. Domestic criminologists tested the influence of Hegelian-Marxian theory, positivism, and interactionism, while developing the ideas of the Russian sociological school in criminology. The influence of Hegel and Marx, pre-Revolutionary criminology, and the hard social conditions in the Soviet state lead to the convergence of domestic criminological works with western critical, radical, and "structural" theory.

One stimulus for the development of crime prevention in the former USSR was recognition of the complex socioeconomic planning and development of labor collectives. The idea, born in the 1960s in Leningrad, was "approved" by the leadership of the Leningrad Regional Committee CPSU and was widespread across the country. For CPSU leadership, it was an attempt to maintain the system by adding to the centralized planning of economic production — the planning "from the roots up" of social development (for example, improvements in health care, working conditions and modes of life, adequate housing, "communist education of workers," and "prevention of criminality").

The complex socioeconomic planning provided scientists with an ideological "roof", allowing them to carry out empirical study. For example, empirical criminological research was carried out in Leningrad, Orel, Murmansk, and other regions with the purpose of elaborating "the scientifically reasonable plans of complex socioeconomic development," including crime prevention (see, Spiridonov and Gilinskiy, 1977). Under the same ideological roof and technique of socioeconomic planning, planning for crime prevention in labor collectives and "on a residence" (that is, community crime prevention) was developed. As a result, in the

1960s and 1970s, the theoretical and methodical bases of crime prevention were developed.

The basic approach to prevention was to identify the causes and conditions of criminal behavior, for the purpose of neutralizing or eliminating them. This stimulated research on the causes and factors influencing the conditions, rates, structures, and dynamics of crime and various kinds of crimes (Kudrjavcev, 1968; Karpetch, 1969; Jakovlev, 1971; Spiridonov and Gilinskiy, 1977). The three levels of prevention were general social (primary prevention), special, criminological (secondary prevention), and individual (tertiary prevention). There were also geographical levels of prevention focusing on the republic, region, area, city, labor collective, and community ("a residence"). The geographical aspect of criminal behavior has been studied by Gabiani in Georgia, Leps and Raska in Estonia, and Avrutin and Gilinskiy in Leningrad.

The topics of prevention were classified according to the description of their purposes, problems, functions, and methods of activity (for example, party committees, Soviets of people's deputies and their executive bodies, law enforcement bodies, labor collectives, public organizations, and citizens). There were also organizational bases of prevention, including information provision (empirical sociological and criminological study), forecasting of criminal offenses, planning and coordination of preventive activity, and analyses of results and estimation of efficiency.

A prevention service was created in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). Additionally, an independent course in prevention was introduced in educational institutions of the MIA. Plans for crime prevention were developed at all "geographical" levels. Voluntary public patrols (VPP), *komsomol* operative groups, public (communal) courts, and councils of prevention in labor collectives were all functioning. District bases for public order guards (DBPOG) were organized and worked in the communities.

The bases included police inspectors, officers from the inspection of juvenile delinquents, members of VPP, and members of public courts. Thus, there was an attempt at crime prevention.

The prevention activity was not without its shortcomings, however. First there was a gradual degeneration and regeneration of initial VPP in a system of formal "measures" for reporting and in specialized formations known as *komsomol* operative groups. Second, some prevention activity reflected an excess of power that infringed on human rights. This was true especially of the members of VPP and the public courts. Third, intrusions into the personal life of citizens often lead to their public disgrace due to the use of "the panel of shame" or "the wall newspapers" (that is, the public posting of names). These and other problems can be attributed to the squalid conditions endured by people residing in urban "communal flats" with their never-ending quarrels, conflicts, and the mass bitterness of the population.

### **Existing Crime Prevention in Russia**

The realization of crime prevention in Russia was pushed to the background at the beginning of *perestroika* and was superseded by political, economic, financial, and ideological problems. The prevention service was liquidated by the Minister for Internal Affairs (MIA), and only later was it restored. The study of prevention in MIA educational institutions was canceled. Eventually, it became a special part of criminology. The majority of the former types of crime prevention (voluntary public patrols, public courts, the councils of prevention in labor collectives) ceased to exist.

The decrease in the crime rate during the years of *perestroika* (1985-1987) was replaced by major increases from 1989. The increase led, partly as a result of fear of crime, to "moral panic" (Cohen, 1996). The reaction on the part of law enforcement bodies, headed by the MIA, was to "strengthen the struggle." As a result, the number of people imprisoned in Russia increased to 760 per 100,000 in 1996 (first place in the world, with the United States occupying second place at a rate of more than 560 per 100,000). Certainly, this did not contribute to the eradication of crime.

Attempts to revive the old forms of prevention under new conditions are doubtful. Thus, the VPP today can become a legal cover for radical groups, including neofascists (this assumption has become a reality: see, *Izvestia* [News], September 23, 1997). Communal (public) courts have not reappeared. It is more expedient to form new "arbitration public courts." Employees act as intermediaries between the offender and victim and carry out restorative justice. In terms of community policing, domestic regional police of the public order (Militia for Public Order) are trained and follow the methods of the federal criminal police.

On the other hand, there are some effective forms of community crime prevention. Public organizations concentrating on "self-help" have emerged for drug addicts, prisoners and former prisoners, homosexuals, and others. Public and commercial organizations offering social and psychological help assist victims of violence, teenagers, female victims of family and sexual violence, and suicide. Neighborhoods have formed associations such as Neighborhood Watch programs and private security groups. Although these steps are no panacea, they represent visible signs of success.

Russia now has a paradoxical situation. The normative documents dictate the prevention of crime and delinquency (for example, the Order of the Minister for Internal Affairs, August 6, 1993, "On Work of Services and Subdivisions of MIA on Crime Prevention"). However, no action is taken on these directives. At the same time, diverse regional initiatives do exist, including voluntary public patrols, district bases for public order guards (DB POG), Cossack's societies, public organizations (such as Social Health and Legal Order), and others (see, Kosoplechev and Izmailova, 1997).

## **Mechanisms of Execution of Crime Prevention**

### **Projects**

The successful execution of diverse projects, programs, and plans runs into continual difficulty in Russia. It is a "tradition" inherited from the former Soviet Union that a

great number of programs and plans are outlined but nothing happens. For instance, the Federal Program of the Russian Federation on the Combat of Crime (1996-1997) and many regional crime prevention programs (including those operating in St. Petersburg) were elaborated but not acted upon. Certainly, elaborate dreams and plans are easier to evoke than to bring about. Real mechanisms of program execution, especially plans and funds for their realization, are absent. Scientists from the Research Institute of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation wrote,

"Systems of prevention . . . were destroyed.... In fact no structure of power controls the situation of crime prevention. . . . The programs of combatting crime are completely unrealized.... Financial means are absent" (Kosoplechev and Izmailova, 1997:84, 86).

Moreover, the Russian citizens have given up hope for crime prevention by the power of the police. Civil initiatives are viewed as more efficient. For example, groups of citizens often organize their own security programs in Moscow and other cities. Such programs are analogous to Neighborhood Watch.

### **The Future of Crime Prevention in Russia**

The prognosis for the success of crime prevention in contemporary Russia is very difficult to predict because of the unsteady economic, social, and political situation. On the one hand, continual economic, social, political, and moral problems are more important than problems of crime prevention. If Russia has no money for health services, education, science, culture, or social welfare, then there is certainly no money for crime prevention. Moreover, the Russian police prefer using power as the primary means of combating crime.

On the other hand, crime is a serious problem. Coercive power alone is not efficient. Theoretical and methodological bases and experiences with crime prevention are present in the country. Fear of crime stimulates public activity and public organizations for "self-help" and Neighborhood Watch programs. Conditions generated by a dubious criminal policy, crises of authority and criminal justice, the

corruption of state and law enforcement bodies, and unskilled efforts from the general populace have prompted a general outcry for crime prevention. International contacts with scientists and practitioners from other countries should prove very productive.

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