

Spring 1963

Police Science Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Police Science Book Reviews, 54 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 125 (1963)

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by

Richard L. Holcomb*

THE MURDERER AND HIS VICTIM. By *John M. Macdonald*, Charles C Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Illinois, 1961. Pp. XIV, 420. \$10.50.

Written by the Chief of Forensic Psychiatry of the University of Colorado School of Medicine, this volume seeks to present a nontechnical, comprehensive survey of the various aspects of criminal homicide. Since, as Dr. Macdonald explains, the book is directed to the intelligent reader who is not familiar with the language of the lawyer and the psychiatrist, nontechnical terms have been used as much as possible although an attempt has been made to avoid the evil of oversimplification. Psychiatric examinations of over one hundred murderers, the majority of which were made for the District Courts of Colorado, form the background of the personal experience of the author, but he states that he has also "drawn very heavily on experts from many sources" and emphasizes that "our knowledge is imperfect and much research is yet required if we are to understand and control the mainsprings of murder." Dr. Macdonald believes, however, that if "this book arouses greater concern over the tragedy of criminal homicide and stimulates greater attention to preventive measures, it will have served a useful purpose."

Using many case histories to illustrate the nature and magnitude of criminal homicide, the author ranges over many aspects of his highly complex subject. He begins with an analysis of the problem of murder, then describes some of the types of murderers and their victims, introduces the reader to the psychology and psychiatry of murder, touches upon some of its legal aspects, and concludes with a discussion of the prevention of criminal homicide. The book closes with a chapter on homicide in fiction by Dr. Stuart Boyd, Associate Professor of Psychology, New Mexico Highlands University.

Although Dr. Macdonald seeks a comprehensive view of his subject, he frankly recognizes the great complexity of the problems with which he deals, turns to legal and sociological, as well as psy-

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chiatric, sources for his information, and writes cautiously regarding the relationship between criminal homicide on the one hand and the business cycle, mass media, religion, and alcohol on the other. Nevertheless, the core of his treatment is psychiatric and therefore often suffers from the weaknesses of this approach. These weaknesses are clearly revealed, for example, in his uncritical use of the term "psychopath," which has been rejected as of little value by some writers of his own profession, and by his unrestrained advocacy of the Durham Rule as a substitute for the M'Naghten Rule in criminal cases involving the defense of insanity. Actually the Durham Rule has not only greatly confused the law on mental disease and criminal responsibility since it was adopted in the District of Columbia in 1954, but has been repudiated in over a dozen jurisdictions, including several federal circuits, where it has been submitted. The real difficulty, of course, lies not in the law's indifference to science, but in the lack of medical and psychiatric knowledge of mental disease, much of which remains a mystery despite the bombastic avowals of great progress by some psychiatrists. Furthermore, the author, like so many other psychiatrists, fails to understand the importance of the principle of legality, which has been established to protect the offender against the arbitrary use of power by those in authority. Thus, in recommending a completely indeterminate sentence system, under which the exact time of the prisoner's release is to be decided by a board of parole, he bluntly states: "Just as the insane person remains in a mental hospital until he is well enough to be discharged, so the criminal offender should remain confined until it is reasonably safe for society to set him free." And yet despite this recommendation, and apparently unaware of the inconsistency of his position, he makes this damaging admission a few paragraphs later: "Unfortunately, psychiatry lacks reliable predictive techniques, and it is not always possible to predict, with any degree of confidence, the future career of an individual offender."

At times this book is interesting and stimulating, but often it is dull and heavy, facts piling up with no integrating principle to make them meaningful

to the general reader, for whom they are primarily intended. In view of the avowed nature and purpose of the book, interpretative summaries, at least in the more crucial chapters, would have been helpful to this type of reader, who, although he will probably benefit by reading *The Murderer and His Victim*, will not be eager to purchase it at its present price.

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LIARS AND LETTERS ANONYMOUS. By *Oscar Mendelsohn*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, Australia, 1961. Pp. 192. 35 shillings.

Mr. Mendelsohn has put together a non-technical account of a number of his cases in the questioned document field. He writes principally about the background of cases and very little about the technical aspects of examination. Workers in the field, who are interested in the type of cases occurring in private practice in Australia, will find this book of interest.

Unfortunately, this book suffers from several defects. The author has a tendency to digress from the case under discussion a good deal of the time. In addition to handwriting problems, a field in which he is a qualified worker, he turns to the discussion of psychiatry and psychology, lie detection, blood tests, suggestions on domestic relation case procedures, and a number of other subjects which arise out of document cases which he has handled. Most of these discussions are those of a layman, and in this reviewer's opinion do not add particularly to the value of the book. Further, the book could have profited by critical editing to improve its organization.

It is unfortunate that at several places in the review copy the type setting contained obvious evidence of a lack of careful proof reading either in the printshop or by the author.

ORDWAY HILTON

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KILL OR GET KILLED. By *Rex Applegate*, (Fifth Edition) the Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Penn. 1962. Pp. 421. Illus. \$3.95.

This book covers close combat (armed and unarmed), training techniques, the police baton, raids, chemical munitions, civil disturbances, Communist tactics and strategy in directing mob violence, and developing and training riot control units.

The author is a retired Army colonel, and as a result many of the illustrations use Army personnel; but aside from this, the material applies directly to civil police organizations. It is practical, well presented, detailed, and based on sound experience. While I am no fan of the many judo, or hand-to-hand combat books that are published regularly, this publication is entirely different and covers a much wider range. The hand to hand combat material presented is among the best written and illustrated, but the book goes much further. For example, there is considerable material in all sections on teaching the various subjects covered, something usually lacking.

There is a considerable discussion on the handling of disorderly crowds or mobs, starting from the planning stage on through. This is complete and well illustrated. The section on chemical munitions is the best written to date. The section covering crowd psychology is good with many examples taken from actual disorder situations.

No police officer likes to think that he will be involved in the control of a disorderly crowd or a mob. This is most unpleasant duty, but it is something that does occur. When it does, proper planning and training will either stop the event before it starts or keep it under control with much less hazard to everyone involved.

This book has a wide application in the police field. The price is low enough so that anyone can afford it, and the material covered is a value to law enforcement officers at every level. Col. Applegate is to be congratulated.

R.L.H.