New York Police Department Is on a War Footing

Nothing Has Been Left to Chance During the Last Two Years to Prepare 11,000 Policemen for Any Emergency to Come

THE Police Department of New York is on a war footing. That is the way to put it just now because we are all thinking of war as the next great calamity that may come to the United States. But it would be equally true to say that the Police Department is on an earthquake footing or a black plague footing or a famine or a riot footing or on a footing to handle the town devasated by fire or flood or to come back to the war footing—to do the best in the case of invasion by a foreign enemy. For the last two years, the 11,000 policemen of New York are on their feet, they are right on their toes for any sort of emergency that may come.

Scientists assure us that this particular part of the earth is finished, geologically, and that there can be no earthquakes here. Nevertheless, Commissioner Arthur Woods has made a study of the things the police of San Francisco were unprepared to do when the earthquake came to that city, and he has his force in readiness to do the things for the people of New York that the people of San Francisco should do.

There has been nothing left to chance in the last two years in which Commissioner Woods has been preparing his preparations. Many remote possibilities were anticipated and worked into the main scheme long before the country was startled by the scowling of diplomatic relations with Germany. For one thing a war map of this city, which covers a whole wall at Police Headquarters, was made a long time ago, showing many things that it might be necessary to know in such an emergency. It is, of course, useless to the policemen, so useful is the police has made a copy of it for its own use.

It shows all the ramifications of the city's vital organs, its water supply pipes, its telephone and telegraph wires, its main and water lines of communication and a thousand other things.

Nobody should attempt to write about the New York Police Department as it is now organized and managed today who has a memory running back very far in the history of the city, because such a memory suggests so many contrasts between now and then that it is difficult not to waste time in comparison. One obvious difference, for example, that gets right to the heart of the matter, is between the present-day group of men and mentally and physically very wiry and alert policemen who are assisting the lean and wiry Woods, and the fat, pudgy-handed people who were the police hands something less than a generation ago.

Woods has had the time and the opportunity to plan the required adjustments. He asked himself two questions: What has the city the right to expect from its police force under either normal or abnormal conditions? and, What service can the policemen of New York give? The answers to both questions everybody thinks of in connection with the needs of a city and the duties of the police. Woods cleaned up quickly as a matter of routine—the elimination of graft and the handling of win and crime affairs.

Then in the spirit of the time, Woods looked to what may be called preventive police work, which previously had been limited to the ancient practice of the old night watch of trying shop doors to see if they were secure against thieves.

It was then that the Commissioner began to make a thoroughgoing, scientific study of great emergencies and of the best methods of handling them. And the result of that and the work that grew out of it is that the Police Department is on a war footing already referred to and looked upon by the United States Army as a body of men fit for active co-operation with regular troops in the matters peculiar to the country's chief city and port.

So far as war is concerned the problem is in two parts. The first and the one most obviously to occur has to do with invasion or bombardment or the cutting of supplies by siege. Detailed services in every phase of that question are on file at Police Headquarters. In August, Pre-Foot Commanders and Foot Commanders all over New York, in advance what they would do in any such emergency. Plans for evoking the town or any given section of the town are perfected. In addition to all the current traffic lines, elevated, surface and subway, which the Police & Transportation has the right to command if the lives of the people are at stake, he has on record lists of everyandle of motor trucks and any other vehicles which would be at the instant disposal of the police. In addition

Of course, these same 11,000 policemen can fight, too, not only as individuals with criminals and in police precinct groups opposed to a military organization armed with rifles, the use of which they all know, and grouped as battalions, regiments or brigades in the command of their own officers, who have been trained for the purpose of an army in the handling of large bodies of men. The police force can be thrown together in short order at any given point in the city, and transportation for the 4,000 men already held in reserve at the present time can be marshalled in an instant and put at the disposal of the police.

The second part of the war problem for the police, which is not a remote contingency, but something very real to be coped with now (as a matter of fact, something they have been dealing with for some time), is that of foreign espionage in this city and the plotting of destruction of property and persons.

In that connection the war map at headquarters, which shows the police force and what they are prepared to do, is a most interesting thing. It shows the vital points of the city, the lighting and transportation and water systems and their values. Any point of weakness in the system is indicated, and the whole police force knows exactly what that weakness means to the city. It shows where and how and by what groups of policemen to be used and under whose command various things may be most quickly and effectively guarded against.

The most striking illustration of this, which was open for all to see, came on a recent occasion when the proposed visitation of Germany. The police happened just as it would have been in the diplomatic break came, carrying with it the danger of invasion—just as it was, and did they.

As smoothly and with as much matter as the handling of the police, as they would form two lines at a time, the precautions made ready the various bridges across the city and the various bridges over the Harlem River and to the approaches to the bridges over the Harlem, by means of which the city gets its water, and guarded them until relieved by the Krefeld Reserves.

The map also shows the locations of the great groups of the city's foreign population, which consists of a tremendous foreign population. It gives the number of men held in large numbers, where they work, where they congregate to enjoy themselves and think of all kinds of great, and where the bad spots or danger points, if there are any, in such foreign groups are to be found.

This, of course, applies to all national.
alties. It would make no difference what country this country might be at war with, the police would know all about the nationals of that particular country in this city. That suggests another thing the ideal policeman has to be. He must be part diplomat. Nothing would be more absurd or fraught with danger of serious consequences in a time like this than for the police to act on the assumption that all Germans are suspects. There are 300,000, or more, of them in this city. The occasional plots of the last two years and a half in this country and city would indicate that perhaps a very few of these Germans have to be watched—probably not one in a thousand.

The police would fight hard to save the communication system of the city, the telephone and the telegraph, but if they lost that fight, if some unbelievable thing should happen to put the underground wire system or the exchanges out of commission, the police have an answer all written for the question as to what to do next.

Commissioner Woods has had his men trained by men of the United States Navy in flag wigwagging by the Morse code. By the use of lofty building tops, all designated in the plans for such emergency work, the wigwaggers can relay communication between any precinct in the city and Police Headquarters. And in addition to that the department has a wireless system of its own that is rapidly nearing completion. Already there are the central station, at Headquarters, and sixty other stations.

This, in brief, is a summary of a part of the preparation of the 11,000 police for handling abnormal situations. But in the course of the short two years in which all this has been done, there has been organized a supplementary, unofficial police department. It is called the Home League, and has a membership of 15,000 men, organized and drilled in companies throughout the city, with at least one, and in some cases several, companies to a precinct. The spirit and motive of these men are very much the same as cause lovers of the Fire Department to become buffs. They receive no pay, they have no official standing with the City Government, but they are recognized by the Police Commissioner, who organized them, as his emergency reserve, as men who would jump in and do the ordinary police work should the uniformed men be called upon for more urgent matters.