



## The Joyriders: Richard Enright, Barron Collier, and International Policing, 1922–1938

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Narratives on the history of international police cooperation tend to focus on Interpol<sup>1</sup> (founded in Vienna in 1923), which has resulted in a Eurocentric historiography. But the early period of international police cooperation produced several other initiatives besides Interpol, and many of them originated in the Americas. Perhaps the most meaningful of these initiatives was the International Police Conference (IPC). The IPC began as a meeting of police chiefs from major cities in the United States, but thanks to funding from advertising tycoon and policing aficionado Barron Collier (see image), the group quickly expanded

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Interpol' will be used in this essay as an easier-to-understand shorthand for the correct acronym ICPC or IKPK.

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to include participants from Canada, Latin America, and Europe. IPC conferences became important venues for police to discuss and exchange ideas on new developments in crime, particularly regarding traffic control and narcotics. Using Collier's funds, the IPC became a rival organization to the emerging International Criminal Police Commission (the precursor to Interpol). Although the IPC boasted better funding and more extravagant conferences than Interpol, the group eventually fell out of favor among police on both sides of the Atlantic. What were the reasons behind the IPC's downfall, and why did Interpol succeed? What can the IPC's story tell us about the past and present of international police cooperation?

The IPC was founded at a meeting of the National Police Conference of the United States (NPC) held in New York City in 1922. The idea to turn the NPC into an international association belonged to New York Police Commissioner Richard Enright, who argued for the change based on the inclusion of a token number of Canadian and Mexican police officers in the NPC. Though the members of the NPC voted in favor of the change, it was left up to Enright to try to encourage foreign participation in the organization. In order to build up this participation, Enright went on a personal tour of Europe in the summer of 1922, visiting Britain, France, Belgium, and a number of other countries.

In discussing the idea with London Metropolitan Police Commissioner William Horwood, Enright declared that "the suppression of criminality is not only a city, State, or National concern, but it is in fact a matter of international concern ... It is the earnest wish of the responsible officers of every department which I have visited at home or abroad that an efficient and sympathetic system of co-operation be immediately established between the Police Departments all over the world."<sup>2</sup> The IPC, Enright advertised, "would go far towards establishing greater efficiency and a co-ordination of police work throughout the world."<sup>3</sup>

Enright seemed convincing enough, as the

2 Richard Enright to William Horwood, July 12, 1922, MEPO 3/2477, National Archives, Kew [hereafter NA].

3 Ibid.

British government sent Llewellyn Atcherley, the country's Inspector General of Constabulary, to attend the IPC as Britain's representative.<sup>4</sup> Other foreign countries represented at the conference included Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, France, and Germany. The conference program reflected the general concerns of police worldwide during this time period. Topics for discussion included industrial conflict, drug trafficking, vehicle traffic control, and criminal identification. Atcherley reported that the delegates from Canada and South America, as well as those from Belgium and Denmark, pledged their "whole-hearted support" for the new scheme.<sup>5</sup> Atcherley supported continued British participation in the organization, though he and the rest of the Metropolitan police worried that group would try to encourage new international criminal law. In particular, the British worried that the American organization would try to encourage its members to standardize vehicle driving on the right-hand side of the road.

William Horwood himself attended the 1923 meeting of the IPC.<sup>6</sup> The meeting saw members discuss drug trafficking, traffic control, extradition, and distant identification. Horwood felt, in general, that no progress could be made on international work as long as American police remained so disorganized. Of course, Horwood also remained skeptical of the effectiveness of any such international work, with or without America. He argued that if the treatment of issues like drug trafficking and extradition were to be standardized, it would first require broad-based public support as well as new legislation within each member nation. Furthermore, Horwood felt that it would be too difficult for the organization to standardize police work because of the cultural differences between member nations.

Despite British reservations about the organization, Richard Enright attempted to hold the 1927 meeting of the conference in London. Writing

4 National Police Conference, *Proceedings of the National Police Conference* (The Conference, Bureau of Printing, Police Dept., 1921), 259.

5 Ibid., 10.

6 Horwood to Home Office, June 7, 1923, MEPO 3/2477, NA. This letter contains Horwood's report on the proceedings.

to British Consul General Harry Armstrong in New York, Enright argued that “London is splendidly situated with respect to transportation, and we would doubtless have a much larger and more representative conference in that city than in any other place in Europe.”<sup>7</sup> Enright, now the former Chief of Police in New York, said that the IPC would pay for the conference, and told Armstrong that his colleague Barron Collier was sailing for London to present the idea to William Horwood and the Home Office.

Collier was a powerful advertising tycoon fascinated with policing and international crime.<sup>8</sup> According to Armstrong, Collier “found the funds that Mr. Enright had at his disposal for entertainment and celebrations [at his conferences].”<sup>9</sup> This relationship “incurred a good deal of odium” because Enright returned the favor by granting Collier the title of Deputy Commissioner (complete with badge) and allowing the tycoon several privileges, including the ability to drive his “motor through the streets [of New York] ... without regard to traffic regulations.”<sup>10</sup> Ronald Howe, a member of the Met that came into contact with Collier in the 1930s, judged that the title of Deputy Commissioner gave Collier “more pleasure than any of his financial triumphs” because beneath his advertising millions “there was a policeman struggling to get through.”<sup>11</sup>

After learning of Enright’s plan and Collier’s impending visit, the British government reached out to American policing experts to field their opinion on the IPC. Eventually, they corresponded with the new director of the Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover believed that the end of Enright’s reign as head of the NYPD meant that his organization “had practically passed into oblivion” and that the International Association of Chiefs

7 Richard Enright to Sir Harry Gloster Armstrong, July 7, 1927, MEPO 3/2477, NA.

8 Ethan Avram Nadelmann, *Cops Across Borders: The Internationalization of U.S. Criminal Law Enforcement* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 91.

9 Harry Armstrong to William Horwood, July 8, 1927, MEPO 3/2477, NA.

10 Ibid.

11 Ronald Howe, *The Pursuit of Crime* (London: A. Barker, 1961), 127.

of Police now represented the only such body in America.<sup>12</sup> Hoover stated that “[Enright] has almost been forgotten by the law enforcement officials in the United States, and it would certainly be most unfortunate for his organization to be revived or recognized by the foreign police authorities.”<sup>13</sup> He went on to declare that the United States intended to ease the method of cooperation with foreign police departments by making the Bureau of Investigation the clearing house for international cooperation.

Viewing Enright and his organization as a potential threat to this plan, Hoover suggested that the British government present negative articles on Enright from newspapers in New York to foreign police considering cooperation with the IPC. In an ironic twist, he wanted foreign police to know in particular that the NYPD had to “forcibly bring back to Police Headquarters many papers and documents which Enright had taken with him and which did not belong to him.”<sup>14</sup> Hoover, however, had little need to fear competition from Enright and his cohort. After receiving word of Collier’s impending visit, Horwood declared that the idea of a London conference would “be turned down with a heavy hand.”<sup>15</sup> Collier left the Met empty-handed and resolved – based on a mischievous suggestion from the Home Office – to try to hold the conference in Paris instead.<sup>16</sup>

At the time, Britain’s reservations about the IPC were shared by a number of European countries. These countries did not want to be involved in an organization with supranational intentions, such as the standardization of criminal law or traffic control proposed by Enright. This preference did not represent a lack of enthusiasm for police cooperation, but instead showed a desire to focus on the possible rather than reach for the unattainable. Additionally, European police wanted

12 J. Edgar Hoover to Mr. H. W. Marsh, July 19, 1927, MEPO 3/2477, NA.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 William Horwood to Harry Armstrong, July 20, 1927, MEPO 3/2477, NA.

16 Barron Collier to A.L. Dixon, Home Office, October 29, 1927, MEPO 3/2477, NA.

an organization that was truly international, and not a mislabeled association focused primarily on North America. Finally, these police wanted an international police organization that was serious. The juvenile antics of Enright and Collier led the Metropolitan Police and other foreign police departments to avoid the IPC and search for an alternative.

The alternative that emerged was Interpol, an organization founded in Vienna in 1923. The early British representative to this organization, Leonard Dunning, discovered that the “description of a joy-ride does not apply.”<sup>17</sup> “The Commission,” Dunning wrote, “met from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on each of three days, [and] the discussions were earnest and thorough,” while the conference meals were “simple affairs.”<sup>18</sup> Even the conference photograph, in Dunning’s estimate, managed to suggest “business rather than pleasure.”<sup>19</sup> Dunning also negated fears that the organization hoped to become a supranational organization, writing that Interpol “does not aim at influencing legislation, nor does it seek to touch matters which are more properly approached through diplomatic channels.”<sup>20</sup>

The buttoned-down approach of Interpol, as well as its location in Vienna, helped to draw away European membership from the IPC during the late 1920s. The IPC, however, did not take this occurrence as an opportunity to change its approach, but instead as an opportunity for confrontation. During an Interpol meeting in Antwerp in 1930, members of the IPC, including Enright and Collier’s associate Curt Szekessy, attempted to force their way into the proceedings.<sup>21</sup> Szekessy, described by British Interpol representative Norman Kendal as “a melodramatic figure, [a] Hungarian who speaks American and lives in Paris with an alleged Countess,” served as the European Representative of the IPC as well as

Police Chief of Everglades City – located in (Barron) Collier County, Florida.<sup>22</sup> His goal at Interpol’s conference was to encourage cooperation, or perhaps amalgamation with, the IPC. Kendal wrote that the Antwerp Congress “adopted a resolution to the effect that any application from Mr. Enright or his friends must come through the diplomatic channel and must state specifically whether the members of the organization were serving Police Officers or not before it could be considered at all by the Commission.”<sup>23</sup> He also judged that “with the exception of Monsieur [Florent] Louwage of Belgium [there was] the strongest feeling amongst members of the Commission against having anything to do with Mr. Enright.”<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately for the members of Interpol, the IPC’s push for cooperation only continued with the next meeting of Interpol at the Sorbonne in Paris in September 1931.<sup>25</sup> Barron Collier spent the summer of 1931 campaigning for the inclusion of the IPC in Interpol’s conference program, suggesting that the two organizations should consider combining their groups.<sup>26</sup> Interpol responded to this application by suggesting that a subcommittee made up of members from each organization should be created to explore future cooperation, but declared that Interpol would “maintain its independent position.”<sup>27</sup> Not satisfied

22 Collier first visited the Everglades in 1911 and, after falling in love with the area’s natural beauty, began buying up large tracts of land in the region, both to develop and to preserve. He became the namesake for Collier County after loaning the State of Florida money to complete the Tamiami Trail. Gail Clement, “Everglades Biographies – Barron Gift Collier,” *Reclaiming the Everglades: South Florida’s Natural History, 1884 to 1934*, Everglades Digital Library, Florida International University, <<http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/collier.htm>>.

23 Ibid., 3.

24 Ibid., 3.

25 “8th Meeting of Commission in Paris 1931: Correspondence on International Police Information Bureau,” 1931 1938, MEPO 3/2050, NA; “8th Meeting of Commission in Paris 1931: Reports and Resolutions,” 1931 1933, MEPO 3/2044, NA.

26 Barron Collier to Johann Schober, President of the International Criminal Police Commission, May 22, 1931, MEPO 3/2044, NA.

27 Oskar Dressler to Members of the ICPC, July 1, 1931, MEPO 3/2044, NA.

17 “9th Meeting of Commission in Amsterdam July 1927:

Reports and Resolutions,” 1928 1929, MEPO 3/2046, NA.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 “3rd International Police Congress in Antwerp 1930: Reports and Resolutions,” 1930 1931, MEPO 3/2060, NA.

with this answer, Collier and the IPC revealed in August 1931, barely a month before Interpol's conference, that they would hold their own annual meeting at the same time as Interpol in rooms not already reserved at the Sorbonne. "This meeting," advertised the secretary of the IPC, "offers each of those attending unusual opportunity to take part in the most interesting and instructive series of discussion on police affairs ever before scheduled."<sup>28</sup> Interpol, obviously flummoxed by this turn of events, contacted members again to reiterate that the organization would consider a subcommittee meeting between the two groups, but would not allow either the conferences or the organizations to merge.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the IPC's ham-fisted approach, Interpol's proposed subcommittee between the two organizations materialized at the Paris meeting. Referred to as "The European-American Contact Committee," the subcommittee included Interpol representatives from Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, and H. G. F. Archer from the Metropolitan Police. The IPC contingent featured police commissioners from Detroit, New York, and Montreal. The subcommittee agreed that "efficient co-operation has become absolutely necessary between the criminal police authorities of all nations, considering the increasing extension of international trafficking which has increased the danger resulting from the rapid displacements from one continent to the other of international criminals."<sup>30</sup> On these grounds, the subcommittee decided that the two groups should exchange information on criminals arrested in America or Europe, but Interpol remained adamant that they were not interested in the amalgamation of the two groups. Archer reported that the Belgium representative, Florent Louwage, continued to support the idea of joining the two organizations, but as in 1930, he remained the lone enthusiast for union within Interpol and Europe at large.

Hoping that the Paris subcommittee finally

28 Robert B. Fentress to Norman Kendal, August 15, 1931, MEPO 3/2044, NA.

29 Oskar Dressler to Norman Kendal, August 28, 1931, MEPO 3/2044, NA.

30 H.G.F. Archer, Conference report, MEPO 3/2044, NA, 2.

settled the problem, Interpol organized their 1932 meeting in Rome.<sup>31</sup> Unbeknownst to the majority of members, however, Interpol Secretary Oskar Dressler had invited three members of the IPC to attend this meeting. Their presence, Norman Kendal wrote, caused "a great deal of trouble and argument [because] in theory they were not allowed to attend the meetings, in practice they generally managed to be there."<sup>32</sup> To help manage the situation, Kendal was made chairman of a new subcommittee designed to find a solution to the problem once and for all. "The only result" of this committee, however, "was that the members of the sub-Committee agreed to differ."<sup>33</sup> Kendal met with the American delegation after the subcommittee concluded and told them that "the first thing for them to do was to approach the American Government to appoint some responsible Police Officer as the official American representative [of Interpol]."<sup>34</sup> Commissioner Rutledge of Detroit told Kendal, however, "that there had been great difficulties and jealousies in America between the various associations of Police Chiefs," and that the government would only nominate a representative after these rival associations had settled their differences or amalgamated.<sup>35</sup>

The success of Interpol lay in the fact that the organization created connections between national police forces – or equivalent departments in capital cities – that did not require intervention by official diplomats. Even though Interpol's technology for sharing information remained in its infancy during the 1930s and the organization had yet to agree on what actually constituted an "international crime," the individual members of the organization found the group useful because of the personal connections it fostered, connections that were largely free from bureaucratic red tape. Interpol's success was as much the result of its

31 "9th Meeting of Commission in Rome 1932: Reports and Resolutions"; "9th Meeting of Commission in Rome: Correspondence on Disputed Wording of Resolution," 1932 1933, MEPO 3/2051, NA.

32 Ibid., 1–2.

33 Norman Kendal, Memorandum of 9th meeting of I.C.P.C., November 14, 1932, MEPO 3/2042, NA, 2.

34 Ibid., 2.

35 Ibid., 2.

measured approach as to its central location in Europe.

The efforts of the IPC, on the other hand, failed because the organization proposed changes to international law, which promised the intrusion of diplomats, and because the organization's main representative, the United States, did not have a single police force to speak for its entire country. Though most European countries did not have a national police force, they did present a stable set of de facto national forces, such as the London Met and the French Sûreté, which contained police officers with international experience. America, conversely, presented European police with a confusing rivalry between police departments in major cities as well as between federal agencies such as the FBI. Adding to these issues was the brash manner in which the IPC attempted to graft its organization onto connections already established by Interpol.

Of course, even Interpol sometimes faltered

with political divisions between member nations. Despite these issues, however, Interpol endured, and eventually saw the formal inclusion of several IPC member states – including the United States – in 1938. Unfortunately, this development occurred in the same year that the Vienna headquarters of Interpol were taken over by Nazi Germany during the Anschluss. The organization became defunct during the war, but the interwar success of the group helped to ensure its postwar resurrection. The IPC faded into obscurity, but the failure of this organization does not mean it is now without historical significance. Indeed, the brash tactics used by the IPC to attempt to force its way into Interpol meetings and into liaison arrangements with European police represented a preview of American criminal justice during the Cold War.