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**COMMAND, CONTROL AND CHARISMA:
REFLECTIONS ON POLICE BUREAUCRACY**

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Introduction

Bureaucratization can be regarded as an organizational technique whereby civic pressures are neutralized from the standpoint of the governing regime. In the development of the modern police, bureaucratization has been a major device to commit members to the occupational organization, to the occupational community, and to its norms of subordination and service to a degree where these commitments take precedence over extra-occupational ones to family and community.

The political neutrality and legal reliability of the police in modern societies are less a matter of the social sources of their recruitment than of the nature of internal organization, training and control. While this, of course, is true for all government organizations under a civil service or tenure system, it is true for the police not primarily because they are civil servants in the restricted sense but because of their allegiance to an occupationally organized community that sets itself apart. The situation is particularly crucial for the police since they often are called upon to enforce laws that are unpopular with publics or for which they have no personal sympathy while at the same time they are armed and organized. Perhaps this fundamental significance of police

bureaucratization can be seen by the fact that given a well organized, well disciplined, and internally well regulated police, civil authorities can count on the police if they are assured of the political loyalty or neutrality of the commander. Indeed, the modern police emerged under conditions whereby they were an organized source of stability between the elites and the mass, serving to draw hostility from the elites to themselves and thereby permitting more orderly relations among the elites and the mass.^{1/}

Command Systems

To our knowledge there is no detailed description of the nature of command processes in a police department. It is necessary therefore to rely largely on published discourses that give information on the rhetoric of command and control and that are of variable and unknown validity as descriptions of behavior.^{2/}

Police literature emphasizes the quasi-military nature of police command relations and casual observation in metropolitan police departments indicates that police officials are highly sensitive to "orders from above" and to probabilities of official disapproval of behavior. In principle and in rhetoric, a police organization is one characterized by strict

subordination, by a rigid chain of command, and more doubtfully, by a lack of formal provision for consultation between ranks.

Before accepting this description of its structure uncritically, it is necessary to say that such statements are meaningful only by comparison. We have relatively little data comparing the operating as opposed to the rhetorical nature of command in different types of organizations. In many ways, policing is a highly decentralized operation involving the deployment of large numbers of men alone or in small units where control by actual command, i.e., by issuing orders, is difficult. Furthermore, evidence from the police literature itself suggests that the description is overdrawn, that both internal and external transactions structure the effective range of command and control. Moreover, as J. Q. Wilson points out, it seems quite clear that the variations between "system oriented" as opposed to "professionalized" departments includes fundamental differences in styles of control.^{3/}

Moreover, historical changes in the nature of police work and organization have increased the importance of more subtle and perhaps more important developments in methods of control. In the dialectic of dispersion versus centralization of command, every

development in the technology for police control of the population is accompanied by changes in the capacity of the organization to control its members. Originally the bell or rattle watches were limited in summoning help to the effective range of their "noise;" the addition of "calling the hours" served to monitor the behavior of the patrol (quite generally open to question). Here we see evidence of a classic and continuing dilemma in organizations--that to control subordinates, they must be required to make themselves visible. For the police, this means that when they become visible, they likewise become more calculable to potential violators. Control of the dispersed police was really difficult before the call box that simultaneously enable patrolmen to summon help and enabled commanders to issue calls and require periodic reporting. The cruising car with two-way radio enabled still greater dispersion and flexibility in the allocation of patrols while at the same time bringing the patrolman or team more nearly within the range of constant control. It is now a fundamental duty of the radio patrol officer to remain "in contact," i.e., controllable.

More important, perhaps, is the fact that radio communication coupled with the central complaint

board makes it possible for top management to have independent knowledge of complaints and who is assigned to them before the patrolman or patrol team does and before subordinate commanders. At least a minimum of centralized control then is available not by the direct issuance of commands from superior to subordinate but by means of a paper-matching process whereby the complaint board's written record can be matched with the written record the patrolman is required to generate. This pattern of control by centralized communication and internal organizational audit is highly dependent upon the distribution of telephones in the population. The citizen's telephone enables the police commander to enlist the complainant on a routine basis as part of the apparatus for control of the policeman. A citizen's opportunity to mobilize the police is intricately balanced with that of the commander.

Added to these matters of task organization, in large police departments, the chief's power to command and control is limited by a complex system of "due process" that protects subordinates. This, of course, is true of all civil service organizations. The strong interest in keeping the police "out of politics" coupled with the interest of the rank and file in job

security, however, creates a situation where formally at least the department head must contend with legally empowered authorities in the selection, promotion, and discharge of personnel. Even in matters of internal assignment and definition of task, decisions may impinge on the civil service classification system. Police employee organizations likewise are quite effective in seeing to it that the system of "due process" continues to protect them. Likewise, the individual officer when accused of wrong doing or a crime demands all the safeguards he may deny to those whom he accuses of committing a crime.

Not all police operations are constituted in the fashion of this highly oversimplified picture of so-called routine patrol. Detectives, for example, are less subject to such control. But these considerations of due process bars to centralized command and historical changes in control procedures that rely less on command as a form of control while facilitating the dispersion of patrol, are intended to raise questions about the sociological meaning of the stress on command and to lay the ground for a somewhat more systematic analysis of it.

Forms of Legitimation

Thus far, "command" has been used in two senses. In one, "command" refers to a technique of control in organizations that consists of "giving commands." The directive communication between superior and subordinate may be called "a command," or, if more impersonally clothed, "an order." In another sense, however, command means neither a specific technique of control nor an instance of its use, but something more general--a principle that legitimates orders, instructions, or rules. Orders then are obeyed because they are "commanded."

Sociologists are familiar, of course, with discussions of this type ever since Weber.^{4/} In Weberian terms the police department "as an order" is legitimated by the principle of command. Each form of legitimation, however, as Weber so clearly saw, has a correlative requirement of "attitude" on the part of those subject to its sway. In the case of "an order" legitimated by a rhetoric of command, the correlative expectation is "obedience"--again not as a situational expectation in the case of a given specific command but as a principle relating member to organization. To be "obedient" in this sense carries the same general sense of principle as in the "poverty, chastity and

obedience" of the monk's vow. In a system so legitimated, we can expect that commitment to obedience will be displayed as a sign of membership.

It is not surprising, then, that social scientists who are based in organizations where independence is legitimated, rehabilitation workers based in those where professional discretion and supportiveness are legitimated and police who are based in organizations where obedience is legitimated so often fail to communicate with one another when they are engaged in exchanges of ideologies.

We may point out as well that in orders legitimated by command and exacting obedience, the classic status reward is "honor." The morale and public relations problems of the American police can be more clearly understood as an attempt to substitute public prestige sought in an occupational performance market for the Weberian status regard sought and validated in the "honor market." The American police are denied both, for the public seems unwilling to accord the police status either in the European sense of status honor as representatives of the State or in the more typically American sense of prestige based on a claim to occupational competence.

Command as a basis for legitimacy can be located under any of the three basic types of legitimation

discussed by Weber--the rational-legal, the traditional and the charismatic. Inherently, however, command as a principle focuses on the commander, and the exact nature of the concrete "order" legitimated by the principle of command will depend on the role of the specific commander. Because of this commander focus, the command principle is likely to lead to a mystique of the personal commander and an organizational stress on legitimating specific orders or even general rules as emanating from him.

Command and Task Organization

To regard a metropolitan police system solely in terms of the classic features of the hierarchically oriented command bureaucracy would be mistaken, however. Although the more traditional police departments in American cities are organized on quasi-military command principles, modernized ones display features of other control systems, particularly those of centralized and professional control structures.

The core of the modern metropolitan police system is the communications center, linking as it does by radio dispatch the telephoned demands of a dispersed population with a dispersed police in mobile units. The technology of the radio, the telephone, the

recorder, and the computer permits a high degree of central control of operating units in the field. The more modern police departments for example have tape records of all citizen phone complaints, the response of dispatch to them, and the action of mobile units. This technology also makes possible reporting directly to a centralized records unit. Indeed the more rationalized police command systems make extensive use of the computer as a centralized intelligence system to which mobile units can make virtually direct inquiry, as a "decision maker" about which units are to be dispersed for what service, and as a source of intelligence on the output of personnel and units in the department. Such a centralized and direct system of command and control makes it possible to bypass many positions in the hierarchical command structure, particularly those in the station command. More and more those in the line of authority assume work supervisory or informal adjudicatory rather than strictly command roles.

There undeniably is considerable variability among internal units of a police department in the degree to which they are centrally commanded such that routine patrol is more subject to central command than are certain tactical units, for example. Yet,

all in all, there is a growing tendency for all internal units to operate under programmed operations of a central command rather than under local commanders. Orders not only originate with the central command but pass directly from it.

The centralization of command and control is one of the major ways that American police chiefs have for coping with the tendency toward corruption inherent in traditional hierarchically organized departments. Chiefs no longer need rely to the same extent upon the station commander to implement the goals of the department through the exercise of command. Indeed, a major way that corrupt departments are reformed these days is to reduce the command operations of local commanders, replacing them with centralized command and control. Yet it is precisely in those operations where corruption is most likely to occur, viz. the control of vice, that a centralized command is least effective. The main reason for this is that a centralized command lends itself best to a reactive strategy whereas a professionalized or hierarchically organized command lends itself to a proactive strategy. Vice requires an essentially proactive strategy of policing in the modern metropolis whereas the citizens command for service demands an essentially reactive strategy and tactics.

A central command not only bypasses traditional hierarchical command relations but like the hierarchical command creates problems for the developing professionalized control in police systems. A professionalized model of control respects a more or less decentralized decision-making system where the central bureaucracy, at best, sets general policy and principles that guide the professional. Indeed many police tasks and decisions would appear to lend themselves to a professional as well as technical role relationship with the client.

Yet, the institutionalized and legally defined role of the police formally denies professional discretion to them in decisions of prosecution and adjudication, granting them to professional lawyers. The "professionalizing" police are formally left therefore only with certain decisions regarding public order, safety, service, and arrest. These formal prohibitions coupled with the new technology and centralized command (developed under the banner of professionalization of the police) both serve to decrease rather than enhance discretionary decision making by subordinates. Police organizations become "professionalized", not their members.

Command and Occupational Culture

The internal organizational life of American police departments displays features which distinguish the police from other organizations and which have important implications for the nature of organizational command. These features are the familial and/or ethnic inheritance of occupation, the almost exclusive practice of promotion from within, the large number of formal voluntary organizations that cut across organizational membership and, finally, the existence of legal protections for tenure which inhere in Civil Service regulations.

Specific police jobs differ; yet it is quite important to recognize that fundamentally police status overrides these differentiations. Not only does the basic status override lateral differentiations but it also tends to override differences in rank. Police occupational culture unlike the situation in industry unites rather than divides ranks.

This is perhaps the most fundamental significance of the practice of promoting from within. The fact that all police command personnel came up through the ranks means not only that there is relatively little class distinction among police but that the sharp

differences between managers and workers in industry tends not to appear in the police.

In addition to the vertical spread of police occupational culture due to promotion from within, local recruitment tends to entrench any specific department's version of the more general occupational culture. This combination of occupational culture and organizational culture produces what J. Q. Wilson referred to as "system" oriented departments.^{5/}

Interlinked with the features of local recruitment and internal promotion is the factor of familial and ethnic inheritance of the police occupation. Many occupations are strongly based in ethnicity and many organizations have wide-spread kinship bonds; indeed, some companies advertise the fact. The consequences however are more exaggerated in the police partly because police culture emphasizes distance between the occupation and the general community but more importantly we suspect because of the relative lack of vertical differentiation. Thus police corruption can become spread up precisely because of this lack of differentiation.

Finally, the development of civil service can mean that a rather rigid formal, legal shell is erected around occupational and organizational cultures in a

way that makes the exercise of command from the top even more difficult than it would otherwise be.

It should be noted however that occupational and organizational cultures and the reinforcing solidarities provided by formal organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police and by the legal protections of civil service have another side. They make possible the existence of police systems which function at least moderately well over long periods in a society notoriously inhospitable to police; indeed they are partially a defensive response to that inhospitability. While they may inhibit modernization and reform they do insure that the job will get done somehow. More importantly they provide the irreplaceable minimum structural conditions for at least the basic elements of status honor. They provide the essential precondition for a sense of honor--a relatively closed, secure community (not just organization) of functionaries who can elaborate and apply honor conferring criteria.

These internal solidarities create especial barriers to the effective exercise of command over and above the features of task organization previously discussed. They become particularly significant in attempts at modernization or reform. The police

commander ignores this internal culture at his peril. It can confront him with an opposition united from top to bottom.

The modernizing chief is constrained therefore to make at least symbolic obeisance to police solidarity by demonstrating that he is a "cop's cop" as well as a devotee of systems analysis and psychological screening of applicants. One of the ways he does so is by emphasis in his dress and bearing--the policeman's chief social tool--the ability to command personal respect.^{6/} At least during a period of change, personal charisma and "presence" are of particular significance. He must also make his orders stick, of course.

The reform chief's charisma is of especial significance because of the objective uncertainty of obedience but also because reform depends on the cooperation of a cadre of immediate subordinates whose careers may depend upon the chief's success. His certainty becomes their hope.

Command and Civil Accountability

The structure of command is affected not only by elements of task organization and technology and by the features of occupational and organizational

culture discussed above but also by the relationship between the chief and his civil superiors. In the case of the American municipality, police chiefs, at least traditionally, both at law and in practice, are politically accountable officials who ordinarily stand or fall with the fortunes of their civilian superiors (who are lodged in external systems). Given the often controversial nature of police work, and the often "irrational" and unpredictable nature of political fortunes in municipal government, the American police chief who is responsible to a politically elected official comes close to the position of a "patrimonial bureaucrat" in Weber's terms. His tenure as chief, though not necessarily his tenure in the department, depends on continuing acceptability to the elected official(s).

We have alluded to some of the dimensions along which police departments and their command processes seem to vary--using terms like modernized, rationalized, reformed. It would be possible to indicate other dimensions which intersect these by referring to department age, growth rate and other variables as well as environmental context variables such as variations in civic culture--comparing for example Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is not our intention,

however, to attempt a systematic comparative scheme. In the case of the problem of civic accountability however it is possible to use some of the material presented thus far to begin development of such a scheme.

The relations of police commanders to civil superiors are actually more varied and complex than those depicted above. We shall discuss briefly only the two most important dimensions of variation, the security of tenure of the Chief Commander and the degree to which he is held strictly accountable by a mayor. Given strict accountability plus insecurity of tenure, we can expect a kind of obsession with command and a seemingly "irrational" emphasis on the twinned symbols of the visibility of the commander and the obedience of the force. Some of the rhetoric of command in the police literature likely arises from an attempt to "protect" the chief by the compulsive effort to "overcontrol" subordinates, almost any of whom can get him fired. This amounts to saying that as civil superiors increase the formal accountability of the police chief without changing the tenure features of the role, the increasing bureaucratization of the American municipal police stressed by J. Q. Wilson leads to the development of an

organization animated by a principle of the commanding person.^{7/} This "personalized subordination" to the Hero Chief can become an operating, if not a formal, principle of organization.^{8/}

Increased professionalization can be another accomodative strategy in such a situation, but this time aimed not at control of the force but at control of the Mayor by changing the grounds of accountability. One of the first jobs of the "professionalizing" police chief often is to convince his civil superior that "you can't win 'em all" and that it is irrational and "unprofessional" to dismiss a police chief or commissioner because of failure to solve some particular crime. Perhaps in the long run it is hard to have a professionalized police without a professionalized Mayor. Perhaps also this would lead us to expect different kinds of command styles where a professional city manager intervenes between the chief and the Mayor.

If the civil superior, for whatever reason, does not demand accountability from the chief, the quasi-formalized obsession with "command" as a principle of control may be replaced by a complex system of feudal loyalties. In this situation ties of personal political fealty between chief and Mayor--or between chief and the local "powers"--may become prominent and

"keep your nose clean" the principle of subordination. When this trend goes beyond a certain point, the department is commonly described as politically corrupt. Finally, to the degree that the chief is secure in his tenure, we would expect the obsession with command and the emphasis on personalized subordination to decrease.

On the basis of this analysis of command and the position of the Chief we may distinguish the following four types of departments:

Relation to Mayor	Tenure of Chief	
	Secure	Insecure
Strictly Accountable	Command Bureaucracy	Personalized Command Bureaucracy
Feudal Allegiance	Command Feudality	Personalized "political" feudality

We have consciously chosen words such as "feudality" with outrageously large quotas of surplus meaning since the concern here is to direct attention to features of police organization that receive relatively little attention and to questions of fundamental differences in the consequences of organizational membership between police and other organizations.^{9/}

A word about two of these types seems in order. The command feudality type seems a contradiction in

terms (and indeed derives from the cross-classification itself). Some small municipal and sheriff's departments, where the tenure of the chief in the local "feudal political structure is secure, may fall here. Because everyone is secure in a relatively nonbureaucratic system, the operating principle of subordination can be command. Such an arrangement possibly characterizes the exceptionally long-tenure chiefs discovered in Lunden's study in Iowa.^{10/}

The "personalized command bureaucracy" seems likely to occur where an insecure reform head is in office. To successfully reform he must bureaucratize and rationalize administrative operations. To do this against the inevitable internal resistance he must emphasize the principle of command. To make clear that status quo oriented commanders have been superseded he must emphasize his command and his capacity to command. In short, he must exercise what Selznick defines as one of the crucial functions of leadership in administration. He must define the emerging character of the institution.^{11/}

Conclusion

We have discussed features of American police systems that may account for variations in and possible

changes in command structures and also features that account for both a rhetorical and behavioral emphasis not on one or the other formal command system but on something which seemingly appears as alien and contradictory--the personal charisma of the chief and the emphasis on personalized command as a symbolic if not actual principle of order.

Command, obedience, and honoring strangely in analysis of organizational life in America, except, perhaps, for the military. Yet it seems to us that meaningful analysis of the police must touch upon them as well as upon duty, courage and restraint. The self-image of the police is different because of them. We have already alluded to the fact that the status reward for obedience was honor and that the maintenance of honor requires a status community--not simply a formal organization.^{12/}

The significance of honor is that it lies at the heart of the necessary police virtues--courage, devotion to duty, restraint, and honesty. In the absence of ritually symbolic auspices such as the European State or the English Crown the personal charisma of chiefs is a necessary transitional step to an occupationally based community of honor. In the long run this is the answer to police corruption.^{13/} In the

short run it means that successful police commanders must attempt not to have the police reflect the society but transcend it.

FOOTNOTES

1. Alan Silver, "On the Demand for Order in Civil Society: A Review of Some Themes in the History of Urban Crime, Police and Riot in England", Unpublished paper read at the meetings of the Society for The Study of Social Problems, Chicago, Illinois, August, 1965, p. 11.
2. See for example, Bruce Smith, Police Systems in the United States, second revised edition, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960, esp. Chs. 7-9.
3. James Q. Wilson, "The Police and Their Problems: A Theory," in Carl J. Friedrich and Seymour E. Harris, eds., Public Policy, XII (1963), 189-216.
4. Talcott Parsons, ed., Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, pp. 324 ff.
5. James Q. Wilson, "The Police and Their Problems," op. cit.
6. The ability to command respect personally is more necessary in America than in Britain where police command more respect officially; Cf. Michael Banton, The Policeman in the Community, New York: Basic Books, 1965.
7. James Q. Wilson, "The Police and Their Problems: A Theory," op. cit.

8. One study reports that as compared with welfare workers and school teachers policemen were more likely to personalize authority. Robert L. Peabody, "Perceptions of Organizational Authority: A Comparative Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly, VI (March, 1962), 477-80. SEE also Elaine Cumming, Ian M. Cumming, and Laura Edell, "Policeman as Philosopher, Guide and Friend," Social Problems, 12 (Winter, 1965), 276-297.
9. This typology owes much to the analysis of labor unions in Harold L. Wilensky, Intellectuals in Labor Unions, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956.
10. Walter A. Lunden, "The Mobility of Chiefs of Police," Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, 49 (1958), 178-183.
11. Philip Selznick, Leadership in Administration, New York: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957.
12. Military honor is similarly communal and not just organizational. Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960, esp. chs. IV and V.
13. M. McMullen, "A Theory of Corruption," Sociological Review, 9 (1961), 181-201.