

# BUREAUCRACY

## What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It

---

JAMES Q. WILSON



BasicBooks

*A Division of HarperCollins Publishers*

## CHAPTER I

---

# Armies, Prisons, Schools

ON MAY 10, 1940, Army Group A of General Gerd von Rundstedt left its positions in Germany, moved through Luxembourg, unopposed and through the southern part of Belgium with only slight opposition, and attacked France. By May 13, the 7th Panzer Division led by General Erwin Rommel had crossed the Meuse River near Dinant and elements of General Heinz Guderian's 19th Panzer Corps had crossed the Meuse near Sedan. On May 14, Guderian sent two armored divisions racing west; by May 19 they had crossed the Somme and later that day had reached Abbeville, a short distance from the English Channel. By the end of the month, the British had been evacuated from Dunkirk. On June 22, France capitulated. In six weeks, the German army had defeated the combined forces of Britain, France, and Belgium. It was, in the opinion of many, the greatest military victory of modern times.

The German success was an example of *blitzkrieg* (literally, lightning war). The word has become so familiar that we mistake it for an explanation. Military officers and historians know differently, but the public at large probably thinks that the key to the German victory can be found in some of the connotations *blitzkrieg* suggests to our minds: A fully mobilized German nation, striking suddenly and without warning, uses its numerical superiority and large supply of advanced tanks and aircraft to overpower a French army hiding in the forts and pillboxes of the Maginot line. The Germans, in this view, were superior to the French in strategy, in resources, and in the fanatical will to fight that had been achieved by ideological indoctrination and centralized command.

Virtually every element in this explanation is either wrong or seriously misleading. The Germans gave the French and British plenty of notice that war was imminent: In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland; France and Britain mobilized; and Allied troops moved into forward positions to defend against an expected German thrust. To be sure, the French and British armies were largely idle and increasingly demoralized during the eight-month-long "Phony War," but after the fall of Poland (and later of Norway) there was ample warning of German intentions. By March the French intelligence service had acquired a quite accurate understanding of the German military build-up opposite Sedan; the French military attaché in Switzerland had reported that the Germans had built eight military bridges across the Rhine and even predicted, quite correctly, that the Germans would attack toward Sedan between May 8 and 10.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, French aerial reconnaissance was almost entirely lacking; no one believed the report of a French bomber pilot that there was a sixty-mile-long column of German vehicles, all with their headlights on, moving toward the Ardennes. But the clues were there.

The German army was smaller than the French army<sup>2</sup> and did not have as many tanks as did the French. In 1939, the French army had over 2,342 tanks (compared to the German's 2,171), and the best French tanks were larger and more powerful than the best German ones.<sup>3</sup> (But French tanks, unlike German ones, lacked radios, and so it was hard to maneuver them in concert.) French aircraft were marginally inferior to those of the Germans, but if one adds to the French resources the air forces of Britain and Belgium, the strength of the Luftwaffe was probably no greater than—and may have been less than—that of its adversaries.<sup>4</sup> While the Panzer Corps that made the initial attack were heavily motorized, the German Army as a whole was not. In our vague recollections of lightning thrusts by tank formations, we forget that most of the German army in 1940 walked and most of its supplies were pulled along in horse-drawn wagons. (As late as 1943, the typical German infantry division had 942 motor vehicles and 1,133 horse-drawn vehicles and for its supply required twice as many tons of hay and oats as it did of oil and gasoline.<sup>5</sup>)

Moreover, the key breakthroughs along the Meuse River front were not accomplished by tanks or aircraft. They were accomplished by foot soldiers who paddled rubber rafts across the water, after which they had to climb up steep banks or dodge across open fields under enemy fire. Supporting fire from artillery, aircraft, and tanks helped the crossing, but these crucial engagements were decided by the infantry.

Unlike the First World War, in the Second the French soldiers did not respond to their mobilization orders in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm. There was no crush outside the recruiting offices. "The memories of the Great War were still too recent," historian Alistair Horne was later to write. "The slogan of the moment . . . became 'Let's get it over with.'"<sup>6</sup>

But there is little reason to believe that Germans flocked to their recruiting offices, either; after all, both sides had suffered horribly in 1914-18. The German political leadership attempted to instill Nazi ideology in their rebuilt armies and may have succeeded with the officer corps; they certainly succeeded in the case of the SS divisions. At one time scholars were unanimous in their view that ideology played no role in German combat cohesion; now, newer studies are challenging that view. But however successful the Nazis were in motivating German soldiers, it is still not clear that this motivation took the form of Nazi zealotry among the rank and file.<sup>7</sup> The Germans fought hard in 1940 (and just as hard in 1944, when they were retreating in the face of vastly superior Allied forces), but there is no reason to think that political fanaticism had much to do with their combat cohesion. In Germany as in any nation, then as now, soldiers fight out of some mixture of fear and a desire not to let down (or appear to let down) one's buddies in the squad or platoon.

One might suppose that Germany's brilliant strategy was sufficient to overcome all these limitations in men and matériel. Because it worked, the German strategy was, indeed, brilliant, but it was also an extremely risky strategy that could well have failed. Moreover, it is not clear that the strategy itself was decisive.

Originally, Hitler had wanted to attack France by sending the German army through Holland and Belgium to the Channel coast. In October 1939, General Erich von Manstein acquired a copy of the plan and concluded that it would not work. It lacked any clear strategic objective and would not lead to an opportunity to destroy the French army, the bulk of which would presumably be stationed south of the German attack. Moreover, a German officer carrying top-secret documents fell into Belgian hands when his plane crashed; the papers pointed clearly to a German attack on Belgium, and accordingly elements of the French army moved north.

But if not through Belgium, then where? Manstein suggested the Ardennes Forest in the southernmost tip of Belgium and Luxembourg. This route had the advantage of putting the German army on a direct course toward Paris over a route that was flat and open—once it got through the Ardennes and across the Meuse River. But how could one get tanks, trucks, and tens of thousands of troops through that forest and over that river?

Consider the risks: To transport a single Panzer division by railway required no fewer than eighty trains of fifty-five cars each. And once the armored column left the train and started off down a decent road, it would stretch out in a line seventy miles long and move at a pace not much faster than that at which a man could walk.<sup>8</sup> One French reconnaissance airplane could spot this movement and know immediately the direction of the German attack days before it was launched. Now put that armored

column on a narrow road that twisted and turned through rocky gorges and over hilly, forested terrain. If the lead tank breaks down, hundreds of tanks and trucks behind it are stalled and the invasion stops.

But suppose that there are no air attacks, no unmanageable breakdowns. The converging tank columns must avoid becoming entangled with one another as they emerge from the forest and then cross a river that is one or two hundred yards wide with a steep bank on the other side—a bank that is hard for attackers to climb but easy for defenders to hold. And then suppose that somehow these barriers are surmounted. At last you are in open country, rolling toward Paris and the English Channel. But by turning from south to west, you expose the entire southern flank of your column to the French army. German Field Marshall Fedor von Bock argued that it was “transcending the frontiers of reason” to suppose that such a plan could succeed. “You will be creeping by ten miles from the Maginot line with the flank of your breakthrough and hope the French will watch ineptly! . . . And you then hope to be able to lead an operation as far as the coast with an open southern flank 200 miles along, where stands the mass of the French Army!”<sup>9</sup>

The French Maginot line, much derided by contemporary opinion, weighed heavily on the German planning. This system of fortifications, running from the southwest corner of Luxembourg south and southeast to the Swiss border, was thought to be impregnable, and so far as history will ever tell us, we must assume it was. Except for one small fort, it held out against the Germans until France surrendered.<sup>10</sup> The Germans were not inclined to attack it in force and they worried that counterattacks from it against the German flank would create a serious threat.

Bock's arguments were unavailing. Just three months before the offensive began, Hitler endorsed the Manstein plan. It worked.

On entering the maximum-security prison in Huntsville, Texas, Professor John J. Dilulio, Jr., was struck by its orderly environment. Inmates were dressed in white uniforms, moved about quietly, and spoke to the guards respectfully, addressing them as “sir” or “boss.” Rarely did an inmate accost or speak to Dilulio or any observer. The cells were spartan but clean. The corridors were tidy, the windows unbroken. The food in the mess hall was wholesome and abundant, much of it fresh from the prison farm. In the classrooms where educational programs were conducted, the teacher was clearly in charge, the lesson plans were implemented, and rowdiness was at a minimum. Almost all inmates worked in a prison industry, typically the farm.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, when he entered the maximum-security prison in Jackson, Michigan, Dilulio encountered a noisy, tension-filled atmosphere. Instead of uniforms, the inmates wore whatever seemed to please them. They moved about at will, and spoke in often threatening and vulgar epithets

to the guards. Inmates demanded to know of Dilulio who he was and what he was doing and supplied him with obscene opinions on the genealogy and physical attributes of the warden. The cells were crammed with a variety of personal effects, often piled about in a jumble. In the mess hall, the food was of poor quality. Classroom instruction took place, if at all, in the prison equivalent of a blackboard jungle, in which shouting, aggressive horseplay, and taunting threats aimed at the teacher were more the rule than the exception.

Matters were even worse at the maximum-security prison in Walpole, Massachusetts. Dilulio saw inmates lying in bed with sheets wrapped around them, mummy-style. An officer explained that it was to keep the cockroaches away. One inmate grabbed a stick with a sharp nail protruding from the end and swung it at a guard. Another inmate threatened to throw a guard off the third tier of the cellblock to the concrete floor below. The quality and quantity of food was erratic. On some days, there was not even hot coffee available.

Dilulio's observations were confirmed by those of other outsiders and by statistics supplied by the state correctional authorities. The level of violence was much lower in Texas than in other big-state prisons. Between 1977 and 1979, the homicide rate among Texas inmates was less than one-half of what it was among Michigan inmates and only about one-sixth what it was in California.<sup>12</sup> “Among the larger states,” wrote Bruce Jackson, “only Texas prisoners were at less risk in prison than outside of it.”<sup>13</sup> A study group from the Rand Corporation concluded that in achieving inmate security, “the Texas system is regarded as the most successful and efficient in the nation. . . . The facilities are extraordinarily clean and free from disturbances.”<sup>14</sup> Even though Texas guards have traditionally enforced the rules rigorously, and Michigan guards have admittedly overlooked many inmate infractions, the percentage of the inmate population that had acquired at least one disciplinary infraction for a serious matter (making threats, having contraband, inflicting violence, attempting an escape) was far smaller in Texas than in Michigan.<sup>15</sup> The suicide rate was much lower among Texas than among Michigan inmates.<sup>16</sup>

Order in the Texas prisons was not purchased at the price of educational or counseling programs. The state offered a full range of medical and educational services as well as a variety of prison industries, ranging from agriculture to computer programming.

The orderliness of the Texas prisons did not prove to be permanent. Beginning around 1983, the level of violence and disorder increased. Whereas there was no homicide inside a Texas prison in 1978, by 1983 there were ten and in 1984 there were twenty-five. In six years, the murder rate increased six-fold.<sup>17</sup> Other statistics confirmed the unhappy trend. Inmate assaults on prison guards and on other inmates rose dramatically.<sup>18</sup> Corridors that once were spotless became littered, windows that once were



clean and intact became dirty or broken. Predatory inmate gangs, organized along racial and ethnic lines, sprang up. The appearance and manner of the inmates deteriorated. But for many years, the Texas prisons were a model for the rest of the nation.

The explanations for this superiority that first came to mind turn out, on close inspection, to be wrong or incomplete. It was not money: State expenditures per inmate were much higher in Michigan (and most other large states) than they were in Texas. It was not manpower: Texas employed fewer guards per one hundred inmates than did Michigan. It was not the amount of training given to guards: In Texas they received 80 hours of formal preservice training; in Michigan they received 640. It was not the absence of crowding: Texas prisons had more inmates per square foot of floor space than did those of Michigan or California. And it was not repression: Though there are some differences of opinion on this, most outside observers, including Dilulio, found little or no evidence of guard brutality. (There is reason to believe that some inmate trustees, called "building tenders," abused their authority and physically coerced other inmates, but the low total level of violence in the prisons suggests that this inmate-on-inmate violence could not, by itself, explain the more orderly nature of Texas prisons.)

Texas inmates are somewhat different from those in California and Michigan. Because Texas judges are more likely to imprison convicted offenders, Texas inmates tend to have less serious criminal records than do those in California and Michigan.<sup>19</sup> This conceivably might make the average Texas inmate more tractable and less violent than his counterpart elsewhere. But as Dilulio points out, we know very little about the relationship, if any, between prior record and inmate behavior. Moreover, when the conditions in Texas prisons began to deteriorate, there had been no significant change in the characteristics of the inmate population. What the Texas system once was able to achieve with a given group of inmates, it no longer was able to achieve with essentially the same group. Most telling, Dilulio describes a California maximum-security prison run Texas-style (but without building tenders) by the brother of a former Texas prison director. Despite being very crowded and housing serious offenders, this facility had lower rates of violence, a neater appearance, and better educational programs than most other similar California institutions.<sup>20</sup>

Inmate characteristics, therefore, cannot be the whole story.

Something else—something much more important than money, training, crowding, or inmate traits—was at work. What?

By the 1970s, George Washington Carver High School in Atlanta, Georgia, had become an educational basket case. Located in an all-black, low-income neighborhood, it drew its nine hundred pupils mainly from public

housing projects where most of the families were female-headed and on welfare.<sup>21</sup>

The teachers, none of whom lived in the area, were demoralized, and understandably so. The school hallways were dirty and much of the equipment was broken. The students were disorderly and fights were common; not much learning was taking place. By all the standard measures, pupil achievement was low, among the lowest in the city. As Carver High became known as a problem school, other schools in the city tried to transfer problem students there in order to put them out of sight and out of mind. Carver was becoming the dumping ground of the city's educational system. The superintendent was considering closing it.

By the time Carver was visited by Professor Sara Lawrence Lightfoot in the early 1980s, it was hard to believe that anybody had ever considered closing it. The halls and rooms were clean. The equipment worked. The students were neatly dressed and mannerly and they seemed to take pride in their high school. Some teachers had left, but most of those who remained were enthusiastic about what they were accomplishing in the classrooms. Achievement levels had risen, though not by much. Far from being seen as a dumping ground, students from other poor neighborhoods were seeking transfers to Carver.

Carver is not the only inner-city school to have turned itself around. Similar examples can be found in many other cities. Though it is difficult to generalize about what factors were associated with these changes, there is a good deal of evidence from studies comparing good and bad schools about what factors do not account for these differences.

At Carver, neither the teaching staff nor the student body changed very much. Essentially the same teachers taught the same students before and after the school's transformation. After the publication in 1966 of the famous Coleman Report (technically, the Equal Educational Opportunity Survey), one would not have expected this. That study of school achievement among hundreds of thousands of pupils in hundreds of American schools found that the characteristics of the students and their families were the best predictors of school achievement. Once those characteristics are held constant, one would expect only small differences in pupil achievement that could be attributed to readily observable differences among the schools.<sup>22</sup>

But other things learned from the Coleman Report are consistent with what happened at Carver. The Coleman group found no significant differences in educational attainment that were associated with the quality of school buildings, the level of expenditures, or the size of classrooms. Similar conclusions have been reached by other researchers. For example, economist Eric A. Hanushek reviewed 130 studies of school outcomes and concluded that the level of resources made no appreciable difference in pupil achievement.<sup>23</sup> In England, Michael Rutter and his colleagues, as-

sessing the differences in educational outcomes among twelve high schools in London, found that these differences bore no significant relationship to the size or age of the school buildings, the number of pupils per 100 square feet of floor space, or the pupil-teacher ratios in the classrooms.<sup>24</sup> At Carver, no new buildings were erected, there was not much of an increase in per pupil expenditures, and the number of children in the average classroom did not change.

But *something* must have changed at Carver and at other schools like Carver. Whatever it was, it is not easily detected in surveys of the "objective" features of school organizations.

This book has begun with brief accounts of the differences among three common and important kinds of government organizations—differences, that is, among bureaucracies. The next chapter will try to explain why these organizations with similar tasks differed in their behavior (or, in the case of Carver, how it changed its behavior) and derive whatever lessons that can be learned from these examples.

The reason for proceeding in this way is not, however, to teach the reader how to run an army, a prison, or a school. Rather, it is to remind ourselves that bureaucracy is a complex and varied phenomenon, not a simple social category or political epithet. In the recurring debate about how large (and presumably how bureaucratic) government should be, all sides tend to treat government agencies as stereotypes. Liberals who want the government to play a large role in society often either minimize the problems created by bureaucratic rule or assume that problems can be solved simply by spending more money, constructing better facilities, hiring better people, or vesting the clients of these agencies with more rights. Conservatives who want the government to play a smaller role in our lives taunt liberals for their misguided optimism about the nature of bureaucratic rule and urge that bureaucracy be curtailed, but often they apply their critique of bureaucracy inconsistently: "Let us have fewer welfare offices but a bigger army."

It is essential that we think seriously about which public goals can best be achieved under public or private auspices, and this book will conclude with some observations on that issue. But however large or small the public sector should be, it is unlikely that this nation will ever decide to do without an army, or choose to turn over the armed services to private enterprise. Possibly prisons and schools can be better managed by private enterprise, but in the foreseeable future this nation, like most, will rely heavily on public prisons and public schools to attain important criminal justice and educational objectives. Private security companies are numerous and growing, but public police departments are here to stay. The State Department may be a rich source of bureaucratic jokes, but con-

ducting foreign affairs is no joke and for the most part can be done only by a public bureaucracy.

There are two ways to look at government agencies: from the top down and from the bottom up. Most books, and almost all elected officials, tend to take the first view. The academic perspective, much influenced by Max Weber (and lately by economic theories of the firm), typically centers on the structure, purposes, and resources of the organization. The political perspective draws attention to the identity, beliefs, and decisions of the top officials of the agency. These are important matters, but the emphasis given to them has caused us to lose sight of what government agencies *do* and how the doing of it is related to attaining goals or satisfying clients.

There are two circumstances under which a top-down view is warranted. Both require us to know what the agency is doing on a day-to-day basis. One circumstance exists when the goals an agency is to serve can be precisely specified in advance and progress toward those goals can be reliably measured by its top officials. In chapter 9 I call such agencies "production organizations" and give as an example the management of the retirement program by the Social Security Administration. The other circumstance occurs when an interest group closely monitors the work of an agency (even one with somewhat vague goals) and reports its judgments in a persuasive manner to the legislature. In chapter 5 I call this condition "client politics" and give as examples the old Civil Aeronautics Board and the present-day Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

But many, perhaps most, government agencies do not meet either of these conditions, though we sometimes suppose they do. Everyone knows what soldiers, prison guards, and schoolteachers do, so what is interesting about armies, prisons, and schools must be their structures, budgets, and rules. But if that is correct, why then did Carver High School change so dramatically without any change in its structure or budget? Why did the German army defeat the French army without having access to greater resources? The organizational structure of state departments of corrections are pretty much the same, yet very different prisons are run by these departments, in ways that depend very little on their budgets.

In other cases we do not assume we know exactly what the members of a government agency do. We wonder, and sometimes worry, about what the officers of the Central Intelligence Agency or agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration really do. We assume, however, that their behavior results from rules, laws, and organizational structure, and so we can change that behavior by changing the rules, laws, and structures. This view often governs the actions of political leaders who press for government reorganizations. Because of this assumption, these leaders—or the scholars who evaluate their actions—are often surprised to learn that the reorganization did not accomplish their objectives. Several studies have

noted the failures of reorganization.<sup>25</sup> Many of these resulted from having looked at the agency in question from the top down.

For example, political scientist Patricia Rachal studied the effort made in the early 1970s to reorganize the federal role in narcotics law enforcement.<sup>26</sup> It involved creating a new agency—the Drug Enforcement Administration—inside the Department of Justice, into which would be merged the old Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (itself the product of a reorganization plan five years earlier) and certain personnel from the Customs Service. The object was to end the duplicative and frequently competitive efforts of Customs and BND and to improve the quality of the investigations aimed at major-trafficking organizations. But the interagency rivalries did not end, the investigative strategies did not significantly change, and by 1981 another reorganization was in the offing. Rachal's explanation for this failure was not that the reorganization had only cosmetic, political purposes; not that the people who carried it out were incompetent or wrongly motivated; not that the problems aimed at were imaginary; rather, it failed because its architects did not fully understand what narcotics agents did and why they did it one way rather than another.

By looking at bureaucracies from the bottom up, we can assess the extent to which their management systems and administrative arrangements are well or poorly suited to the tasks the agencies actually perform. By taking this perspective we can explain behavior that otherwise seems puzzling. For example:

- When the Tennessee Valley Authority was created in the 1930s, it was attacked by conservatives because it threatened the well-being of private electric utilities. Within a few decades it was being criticized by liberals because it behaved just like a private utility. Why?
- When Robert S. McNamara was secretary of defense in the 1960s, he raised the military budget but was disliked by the military brass. When Melvin Laird was secretary of defense in the 1970s, he cut the military budget but was liked by the brass. Why?
- For years, the State Department hired Soviet citizens, many if not all of whom were KGB agents, to be cooks, chauffeurs, and repairmen in the American Embassy in Moscow. When it was suggested that it replace the KGB agents with American citizens, the State Department resisted. Why?
- The United States Air Force jealously guards its command of a large fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles that it regularly seeks to improve. But when the ICBM was first proposed, the air force was indifferent and even hostile to such missiles. Why?
- The United States government has sought to increase the propor-

tion of women working in shipyards. Private shipyards have shown larger such increases than have government-owned shipyards. Why?

- When a new police chief is appointed in order to improve the quality of local law enforcement, the crime rate rarely goes down but the number of traffic tickets issued often goes up. Why?

- When the Environmental Protection Agency was created, economists who had studied the matter argued almost unanimously that the most efficient way to reduce pollution was to assess an effluent charge on polluters. The EPA ignored this advice and instead sued polluters in court. Why?

In the chapters that follow, I try to explain these and other puzzles by offering (for the most part) a bottom-up view of the work of government agencies. I think this is a useful corrective to the perspective common in many political, legal, and academic circles. But such a view, carried too far, can blind us to the important policy and structural choices made by presidents, governors, mayors, legislatures, and courts. The freedom of action of bureaucrats is importantly constrained, and sometimes wholly determined, by the decisions of their political superiors. In Part V I try to make that clear. I also try in other places to specify the conditions under which political dominance of the bureaucracy is more or less likely to occur. By beginning with three important bureaucracies—armies, prisons, and schools—I hope I have made it clear that studying the goals, resources, and structures of an agency is not always a very helpful clue to what it will do. In the next chapter I will suggest some better clues.

## CHAPTER 2

# Organization Matters

THE GERMAN ARMY, the Texas prisons, and Carver High School did a better job than their rivals because they were, or became, better organizations.

### Armies

The key difference between the German army in 1940 and its French opponents was not in grand strategy, but in tactics and organizational arrangements well-suited to implementing those tactics. Both sides drew lessons from the disastrous trench warfare of World War I. The Germans drew the right ones.

By the end of that war, it was evident to all that large frontal assaults by infantry against well-entrenched soldiers manning machine guns and supported by artillery would not be successful. A rifleman who must cross three hundred yards of No Man's Land, slipping and staggering through the countless shell holes made by his own side's artillery bombardment and desperately trying to get over or around barbed-wire barricades, had no chance against the murderous fire of dug-in machine guns. The French decided that under these circumstances the advantage belonged to the defense, and so organized their armies around a squad (or *groupe de combat*) of twelve men whose task it was to fire, serve, and support a machine gun. The rifle was regarded as a subsidiary weapon; only three riflemen were assigned to a *groupe* and their level of training was low. These soldiers, dedicated to the support of the machine gunners, were ideally suited to defend a trench but hopelessly ill-suited to a war of maneuver.<sup>1</sup>

The Germans drew a different lesson. Trench warfare led to stalemate, and Germany, surrounded on all sides by potential enemies with larger manpower reserves, could not afford a stalemate. Therefore, the defensive advantage of entrenched machine gunners had to be overcome. But how? There were only two ways—to make the attacking soldiers bulletproof by putting them in armored vehicles, or to make them hard to shoot by deploying them as infiltrators who could slip through weak points in the enemy's line and attack the machine guns from the rear.<sup>2</sup> When we recall the Panzer divisions with their hundreds of tanks, we may suppose that the Germans chose the first way. They did not. The Panzers were chiefly designed to exploit a breakthrough, not to create one. To create it, the Germans emphasized infiltration warfare.

Their first experiment with this method occurred in 1916 at the battle of Verdun. Abandoning the conventional massed infantry attack preceded by a prolonged artillery barrage (that eliminated surprise and chewed up ground that had to be crossed), the Germans used a brief barrage followed by small groups of infantrymen who probed for weak spots.<sup>3</sup> Gains were made but they were not exploited. A year later a German army used these tactics systematically to attack Riga; the city fell in two days.<sup>4</sup> Further successes along these lines followed at Caporetto.

The Germans sought to use infiltration tactics to produce a *kessel-schlacht* (literally, cauldron battle): a grand envelopment of the opponent's position by turning his flank and spreading out in his rear, exploiting the gains with deep thrusts toward headquarters units (*blitzkrieg*). Under the leadership of General Hans von Seeckt, chief of the army in the early 1920s, this doctrine of maneuver was refined and expounded. It not only fit the lessons of World War I, it fit the realities of Germany's geopolitical position. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was limited to a small professional army that would have to contend with enemies on both the east and the west. It could not match the combined manpower of all of these rivals and it could not afford a war of attrition. Thus, a quick and decisive offensive waged by numerically inferior forces was essential to success.<sup>5</sup>

Such tactics required a certain kind of organization, and the Germans set about creating it. An army that could probe enemy defenses, infiltrate weak points, and rapidly exploit breakthroughs with deep encircling moves could not be an army that was centrally directed or dependent on detailed plans worked out in advance. It had to be an army equipped and organized in such a way as to permit independent action by its smallest units—squads, platoons, and companies. The squad (*gruppe*) should not be tied down to the task of carrying or serving a heavy, water-cooled machine gun. Instead, it should be organized into two sections. The largest (the *stoss trupp*) would consist of seven men armed with rifles and, as resources permitted, with light, rapid-firing machine pistols and submachine guns.



The other, smaller section of four men would service a new, light machine gun weighing only twenty-five pounds.<sup>6</sup>

Designing and equipping such a unit were the easiest tasks. The difficult—and crucial—job was to staff and lead it in such a way that it was capable of intelligent, aggressive, and independent action. This meant that the best soldiers would have to be placed in the squads, especially the *stoss* (or assault) *truppen*, not assigned to headquarters or other rear elements. The officers and noncommissioned officers commanding these small units would have to be given substantial freedom of action. Officers and men alike would have to be given incentives that rewarded fighting prowess, especially that which required them to run risks. Following each battle there would be a rigorous evaluation of the efforts and results. For two decades, the German army devoted itself to solving these organizational problems.

What resulted was a system wholly at odds with the stereotypical view of the German army as composed of fanatical soldiers blindly obeying the dictates of a Prussian general staff. Discipline was severe but it was discipline in service of a commitment to independent action on behalf of combat objectives. In this regard, the post-1920 plans represented a continuation of a military tradition stretching back well into the nineteenth century. The central concept was *auftragstaktik*, translated by Martin van Crevel in his brilliant analysis of German fighting power as a "mission-oriented command system."<sup>7</sup> Commanders were to tell their subordinates precisely what was to be accomplished but not necessarily how to accomplish it. The mission must "express the will of the commander in an unmistakable way," but the methods of execution should be limited "only where essential for coordination with other commands."<sup>8</sup> The German army, compared to its rivals (or even to the contemporary American army), had remarkably little paperwork. Orders were clear but brief.

The best German soldiers were expected to be the storm troopers, the best German officers were those that distinguished themselves by leading men in battle. Selecting personnel for specific military specialties (infantry, motor transport, supply, and so on) was not the responsibility of a personnel organization located in the rear but of combat (usually regimental) commanders.<sup>9</sup> In choosing officers, character, especially willpower and a readiness to accept responsibility, counted more than education.<sup>10</sup> Officers at first were chosen by the regimental commanders to whom the candidates had applied; when later this was replaced by a central screening office, the testing focused on physical, pedagogical, and leadership abilities. Even then, the final choice was left in the hands of the regimental commanders.

Soldiers and officers were indoctrinated with the primacy of combat and the central importance of initiative. The 1936 command manual put it this way: "The emptiness of the battlefield demands independently

thinking and acting fighters who exploit each situation in a considered, determined, and bold way. They must be thoroughly conscious of the fact that only results matter. . . . *Thus decisive action remains the first prerequisite for success in war.*"<sup>11</sup> Though there were efforts at Nazi indoctrination, they were not centrally managed by Nazi leaders and probably had little effect. The real indoctrination was called "spiritual strengthening" (*geistige Betreuung*) and was the responsibility of the commanding officers.

Medals were awarded chiefly for taking successful independent action in combat (Crevel estimates that medals were given much more commonly for this reason in the German army than in other armies). Punishment was often harsh (it is estimated that over eleven thousand German soldiers and officers were executed during the Second World War, many for "undermining the war effort,"<sup>12</sup> but discipline did not fall disproportionately on hapless soldiers. There were almost as many officers and NCOs punished for mishandling subordinates as there were soldiers punished for attacking their superiors.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps because of this, perhaps because German officers (unlike French and American ones) were allowed to fraternize with soldiers when off duty, German soldiers, when interviewed, had a high opinion of their NCOs and officers, describing them as brave and considerate.<sup>14</sup>

To maintain fighting spirit among the squads, platoons, and companies on which combat success so heavily depended, the German army was built up on a local basis. Military units up to the size of a division were formed out of men with the same regional backgrounds—Prussians, Saxons, Bavarians, and so on.<sup>15</sup> When replacements were necessary, they were drawn, so long as wartime exigencies permitted, from the same regions and organized into groups that were then given their final training by a division's field-replacement battalion so as to insure that the new troops would be organized and trained by the men alongside whom they would fight.<sup>16</sup>

The result was an organization well adapted to the task of getting men to fight against heavy odds in a confused, fluid setting far from army headquarters and without precisely detailed instructions. As Crevel summarizes it, the German soldier "fought for the reasons men have always fought: because he felt himself a member of a well-integrated, well-led team whose structure, administration, and functioning were perceived to be . . . equitable and just."<sup>17</sup>

Of course, strategic and technological factors helped. The Manstein plan, despite its risky features, had the advantage of leading to a decisive engagement, not to an inevitable stalemate. The *Stuka* dive bomber was an effective psychological weapon against French troops that had never seen it nor heard its screaming descent. German tanks had radios, French tanks did not. The French advanced too many of their best troops north

into Belgium, where the main attack did not come, and too few toward Sedan, where it did. But in war, good tactics can often save a flawed strategy, whereas bad tactics can rarely make even an excellent strategy succeed. The French prepared, tactically as well as strategically, to reflight World War I, a war of fixed positions and massed firepower. For such a war they made reasonably good preparations—drawing up detailed mobilization plans, building heavy fortifications, acquiring large quantities of tanks and artillery, organizing their squads around heavy machine guns, and maintaining tightly centralized control over operations. Had they adopted different tactics embedded in a more flexible organization, their strategic errors might not have counted so heavily against them.

## Prisons

The Texas Department of Corrections, during the years when it ran what was arguably the best prison system in the United States, based its management of institutions on a clear understanding of the central problem confronting wardens and guards: How do you keep order inside the walls when you are outnumbered and outmuscled by the inmates?

It cannot be done simply by force. Guards can band together to overwhelm a single prisoner, but they cannot do so continuously or against every inmate, yet the threat of unruly behavior is continuous and general. Guards can use weapons to cope with inmate mobs, just as a nation can resort to war to defeat an adversary. But guards, like nations, can only use armed force for the most serious threats, leaving to the imagination and initiative of the prisoners opportunities for misconduct just short of what ever will trigger an armed reprisal.

Some prison authorities believe order can be maintained by encouraging inmates to accept responsibility for their own actions. John Dillulio called this the “responsibility model” and quotes an administrator of the Michigan prisons on how this philosophy shapes the management of that state’s prisons: “You have to keep control . . . but we don’t have to smother people to keep things under control. We try to show the inmates respect and expect it in return. We are more willing than Texas to give them air [i.e., freedom] and then hold them accountable. . . . We attempt to operate safely in the least restrictive environment possible.”<sup>18</sup>

The Michigan philosophy does not condone violence, of course, but provided violence does not erupt, rule enforcement should be minimized. An inmate is classified on the basis of his likely behavior at intake and sent to the least restrictive facility appropriate to his predicted conduct. The rule book reminds guards that “there is no requirement that every rule violation” be handled formally or followed by a sanction, noting that

“in many cases verbal counseling or summary action should be the first response to the apparent misconduct.”<sup>19</sup>

Inmates should be allowed to move about relatively freely, dress according to their personal tastes, keep many personal effects in their cells, and refuse, if so inclined, to attend educational and rehabilitative programs. Outsiders may telephone and visit frequently with inmates. Inmate organizations are not only tolerated but encouraged “as a means of prisoner self-expression and self-development.”<sup>20</sup> Inmates are expected to obey orders, but if they disagree with an order an appeal and grievance procedure exists.

The consequence of this management philosophy, as we saw in chapter 1, was a set of prisons that were disorderly and often violent (though not as violent as those in some other states), where little meaningful work or education occurred, and in which guard morale was low. Security problems were compounded by the amount of personal property inmates were allowed to receive and keep, property that was often used to make weapons or conceal contraband. Because some prisoners were stronger or had more valuables than others, Dillulio observed a convict class system, with certain inmates able to exert authority over or take advantage of others.<sup>21</sup> Given the detailed rules governing prisoner rights, discipline, appeals, and grievances, administrators were inundated with a torrent of paperwork.

The Texas Department of Corrections, under the leadership of its former executive, George Beto, developed a radically different solution to the problem of maintaining order. Known as the “control model,” it was based on the assumption that prisoners were impulsive, often dangerous individuals who, left to their own devices, would attempt to take advantage of each other and of the guards. In the eyes of Beto, convicted criminals were persons lacking in an internalized code of discipline, a fact that was evident not only in their criminality but in their indifference to the conventional customs of daily life:

Observe these inmates. Most of them have simply never known discipline, internal or external. . . . In prison, these men, most of them for the first time in their lives, are made to experience external discipline. They must take a bath every day. They must shave. They must wear fresh clothes. They must wait in lines and be respectful to others.<sup>22</sup>

In this view, inmates were not to be regarded as incarcerated citizens but as convicted criminals. Given the defects in their character, Beto organized his institutions to treat all inmates in a maximum-security setting in which the most minute details of their daily lives were closely regulated. The prisons were governed as paramilitary organizations.

Inmates were required to bathe, shave, and dress in neat uniforms.

Every minute of their day was regulated by a detailed schedule.<sup>23</sup> They arose early, ate breakfast in a mess hall, and walked quietly to their work stations following lines painted on the corridor floors. They were required to address guards as "boss" or "sir." Inmate gangs or associations were forbidden. Even casual groupings in the corridors or yards were broken up.

If they obeyed the rules and behaved properly in classes and at work, inmates earned points that could be exchanged for extra privileges and, most important, for early release. (As of 1982, a prisoner could earn as much as two days off his sentence for every problem-free day served in prison.<sup>24</sup>) If inmates broke the rules, punishment, in the form of extra work duties or time in solitary confinement, was swift and certain. The object of all this was not rehabilitation (though some Texas officials thought the external discipline might help achieve that end) but habituation: making each unruly offender a tractable inmate.

The rules, though clear and detailed, were not extensive and could be listed easily in a small handbook given to each inmate on arrival. The guards and administrators had reports to fill out (all inmate misconduct, for example, was to be promptly reported in writing), but the paperwork was not so onerous as to prevent the administrators, including Beto, from spending a good deal of time in the prison observing the daily routine.

The control model, as Dillullo observed it, was not without its problems. In the hands of a cruel administrator it could become an engine of cruelty. Some of its organizational features were open to abuse. For example, prison administrators selected certain inmates, known as building tenders, to assist them in running the cellblocks. All groups develop leaders, even those in prison; Texas administrators felt it imperative that they, not the prisoners, select the inmate leaders. These building tenders had a certain amount of privilege and authority that without careful selection and control could be used for illicit purposes.

After Beto's retirement, the task of supervising the building tenders became too much for prison administrators who lacked his skill and who confronted an explosive increase in the number of inmates. Some tenders began to abuse their authority, occasionally using violence against other inmates to enforce their demands. The conduct of the tenders became an important issue in the federal court hearings over alleged abuses in Texas prison management. The sweeping order issued by Judge William Wayne Justice in 1980 put an end to the building tender system.<sup>25</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the Texas prisons had lost much of their orderly, violence-free character. There is little agreement on why the change occurred: some blame the intervention of the federal judge, others fault the collapse of external political support for the Department of Corrections, and still others argue that the increase in prison population strained the old order to the breaking point. But most agree that Beto's successors as

chief of the Department were unable, for a variety of reasons, to sustain his management system and some of them (such as Raymond Procnier, imported from California to "fix up" the Texas prisons) did not even try.<sup>26</sup> The organizational system and philosophy that had made Texas prisons a model for much of the rest of the nation was scrapped.

## Schools

The dramatic change in Atlanta's Carver High School was caused by a dynamic new principal, Norris Hogans. He was an energetic, dominant personality with great willpower and a deep conviction that the school, to be a good school, had first to become a safe and orderly school.

As Sara Lightfoot described the process, Hogans announced a dress code, banned radios and stereos from the hallways and playgrounds, eliminated the graffiti from the walls, and insisted that the hallways and restrooms be kept clean. His managerial system was authoritative, even authoritarian. Teachers and students alike felt his presence; Lightfoot described him as having a "heavy hand and an autocratic style" and projecting a "big-daddy, paternalistic image."<sup>27</sup>

Order was important, but only as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Hogans stressed the importance of education, especially vocational education. He created a new work-study program in which students would spend half their time at school and half working at jobs in the city. To help acquaint them with business and job opportunities, Hogans devised an Explorers' Program whereby students, dressed in white uniform jackets, visited Atlanta firms to meet with their executives. Once a year, Hogans presided over a Free Enterprise Day at which awards were given to students who had completed the work-study program, and exercises were held in honor of "democracy, free enterprise, and capitalism."

Hogans's experiences at Carver High were not unique. There is by now a substantial literature on effective schools and the processes by which schools improve. Gwendolyn J. Cooke describes a disorderly, all-black middle (or junior high) school in which the norm was to "leave the teachers alone and let the students fail."<sup>28</sup> Its transformation by a new principal involved some of the same strategies (though not the same tactics) found at Carver: strong leadership by the principal, a heavy emphasis on creating a safe and orderly environment, and a focus on teaching basic skills in an environment in which learning was expected. Unlike Hogans at Carver, however, this principal tried to share educational leadership with a faculty committee, but soon the teachers sought to have the principal transferred for having exceeded her authority. Instead, the principal saw to it that several dozen teachers were transferred out.

Kenneth Towel was the principal of the Franklin K. Lane High School in Queens, New York, at the time when it, like Carver, was seen as the leper of the city's school system. He had to get teachers once again to make education a paramount objective and this required him to address their safety and security concerns. His experiences in turning the school around led him to write a doctoral dissertation comparing what he learned with the experience of three other urban high school principals. He concluded that all held identical views of their mission: "to resolve the crisis atmosphere and create the conditions under which students could attend school safely and learn."<sup>29</sup> To accomplish this each principal had to adopt an authoritarian attitude toward the staff and to maintain tight control over the changes. But once the schools were set on a course of orderly progress, a different, more consultative management system seemed preferable.

There is disagreement among scholars on the extent to which "good" schools actually improve the educational achievement of pupils independently of their native abilities and family backgrounds. Some researchers have found significant effects,<sup>30</sup> others have found little or no effect.<sup>31</sup> The most comprehensive and systematic comparisons have been those of James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore in their study of public and private high schools in America.<sup>32</sup> Their conclusions, based on the most elaborate data yet gathered, is that private and Catholic high schools produce greater educational achievement on the average, as measured by standardized tests, than do public high schools after controlling, statistically, for family background.<sup>33</sup>

The reasons for the more impressive results of private and Catholic schools is central to the lessons one might learn from efforts to transform Carver High or Lane High School: "the greatest differences in achievement between private and public schools are accounted for by school-level behavior variables (that is, the incidence of fights, students threatening teachers, and so forth)."<sup>34</sup> In other words, differences in educational attainment crucially depend on differences in order and discipline. The inference one may draw is that creating a secure and fair environment is a necessary precondition to learning. Similar results were obtained by Michael Rutter and his colleagues in their study of twelve London schools.<sup>35</sup> These studies have been criticized, but not supplanted or destroyed. In my judgment, their results may be modified but their central findings will in general be substantiated. There have been several reviews of the burgeoning literature on effective schools and many come to similar conclusions, sometimes described as the "six-factor model": Effective schools tend to have strong principals who provide leadership in instructional matters, to have teachers with high expectations of student achievement, to emphasize learning basic skills, to maintain good order and dis-

cipline, to evaluate students on a regular basis, and to devote large amounts of time to study.<sup>36</sup>

There is disagreement about how many of these factors are essential and about the quality of the evidence supporting their importance.<sup>37</sup> But there can be little doubt that, whatever their impact on educational achievement, schools with similar students can and do differ dramatically in their order, atmosphere, and ethos. To most students and parents, these are no small accomplishments.

## Some Generalizations

Organization matters, even in government agencies. The key difference between more and less successful bureaucracies, if these three cases are any guide, has less to do with finances, client populations, or legal arrangements than with organizational systems.

Only two groups of people deny that organization matters: economists and everybody else. To many economists, government organizations are like firms: black boxes that convert, at the will of a single entrepreneur, inputs into outputs. Until very recently, the firm had been the atom of economics, the irreducible unit of analysis whose behavior was that of a disembodied intellect calculating the marginal costs and revenues of alternative courses of action. Of late, some economists have become interested in why firms should exist at all and, once they do, how those in charge get their subordinates to do what they consider rational from the firm's point of view. This concern has been elaborated into theoretically interesting (though, as yet, empirically rather arid) arguments about the relationships of principals and agents. This is an issue to which we shall frequently return. But as economists have extended their interest in the firm to include government agencies, they have brought with them, by and large, the conventional view of the firm, that is, somebody (an entrepreneur, a bureau chief) maximizing his or her utility under a set of market or political constraints. That bureaucracies may adopt different organizational arrangements with different consequences is still about as foreign a notion as the possibility that some business firms may act in ways not predicted by marginal-cost economics.

Noneconomists do not need to be told that firms and agencies are complex entities with an internal life far more subtle and changeable than anything that could be described as a maximized utility. But having thrown out the economists' bathwater, they often toss out the organizational baby with it. The most frequent remark I hear from people in all walks of life



with respect to organizations is that it's not the organization that's important, it's the people in it.

Now, there is a great deal of truth in the view that people make a difference, just as there is much truth in the view that most of us (most of the time) follow the course of action that will increase our net money benefits. But there are two errors in the "only people matter" view. The first is that people are the products, not only of their biology, family, and schooling, but of their organizational position (or role, as sociologists have put it). As Herbert Simon said many years ago, a person "does not live for months or years in a particular position in an organization, exposed to some streams of communication, shielded from others, without the most profound effects upon what he knows, believes, attends to, hopes, wishes, emphasizes, fears, and proposes."<sup>38</sup> Erich von Manstein and Heinz Guderian, George Beto, Norris Hogans and Kenneth Tewel—these were not simply gifted people who happened to be generals, prison administrators, or school principals; they were people whose views and skills had been shaped by the organizations in which they spent their lives.

Moreover, what they were able to accomplish depended on having the authority and resources with which to act. This is the second difficulty with the view that only people matter. Herbert Simon again:

If organization is inessential, if all we need is the man, why do we insist on creating a position for the man? Why not let each create his own position, appropriate to his personal abilities and qualities? Why does the boss have to be called the boss before his creative energies can be amplified by the organization? And finally, if we have to give a man some measure of authority before his personal qualities can be transformed into effective influence, in what ways may his effectiveness depend on the manner in which others are organized around him?<sup>39</sup>

Many readers will agree with this and still respond, "yes, but the exact organizational structure surely did not determine the success of Guderian, or Beto, or Hogans." Perhaps. But this view rests on a common error, the confusion of organization with organizational structure. An organization is not simply, or even principally, a set of boxes, lines, and titles on an organizational chart. An organization, in the words of Chester Barnard, is a "system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons."<sup>40</sup> The most important thing to know is how that coordination is accomplished.

In the German army, the system of coordination was designed to enhance in lower-ranking soldiers and officers the capacity for independent action toward a general goal and within an overall system of discipline. In the Texas prisons, the system was designed to achieve exactly the opposite

effects: not independent action toward general goals, but immediate and reflexive obedience of detailed rules. At Carver High School, the major coordinating effort was aimed at reducing disorder and instilling school spirit and personal self-esteem.

If organization matters, it is also the case that there is no one best way of organizing. Take the question of centralization or decentralization of authority. In the Texas prisons, authority was rigidly centralized and that centralization was regularly made visible by George Beto's frequent walking tours of a prison yard or cellblock. In the German army, authority was equally hierarchical, but the right to give orders or make decisions (which is the essence of authority) was left, to a degree that would have startled French or British generals, in the hands of corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. At Carver High, there was no doubt who was the boss, but that boss could not run each and every classroom. Norris Hogans had to let teachers teach (which is to say, exercise a great deal of authority). The best he could hope for was that he had instilled a sufficiently strong sense of purpose and could manage a sufficiently powerful set of incentives that the teachers would work hard to use their authority well and on behalf of common purposes. If these first two chapters had included more organizational examples, the variety of coordinating systems would have been even greater. A research laboratory or foreign ministry could not possibly have been run along the lines of the German army or the Texas prisons.

In trying to understand the success of these three organizations, one has to understand how they coped with three organizational issues. First, each had to decide how to perform its *critical task*. By critical task I mean those behaviors which, if successfully performed by key organizational members, would enable the organization to manage its critical environmental problem. For the German army, the problem was the killing power of dug-in machine guns and artillery. The critical task was finding the solution to this problem. There was a technological solution (the tank) and a tactical solution (infiltration). The Germans made use of both, principally the tactical solution. For the Texas Department of Corrections, the critical environmental problem was maintaining order among numerically superior, temperamentally impulsive, and habitually aggressive inmates. The critical task became the elaboration and enforcement of rules sufficiently precise, understandable, and inflexible that inmates would never acquire the opportunity for independent or collective action. For Carver High School the critical environmental problem was the fear, disorder, and low morale among students and teachers. The critical task was to carry out a highly visible, even dramatic attack on these feelings by a relentless program to clean the buildings, keep them safe, and motivate the students.

Notice that I have referred to tasks, not goals. It is often the case that



many analysts and executives who wish to improve an organization begin by trying to clarify its goals. Sometimes this is useful. But government agencies, much more than business firms, are likely to have general, vague, or inconsistent goals about which clarity and agreement can only occasionally be obtained.<sup>41</sup> Often any effort to clarify them will result either in the production of meaningless verbiage or the exposure of deep disagreements. The German, French, and British armies all had the same goal—to defeat the enemy. Thinking harder about that goal would not necessarily have led to any deeper understanding of how one defeats an enemy. At some level, the Texas and Michigan prisons may have had similar goals—to keep order, rehabilitate inmates, incapacitate criminals, or deter would-be criminals. But if either organization sought to improve itself by thinking harder about these goals, it probably would have discovered that it did not know how to do some of these things (rehabilitate), could only guess at whether it was able to do others (deter), and would be internally divided over the relative importance or even the meaning of others (order, incapacitation). At Carver High, “educating children” was to some degree a purpose shared by everyone, but if a new principal had devoted himself or herself to clarifying the meaning of education, there would have occurred an interesting seminar but not much change.

Of course, tasks cannot be defined completely without regard to goals. The two are related but in a way that is often complex and uncertain, especially in government bureaucracies. In later chapters I will take up this relationship. I hope for now it is sufficient to assert that on the basis of the three cases considered so far, tasks and goals are not connected in the straightforward way that is implied by the notion that tasks are “means” logically related to “ends.”

The second challenge overcome by these three organizations was agreement about and widespread (if not enthusiastic) endorsement of the way the critical task was defined. When that definition is widely accepted and endorsed, we say the organization has a sense of *mission*. (The German army even used a variant of that word—*auftragstellung*—to define what it was trying to achieve.) In all three organizations, members took pride in what the organization was doing and how it was doing it. At Carver High, as with many schools that undergo wrenching change, pride was never universal. Some teachers resisted the changing distribution of authority, others probably disliked the emphasis on order and pageantry. But in time, through persuasion or replacement, Hogsan's sense of mission became that of the school.

The third problem that each organization had to solve was to acquire sufficient freedom of action and external political support (or at least non-opposition) to permit it to redefine its tasks as it saw best and to infuse that definition with a sense of mission. Each organization managed to acquire a reasonable degree of *autonomy*. George Beto had the support

of key Texas politicians and business leaders. Norris Hogsan had the moral, if not financial, support of the Atlanta superintendent of schools. The advocates in the German army of linking flanking and infiltration tactics with *blitzkrieg* penetrations did not get their way unaided; many of them, including Guderian, Rommel, and Manstein, had to overcome the suspicion and even hostility of more traditional German commanders. Cavalry, artillery, and even infantry officers resisted the new doctrines. Adolf Hitler's intervention on behalf of the innovators was decisive.<sup>42</sup>

## An Analytical Perspective on Organizations

This book is primarily descriptive: it is an effort to depict the essential features of bureaucratic life in the government agencies of the United States. In Part II, I try to describe how the rank-and-file employees of these agencies decide what to do, in Part III how agency managers decide what to do, and in Part IV how agency executives decide what to do. But it is not merely descriptive. In sorting out the examples, I have been struck by the fact that the concepts useful in explaining what was distinctive about the German army, the Texas prisons, and Carver High School are also useful in explaining how employees, managers, and executives function in police departments, regulatory agencies, the Forest Service and the Park Service, the State Department and the CIA, the Social Security Administration and the Postal Service.

First, rank-and-file employees (or, as I shall refer to them, operators): Why do they do what they do? The formal goals of the organization are sometimes helpful in explaining this, but more often what operators do will depend on the situations they encounter (what they see as the “critical environmental problem”), their prior experiences and personal beliefs, the expectations of their peers, the array of interests in which their agency is embedded, and the impetus given to the organization by its founders. For any distinct bureaucratic unit, these factors combine to produce an organizational culture—a distinctive way of viewing and reacting to the bureaucratic world—that shapes whatever discretionary authority (and it is often a great deal) the operators may have. When that culture is a source of pride and commitment, the agency has acquired a sense of mission.

Second, managers: The further managers are from the day-to-day work of the agency, the more their lives are shaped not by the tasks the operators are performing or the goals the agency is serving but by the constraints placed on that agency by its political environment. These constraints limit their ability to allocate resources, direct workers, and work toward goals. Despite these constraints, managers must try to manage. How they do this will depend on the kind of agency in which they work.

To help simplify the incredible variety of agencies, I describe in chapter 9 four types—types based on the extent to which the goals of the agencies are clear and the work of the agencies' operators is observable. The concrete examples that are the source of my observations are sorted out, to the extent they can be without doing excessive violence to reality, into "production," "craft," "procedural," and "coping" agencies.

Third, executives: Executives, in trying to maintain their agencies (and their own position in them), worry about retaining control over their turf—a popular bureaucratic word for what I call "autonomy." No agency has or can have complete autonomy, but all struggle to get and keep as much as they can. In pursuing their twin goals of maintaining their agencies and maintaining their political position in the larger governmental world, executives follow a variety of strategies (described in chapter 11) and sometimes encourage innovations (described in chapter 12).

After the reader has acquired a worn's eye view of American (especially federal) government agencies, the context in which these bureaucracies work is described in Part V. That context consists of the struggle among the president, Congress, and the courts for control of agency actions. At the end of Part V, all this description is viewed from afar by asking (in chapter 16) how and why public administration in the United States differs from that found in other more or less democratic nations.

The final part describes the chief bureaucratic problems, in particular inefficiency and arbitrariness, of which citizens complain (chapter 17) and then analyzes the major alternatives for coping with those problems—applying rules (chapter 18) and using markets (chapter 19). The final chapter returns to armies, prisons, and schools as a way of seeing what we have learned in the intervening pages and then asks why so few government agencies act as if they had learned and were prepared to apply the lessons that can be drawn from these three examples.

Though this is not a book about how to run a bureaucracy but one about why bureaucracies are run the way they are, I cannot refrain in the final pages from offering some modest suggestions for running them in a somewhat better manner or from indicating why, in my opinion, even these suggestions are unlikely to be heeded. To reassure any bureaucrats who may read this book, the reason why my advice (and theirs, for I have learned many of these ideas from them) is not going to be followed has nothing to do with the limitations or inadequacies of individual bureaucrats and everything to do with the constitutional regime of which they are a part. Readers who want to get immediately to the "bottom line" can spare themselves the hundreds of pages that follow and turn immediately to Federalist Paper number 51, written two centuries ago by James Madison.

# PART II

## OPERATORS