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SOCIAL BOND IN MILITARY STRUCTURES

Abstract: In the consideration regarding the personalization of armed forces the issues related to social relations are hardly ever raised. However, when they occur authors are most frequently interested in discipline problems or they refer to professional ethics, which is perceived as one of the most significant regulators of soldiers' attitudes. In the transformation of the social structure zestful, spontaneous actions are usually excluded, which in fact are the immanent feature of all social processes, in particular those which take place in microstructures. It shapes the outlook on life which to a certain extent is schematic, at the level of the social reality which is so important for the functioning of armed forces. This observation led to the discussion on the issue of social bonds in the armed forces. The thesis of the paper is that the formal bond should not be dominant in modern military structures, neither in quantitative terms nor owing to its position in the army. To verify its accountability the following issues are analyzed:

- The concept and meaning of bureaucracy,
- Social and personal bonds and their functions in the army,
- Recommendations for the systemic solutions.

The discussion is based on the analysis of concepts and their meanings from the perspective of philosophy, command and control, and management, referring to cases and practices in the army.

Keywords: bureaucracy, social bond, armed struggle

Introduction

The issues related to a social bond belong to this field, whose perception has been dominated by a traditional image of the army and the way in which it performs tasks. While characterizing military structures it is highlighted that one of their basic features is the fact that a formal bond overweighs a personal bond¹. Referring to the typology of the social bond presented by Paweł Rybicki, we could define the army as a structure with a dominant fixed bond². In this case armed forces are perceived as an ideal type of bureaucracy according to Max Weber – as an institution, in which everything is formalized, and legal regulations ensure the continuity of functioning as well as organizational cohesion. Reaching this model is the ultimate aim of the majority of reformatory activities in the army.

¹ J.J. Wiatr, *Socjologia wojska*, (Warsaw, 1964), p. 24.

² P. Rybicki singles out natural, collective and fixed bonds. They are theoretical constructs which include model systems of features. P. Rybicki, *Struktura społecznego świata*, (Warsaw, 1979), p. 679.

Bureaucracy – the meaning of the term

Such an "ideal type" of an organization seems to be incredibly functional when it comes to tasks, which are realized by sub-units, divisions and tactical groups. In plain language, which arises from a social life, the term *bureaucracy* has a pejorative meaning though and it means the way of managing institutions and directing groups of people as well as it means an organization, in which substantive sorting issues out and its efficiency are subject to the functioning of the organizational machine, which is formally intended to the observance of rules and procedures. The way of such an action is more often than not associated with contempt for a person, callousness, assurance, routine, selfishness, laziness as well as reluctance to search rational solutions.

The common understanding of the term bureaucracy indicates how difficult it is to achieve ideals presented by M. Weber. The functioning of an organization dominated by the fixed bond, without any extended network of primary groups is faulty and it generates pathological behavior. Karl R. Merton points out this aspect of the bureaucratic organization activity, and he highlights that in all bureaucratized collectivities formalism and ritualism will develop while performing activities, which spring from absolutisation of the meaning of legal regulations. The majority of taken actions is then not related to performing organizational tasks, but it is related to strengthening one's position in a structure of a given organization³. This negative side of the functioning of bureaucracy is reflected among others by such examples of behavior as: favoritism, bribery, ingratiation, nepotism. It evokes resentment in people who are an object of bureaucratic deeds, and sometimes it even causes hostility towards an organization.

Bureaucracy transitions from the efficient action mechanism into the mechanism of excessive formalism and the formation of bureaucracy also take place in military structures. It is indicated by empirical research, which confirms the occurrence of numerous pathological phenomena in the life of social sub-units, divisions and tactical groups, which have their source in the faulty functioning of the social system of armed forces⁴.

In order to avoid negative tendencies related to professionalization in transforming the army, an attempt should be made to orient emerging transitions in such a way that in the military structure apart from the fixed bond the collective bond and bonds of a personal nature ought to be firmly shaped.

The collective bond and bonds of a personal nature in The Army

The collective bond is formed according to the rule of freewill relations created by people, who join a particular association and become dependent on one another and are obliged to certain actions. A problem expressed in a question, what the extent to which divisions or tactical groups are associated is, should be considered here. Traditionally, they should rather not be considered as institutional relations⁵. Those associations are in fact organizations (understood as a social

³ K.R. Merton, *Teoria socjologiczna i struktura społeczna*, (Warsaw, 1982), p. 259.

⁴ M. Kubiak, K. Loranty, *Etyka zawodowa żołnierzy demokratycznej Rzeczypospolitej*, (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 63-117; K. Loranty, *Zespołowość w szkoleniu bojowym – pododdział jako zespół*, "Scientific Papers of the National Defence University" 2000, No. 3.

⁵ All organizations are divided into two principal types, which in many respects are contradictory: institutional relations and associations. The former serves with their activity to a wider community (external environment) accomplishing normatively defined tasks, whereas the latter serve their members realizing goals set by themselves. K.Z. Sowa, *Wstęp do socjologicznej teorii zrzeczeń*, (Warsaw, 1988), pp. 19-54.

group), which serve their members with their activity. On the other hand, military structures in a democratic country aim at accomplishing specified tasks significant from the point of view of wider social communities, such as a country or a society. They are not focused on achieving goals of their own members. However, when we pay more attention to phenomena which take place in those organizations, we notice that in many cases they take on the characteristics of an association. Obviously, we have to deal with numerous elements characteristic for institutional connections. They include: divisions of members into groups (brigades, regiments, companies, platoons) imposed from outside and determined by law, likewise the contact system, interactions and relations between members of an association and with the outside world are dominated. It is all very precisely determined and enforced by way of criminal penalties. Apart from activities based on a compulsion there is also a considerable area of own activity, which stems from approval of organizational purposes and seeing own benefits from shown conformism. Thus, motives of an activity of many entities do not result from a compulsion included in formal and legal regulations which determine an activity of an organization, but their sources should be sought in freewill relations created by people, who become dependent on one another and are obliged to certain tasks so as to achieved accepted goals and personal benefits (tangible and intangible). We are very often familiar with this situation when it comes to performing various tasks by professional soldiers. They perform them not because they are afraid of sanctions, but because of they have strong sense of duty, mission to accomplish it, or they perceive specified benefits related to their realization, e.g., prestige, increase in authority, tangible gratifications. The fixed bond, characteristic for total institutions is only the background for an appreciable sphere of the social life of divisions and tactical groups. It is entirely accepted and constitutes a basis for extending wider social systems based on collective and personal bonds⁶.

An essence of the personal bond is friendship (*filia*). According to Aristotle friendship is a basic element constituting a society. In this case the social bond results from a mutual, emotionally tinged and positively determined attitude to one another⁷. The significance of this type of relations in formalized military structures was emphasized by Samuel Stouffer, Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz in 50s of the previous century. They came to a conclusion while conducting empirical research that a simple identification of soldiers with symbols of a military organization, a country organization or causes for waging war has relatively low importance. On the other hand, research showed a very strong connection between the morale of primary groups and efficiency during a fight. Where circumstances allowed primary groups to be freely established and function and where those groups reached a high level of compatibility, morals were very high, and resistance was effective, regardless of political attitudes of soldiers. Similarly, in critical situations soldiers remained on their positions, not owing to a necessity to protect actual values, but as a result of loyalty towards their primary groups⁸. Therefore, an effective action on a battlefield depends to a large extent on networks of primary groups which cover formal organizational structures of the army. Sub-units, divisions and tactical groups should not be (according to E. Shils

⁶ K. Loranty, *Środowisko wojskowe jako determinant jakości szkolenia bojowego w oddziałach i związkach taktycznych*, dissertation written under R. Stępień, National Defence University, (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 117-122.

⁷ P. Rybicki, *Struktura...*, op.cit (Warsaw, 1979), p. 682.

⁸ J. Szmatka, *Jednostka i społeczeństwo. o zależności zjawisk indywidualnych od społecznych*, (Warsaw, 1980), pp. 127 and 129.

characterizing the modern social macrostructure) soulless, selfish "Gesellschaft", deprived of love, faith or any integrative powers expect for interest or a compulsion⁹. Similar outcomes, indicating a positive influence of informal groups on efficiency of sorting out problems by formal structures were obtained in research carried out by civil bureaucratic organizations.

We can distinctly see that the army should not be a group, in which the bond is exclusively based on a compulsion as well as formal and legal regulations. It is related not only to a requirement to act efficiently, but also it stems from the nature of a democratic society. In such societies a unifying factor of individuals is always some common good and mutual needs. Each society has a task to achieve which is to provide this good for everyone. Common good is more important than individual good, therefore an entity should submit to it. Given this reason, it has powers over a community in terms of insisting on realization of individual good through common good. The military service in a democratic country means embodying common good by an individual, and at the same time respecting within its framework, individual good of an entity. Thus, if thanks to the military service an individual realizes individual good, then it is fully reasoned to perceive divisions and tactical groups as associations, since they are not only considered in terms of institutional relations.

Therefore, traditional views should be verified, according to which a specific feature of military structures is the advantage of the formal bond over other kinds of bonds. How is this predominance reflected? It seems that the most accurate approach would be drawing the attention to co-occurrence of various types of bonds: fixed (formal) and collective as well as personal (a natural bond) while highlighting that the former in spite of its primary character in the army, does not decide about consistency of military structures or about efficiency of their actions. Thanks to personal and collective bonds a group is capable of performing complicated and difficult tasks. It makes it a transgressive structure, which is able to achieve goals, which could seem impossible for formal groups. Thus, we notice that the army specifics is rather a necessity of diverse types of social bonds to co-occur within it. The fixed bond (formal) is in the army given by a formal organization of the social system. The collective bond and personal (natural) should be treated as demanded bonds crucial to achieve high efficiency of tasks undertaken by an organization. Hence, actions of leaderships of divisions and tactical groups should be directed at extending interactions between members of formal structures, based on those types of social bonds, which aid strengthening cohesion of a group.

Enhancing cohesion of a group, which is a result of occurrence of the collective bond and the personal bond in military communities should be considered as an unspeakably important source of social authority. It is an immensely significant assumption, since in this way a greater degree of authority over subordinates is shown. Various group structures may in such circumstances considerably more efficiently put pressure on entities without any fear of causing resistance or protest. As sociologists claim a paradox is that in general the growth in a sense of freedom and people's satisfaction is connected with the growth in cohesion of a group, and hence an opportunity to control entities is larger as well as putting pressure and compulsion is possible. Such groups achieve a high degree of centralization of leadership, they are effective, but besides

⁹ Ref. p. 124.

they achieve a high degree of satisfaction of their members. Extension of personal and collective bonds is a powerful tool of leadership in modern military structures. Strengthening cohesion of a group, this type of bonds makes formal structures capable of undertaking immense effort, dexterity and sacrifice, provide complete subordination of their members at the same time sustaining their sense of freedom and satisfaction¹⁰.

For a clear justification of the thesis, which states that the formal bond should not be dominant in modern military structures, neither in quantitative terms nor owing to its position in the army, we should take a look at functions, which are accomplished by the social system of the army. Generally speaking, the following functions may be included¹¹:

- setting and realizing tasks;
- developing relations with the external environment;
- sustaining and strengthening internal cohesion of the army.

In addition, an inspirational function is significant, which underlines a tendency of people who have similar values to think and act in a certain manner, as well as a safety feature, which is related to a guarantee of existence and operation of the social system and it also protects values and ways of interpreting the world which function in it¹².

We should ponder a while, what types of bonds create better circumstances for accomplishing those functions. Doubtlessly, the formal bond (fixed) is dominant and it is helpful for the function defined by T. Parsons, as *setting tasks*. Seeking a conducive factor in *realization of tasks* is problematic. If in the course of performing simple, algorithmic actions, which do not require creativity or personal involvement, formal structures may operate efficiently, in complicated tasks as shown by research carried out by psychologists and sociologists, they appear to be fallible without support of informal groups. Collective or personal bonds seem to be also much more functional while accomplishing an integrative function which is expressed by sustaining and enhancing internal cohesion of the army. Similar dependencies appear if the inspirational function is analyzed. Also in this case social groups, in which interactions are dominated by individual or collective bonds, encourage people to follow similar values and attempt to normalize ways of thinking and acting to a much greater extent than in the case where the fundamental bond which brings people together consist of formal and legal provisions. Furthermore, W. Jacher enumerates the safety function, which was previously assigned to the social system of the army. Its realization implies an assurance of existence and operations of the social system as well as the protection of values which function in it. It seems that in this field both the fixed bond as well as collective and individual bonds have a significant role.

Dominance of the formal bond in armed forces, in particular at the level of microstructures, is not a beneficial phenomenon and for certain it has a plethora of negative consequences for the functioning of social groups. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to imagine the regular army based exclusively on personal or collective bonds. The army as a purpose group, designated by the society to specific tasks has to have strong support in formal and legal solutions regulating the internal life and relations with the external social environment. However, they should only point out the

¹⁰ J. Szmatka, *Małe struktury społeczne. Wstęp do mikrosocjologii strukturalnej*, (Warsaw, 1989), pp. 263-280.

¹¹ Functions were distinguished on the grounds of the social system presented by T. Parsons.

¹² Por. J. Jacher, *Zagadnienia integracji systemu społecznego*, (Warsaw, 1976), pp. 87-88.

general framework for actions, within which social relations may develop in order to enhance cohesion of a group. The army based on dominance of the formal bond is not able to function effectively when difficult situations emerge, which require from soldiers' actions that go beyond established algorithms defined by procedures. Moreover, it may be difficult to achieve a facilitation effect and evoke personal engagement in realization of tasks belonging to an organization. It should be borne in mind that „it is only a feature of a fixed bond that it vanishes or at least it weakens, when circumstances and situations cease, in which it was formed”¹³.

If we are in the full agreement with the thesis that the base for the army functioning is the fixed bond, then a significant feature which decides about efficiency of actions undertaken by its structures, should be perceived as extension of interpersonal relations based on collective and personal bonds. Bonds of this type very frequently turn out to be stronger than natural bonds and they create convenient circumstances crucial to fulfill tasks of armed forces.

Conclusions

Recognizing the importance of personal bonds regarding efficiency of an armed conflict and activity of military sub-units in difficult situations implies a greater interest in developing this type of bonds during a soldiers' training. Forming cohesion of sub-units on the grounds of personal bonds should be the fundamental purpose of educational activities undertaken by commanding officers. An ample network of primary groups in military structures may be dysfunctional in situations in which there is the lack of acceptance concerning values imposed by central structures. Furthermore, it enables the occurrence of the *amoral familism* phenomenon as well as the formation of cliques. Potential negative results of covering formal structures with a network of primary groups may be limited to the occurrence of an association bond.

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