

The German model – between past and future

The continuous struggle between humanistic general education and professional training of the German officer 1808 – 2002

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Abstract

Prusso-German officer training has always been a combination of practice and theory. In contrast to the pure 'Cadets' Academy education' of other nations, the Prusso-German aspirant officer for centuries has first learned the practical soldiering of his arm or service on all levels before enriching these experiences with theoretical knowledge in special officer courses. The article reviews the development of Prusso-German officer training throughout the past two centuries, describing the various preconditions, main emphases, objectives and results. It also compares briefly the German and Dutch approaches of educating their aspirant officers and cadets. The conclusion discusses the recent problems and the future challenges of the German officer training.

Basic principles of the Prussian-German officer education^I

Prusso-German officer education has of old been a combination of practice and theory. In contrast to the pure 'Cadets' Academy-education' of other nations, the Prusso-German aspirant officer for centuries has first learned the practical soldiering of his arm or service on all levels (in the rank of private, NCO and Warrant Officer), before enriching these experiences with theoretical knowledge in special officer courses. This 'continuing swing between the academic and practical characters of the education' (Bald, 1982:101) forms another constant factor in the permanent struggle for the optimal education of new generations of officers. Reforms in officer education were usually realized much later than political, social, economic and scientific changes. (Kutz, 1982: 13) Therefore, the development of the Prusso-German officer education is best described by the various preconditions, main emphases, objectives and results.



Saxonian cadet early 19th century

Saxonian cadets' school early 19th century



Officer education after the Prussian Army reform of 1808

In early 1808, after several disastrous defeats of the Prussian army by Napoleon's armed forces, the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III tasked General von Scharnhorst (Hornung, 1997; Schieder, 1985: 5-20)² to reform the officer recruitment and education of the royal Prussian army. In their battles with Napoleon's troops the Prussian officers had shown considerable shortcomings, mainly related to their insufficient intellectual flexibility. Scharnhorst concluded that the intellectual and discerning capacities of the officer had to be increased by offering a broad education, in order to live up to the demands of modern warfare in the era of Enlightenment. (Bertram, 1969:166ff) Thus, the reform of the officer education was determined primarily by the changes in the conduct of war, created by the French Revolution and the ensuing military conflicts. But also the Enlightenment, with its ideal of the broadly educated individual, had an influence on the reorganization of the officer education within the context of the Prussian army reform of 1808. (Bertram, 1969:169-173)

In order to achieve these lofty objectives, the main emphasis of the officer education in the Prussian army was fundamentally changed: away from the voluntaristic character building of the traditional, feudal officer, towards the intellectual education of a modern, dynamic officer. (Demeter, 1962: 76ff; Hackl, 1995: 199ff) Henceforth, the level of education was going to be the determining criterion for the professional development of the officer and not his noble background.³ This is where the continuous struggle for the consolidation of the humanistic education in the Prusso-German officer education found its origin. It is a struggle that even at the beginning of the 21st century still flares up from time to time.⁴

The continuous change in the Prusso-German officer education during the 19th century

The reformed officer education along Scharnhorst's lines ran fundamentally counter to the ideas of the traditional voluntaristic feudal officer corps of the Prussian army. (Demeter, 1962:76) After Scharnhorst's death in 1813 the opponents of the changes

rallied. It was in particular the largely uneducated landed gentry⁵ that protested against the King's 'ingratitude' for faithful services that had been rendered for centuries.⁶ The weak King immediately reacted so that in the years to come the education was constantly modified to the demands of the landed gentry, who were the traditional suppliers of officer recruits.

The appointment of lecturers for the new education centres, too, gave trouble. The lecturers were often officers, who held a simultaneous command in the local garrison. Because of this double duty the level dropped so deeply, that a lecturer of the '*Allgemeine Kriegsschule*' in 1830 commented:

What was wrong with the school (the '*Allgemeine Kriegsschule*') is that it just was not a school. [...] In fact anyone could do as they pleased' (Brandt, 1969:200). This development prompted the reformer General Hermann von Boyen to warn that 'general education of the officer [is] important, if he is not to lose the respect of the other classes. (Bertram, 1969: 65)

In this period of time there were a few responsible officers who actively opposed the pushing back of the general education element in the officer education. These generally broadly educated officers did not strive for a scientification of the officer education, but rather the application of the latest scientific insights to the military profession, in order to keep up with the technological, political, social and economic changes in the state and society. Between 1840 and 1872 their most prominent representative was General Eduard von Peucker. (Bald, 1978: 21-28) It was also on his initiative that the new Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV issued an order that made the civilian educational ideal an integral part of Prussian officer education. As a consequence of the Revolution of 1848, even, all military education centres were to be dissolved and the officer education to be transferred to the universities, in order to increase the level. These attempts, however, were rejected by the army on grounds of absence of any practical elements. Conservative circles, mostly comprising the landed gentry, vehemently opposed the civilian educational tendencies in the officer education, as they found



Saxonian cadets early 19th century

it increasingly more difficult, mainly for financial reasons, to prepare their offspring adequately. (Kutz, 1982: 17)

From 1871 onwards, on the initiative of General von Peucker, the possession of a university entry certificate became a prerequisite for every officer candidate. The only exception was made for those candidates who had gone through cadets' schools before their application. They were to ensure the continued supply of new generations of officers from the so-called 'preferred circles'. (sons of noblemen, soldiers and senior civil servants) (Bald, 1982: 102ff) This was a concession mainly to the landed gentry, who would otherwise have increased their opposition against this development even more. The result was a dualism in the officer education between a highly theoretical and a purely practical education, as the graduates of the cadets' schools were immediately appointed as lieutenants in these years. The result was a quite heterogeneous Prussian officer corps. (Demeter, 1962: 85)

Officer education in the German Empire 1871-1918

After their successful conduct of the Unification Wars (1864-1871), especially the victorious Prussian officer corps lay claim to a prominent role in the German society. This claim, however, was out of keeping with the social and scientific developments in the German empire. The clear mismatch between claim and reality caused the military to position itself in a self-elected 'intellectual isolation'. A critical and open exchange of ideas with the leading layers of society was absent in the years following and this eventually led to a flawed development, or rather misperception in the officer corps of the Imperial Army, which would prove to be disastrous. As a result 'education' was held by many, mainly noble, officers as a civilian achievement that was incompatible with the 'practical interests of the military' (Bertram, 1969: 61ff; Bald, 1982: 102). This irrational 'hostility towards education' (Bald, 1982:103) even went to the extent that the officer education was designed diametrically opposed to the generally accepted and enlightened realization, that in view of technological progress, leading functions could only be fulfilled adequately by broadly educated professionals. (Ostertag, 1990: 305ff) Lacking the expertise to solve the problems of the day, the officer corps declined more and more into an uncritical instrument of an obsolete political and social order. (Bertram, 1969: 85)

The decades-long efforts of the reform-oriented officers around Eduard von Peucker, who, first as German War Minister (1848-1849), later as Prussian General Inspector of military training and education (1854-1872), had used the full weight of his influence to create a broad academic officer education, were undone within a few months. The conservative powers prevailed and with regard to the question of the main emphasis of the officer education they were to dominate the discussion on the main effort of the offi-

cer education for many decades to come. (Bald, 1978: 21ff) From 1873 onwards the Chief of the German General Staff, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, the elder, pushed through an increasingly military education, because of bad experiences with the military performance of the subaltern officers during the Unification Wars. (Bertram, 1969: 72; Hackl, 1995:202)

From now on the officer education in the Prussian army lay in the affective learning domain - the building of strength of character and temper - , rather than in the cognitive domain - the intensive transfer of academic knowledge. In the German Imperial Army there was not a single institution to further the higher education of any interested and talented officer. (Bertram, 1969: 73) Thus, it does not come as a surprise that the writings and biographies of older officers, who were socialized in this period, reveal a lack of any special interest in a broad general education. It was more the daily military routine, the upholding of personal 'honour' and the 'building of character' that determined the life of most aspirant and subaltern officers in the German empire (Ostertag, 1990: 308ff). Consequently, the determining criterion for the careers of most officers was not the demonstrable aptitude as an officer, but rather a readiness to fight duels, outward bearing and a strong will in what was deemed to be 'noble tradition'. (Bald, 1982: 105)⁷

Moltkes nephew and his later successor in the function of Chief of the General Staff of the Prussian Army, General Helmuth von Moltke, the younger, increased the imbalance between military-specific educational content and more general aspects of the education even further in 1907 with his reform of the officer education (Hackl, 1995: 203). Thus, a cabinet order, instigated by him, simply forbade the discussion of social-political problems in the officer education. (Nittner, 1980: 95) The attitude of *Kaiser* Wilhelm II clearly supported this development (Demeter, 1962: 88), which was eventually to prove a fatal one because of the military-technological progress and the ensuing tactical innovations before and during World War I.

A false sense of honour ('a hero's death'⁸), a lack of know-how about the potentials of modern technology and a persistence in the tactical principles of 19th century warfare caused extremely high losses among the subaltern officers of the Imperial Field Army in the beginning of the war. (Ostertag, 1990: 309ff) The decisive mistakes of the German generals during the war can be traced back to the same causes. Hardly any of the senior decision makers possessed the ability to assess the significance and consequences of their military decisions with regard to the coming developments. The officer education of the Empire had failed completely in this respect. Most officers had been ill-prepared to conduct a war in the industrial age. Flexibility and imaginative leadership in Von Clausewitz' sense remained exceptions. This negligence was to cost the German nation dear.

Officer education in the Weimar Republic 1921-1933⁹

The experiences from World War I should have led to fundamental changes in officer education of the armed forces of the first German republic. Unfortunately, the terms of the Versailles Treaty dictated an education for the future officer of the new German Armed Forces which was strictly military, weapon-technical, craft-oriented (Hackl, 1995: 204). This accorded with the private interests of the leading military in Germany, as in the emotional disputes on who bore the main guilt of the military defeat, the actual losers - the German military - escaped their responsibility. Worse even, those who wanted to lay part of the blame on the military were accused of defeatism. In the eyes of the officer corps everything had been done right and the reputation of the Army remained unblemished. As a result, the *Reichswehr* could continue to educate its officer recruits in the way the Imperial Army leadership had been used to doing (Ostertag, 1990: 312ff).

Under these circumstances the Chief of the Land Forces General Hans von Seeckt¹⁰ rebuilt the *Reichswehr* (Klein, 1985: 19), and quite consistently he fell back on the Imperial education concept: 'character before achievement' was his premise (Bald, 1982: 107). In spite of the fact that this model was more oriented towards the practice of the officer profession, the entry requirements for the aspirant officers were raised. The reason for that was, on the one hand, the closing down of the cadets' schools, that in the past had enabled the 'preferred classes' to pursue an officer career without a university entry certificate, and the great number of candidates for the small number of officer functions in an army of 100,000 men, on the other. (Demeter, 1962: 103) This in its turn had an effect on the preparatory education of the successful applicants: between 90 and 100% of the candidates who were admitted to the *Reichswehr* in the period of the Weimar Republic had at least obtained their university entry certificate (Bald, 1982: 115). Building on this preparatory education the military-specific education attained an extremely high level in the *Reichswehr*. (Demeter, 1962: 106)

In stark contrast to this, the political and general education of the aspirant officers in the Weimar Republic was reduced to an absolute minimum. (Klein, 1985: 19) The battalion and regimental commanders were responsible for the political education, and its intensity and quality were directly dependent on whether they had any interest in the subject. (Bertram, 1969, 88ff) Very often the result was an extreme view of the world. This was deliberate, as von Seeckt pursued the aim of keeping the army completely out of the general political mainstream, so that it could not be used by one political faction against another, as had been the case in the early years of the Weimar Republic. Unfortunately, the consequence was that many, especially subaltern, officers did not grasp and appreciate the political development in the German Reich in the early thirties. (Bertram, 1969: 97)

The demise of the traditional Prussian officer corps in the Third Reich

After the seizure of power by the Nationalsocialists the 'unpolitical' officer corps of the *Reichswehr* was completely swept off its feet by the social and political developments. (Klein, 1985: 19ff) At first the leadership of the *Reichswehr* had enthusiastically welcomed the 'remilitarisation of the Reich', only to realize very soon that the build-up of armed forces ten times their size could not be realized by representatives of the usual 'officer classes' only. (Kroener, 1991: 280)¹¹ The subsequent integration of the former police and reserve officers and NCOs into the officer corps of the Wehrmacht during the expansion of the armed forces, and the enlargement of the officer corps from 4,000 *Reichswehr* officers to 24,000 *Wehrmacht* officers from 1935 onwards, resulted in an extremely heterogeneous social group. A uniform level of education was out of the question, and the same applied to the socialization and the sense of identity of the German officer. Bit by bit the old Prussian officer corps was systematically broken down by the Nationalsocialists.

The integration of the *Wehrmacht* in the people, aspired to by the 'Nationalsocialist movement', also entailed a fundamental change in the education of officers. The number of those who could produce a university entry certificate, fell by almost 30% up to 1939, compared with that of the Weimar Republic. (Kroener, 1991: 291) That is why the *Wehrmacht* was unable to attain the level of education of the *Reichswehr* officer; worse even, in the Third Reich an educated officer was deemed a contradiction in terms. This went to the extent that officers were officially forbidden to use academic titles. (Bald, 1982: 108ff) Developments like these fully reflected the intention of the Nationalsocialist leadership to position the 'able' in key functions of society, without the arrogance of class or education. An eagerness to bear responsibility, a superior ability, an untiring care, character and achievement became the decisive selection criteria for the future *Wehrmacht* officer. (Klein, 1985: 19) Besides, the Nationalsocialist ideology was gradually introduced into the officer education. The extent to which this development led to a changed behavioural pattern among the young officers, cannot be clearly understood anymore nowadays. (Klein, 1985: 19) It is, however, beyond doubt that the Nationalsocialist ideology as well as the high losses in the course of WWII fundamentally changed the structure of traditional selection criteria and educational mechanisms of the officer corps of the German armed forces. (Kroener, 1991: 282ff) The high social mobility, aspired for by all sectors of society, could therefore be realized especially among the young ambitious military leaders because they were in great demand. (Kroener, 1991: 269ff)

During WWII the *Wehrmacht* command tried to carry out the so-called 'selection of the best', putting 'character and heart above reason'. (Bald, 1982: 108ff) Hitler even personally stated in 1943 that only strong-willed, eager men, immune to stress, could

become officers. The decisive criterion from this point in time onwards was ‘proof of military aptness’, which would enable ‘the officer candidates without the formerly required scientific education to become fully-fledged officers’. (Bald, 1982: 109) Subsequently, the education became exclusively practical and it fell mainly into the hands of front-experienced officers. (Hackl, 1995: 206) The Nationalsocialist ideology and the high losses during the war had turned a class-oriented, value-based, political-social elite into a purely functional elite. (Kroener, 1991: 283) It was also because of this reason that the once relatively homogeneous group lost the fraternal ‘norm guarding’ of its own code of honour. The result was a differentiated perception within this important social group with regard to the events of the war, the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944 and the discussions on the new armed forces in a democratic community.

The build-up of the *Bundeswehr* in the context of *innere Führung*

With the handing over of the certificates of appointment to the first 100 volunteers on 12 November 1955, the founding fathers of the Bundeswehr had already given a clear signal by their choice of date. Gerhard von Scharnhorst’s 200th birthday was intended to symbolize a completely new start. (Klein, 1985: 13) From the outset the politicians wanted to prevent the founding of the armed forces of the second German republic taking place outside the political mainstream, as had been the case during the Weimar Republic. For this purpose a concept was developed that made it the personal responsibility of every leader to take care of his own general and political education, and that of his subordinates. This so-called *innere Führung* did not only comprise political education, but also military pedagogy (leading of men) history, military law as well as complaints regulations and disciplinary rules became elements of this new internal structure of the nascent *Bundeswehr*. This entirely new concept was to facilitate the integration of the armed forces in the democratic structures that had already been firmly estab-



Genealogical table of
the German officer schools 1616 - present

lished in the Federal Republic of Germany by that time.¹² The indefatigable pioneer of the *innere Führung* was the former *Wehrmacht* Major Wolf Graf von Baudissin.¹³ He ardently worked for a new role for the armed forces and with it the officer corps within the democratic society of the Federal Republic of Germany. In order to emphasize the importance of this decisive change, already in the first year of the *Bundeswehr* the 'Centre for *innere Führung*' was set up as an educational and research centre to conduct ongoing critical research into this important concept.¹⁴

That this step was necessary was clear from the lengthy discussions on the officer education in the building-up phase of the *Bundeswehr*. Officers who had been socialized in the *Wehrmacht* were of the opinion that the army was a 'fraternity of men who fight and share one destiny' and that, consequently, the officer education should be oriented in that direction. (Bald, 1982: 109; Kroener, 1991: 295; Kutz, 1982: 38ff) Especially during the first decade of the *Bundeswehr* the military skills of the officer were stimulated by the many senior officers who had served in the war. From their point of view general education, though appreciated, was unimportant for the practical military profession, for some even inconvenient. (Blad, 1982: 134; Kutz, 1982: 41ff) Concepts such as discipline and obedience were still very prominent in the education of the new officer generation.¹⁵ Longwinded discussions between 'practicians' and 'theoreticians' were the result. These problems could only be resolved with the alternation of the war to the post-war generations. (Nittner, 1980: 96) The revolutionary concept of *innere Führung* established itself as the years passed, and nowadays the German Armed Forces are impossible to imagine without this stable core, which, naturally provides the foundation for the education of new officer generations.¹⁶

The development of the officer education in the *Bundeswehr* during the Cold War

In view of the very high pace of the build-up (an envisaged 600,000 men in five years) the first aspirant officers of the *Bundeswehr* received only a very short education, with many already being promoted to 2nd lieutenant after 14 months (Kutz, 1982: 93). As a consequence, they could not be adequately educated to become officers in the *Bundeswehr* and many had to acquire important professional knowledge through self study in the course of their careers. On top of that an insufficient educational level of the candidates made matters even more difficult, with only 68% of the aspirant officers having obtained their university entry qualification. (Bald, 1982: 108ff) So in the early years the high demand for personnel influenced the intellectual quality of the education. On top of that the education was mostly of a practical military nature in the first decade of the *Bundeswehr*, which, up to a certain extent, was also due to the many lecturers with war experience. (Kutz, 1982: 55ff) For the time being, education as a whole remained the

playing field of an insecure army, which, in the absence of an official policy, educated officers on the basis of its own war experiences.

This situation changed from the mid-sixties onwards, when the realization took hold that it was high time to adapt the officer education to social and scientific progress. To begin with, the university entry qualification was made a compulsory pre-requisite for an aspirant officer of the *Bundeswehr*: more than 97% of the officers commissioned since 1965 have met this condition. (Bald, 1982: 117ff) Between 1965 and 1971 the contents of the education was adapted in three phases to the assumed social and psychological development stages of officers. The emphasis in this concept was an 'effective mix of theoretical and practical, general and military professional-technocratic elements.' (Kutz, 1982: 88ff)

In the discussions between the 'practicians' and 'theroreticians' during the longest period of peace that Germany had known in the twentieth century, the balance had once again tipped in favour of the latter. (Bald, 1982: 117) This development was mainly due to the decisive change during the second decade of the Cold War in the image of the officer profession, whose challenges increasingly corresponded with those of civilian executives. Realizing that an officer can only meet the broad intellectual challenges of his profession if he is educated at a high level, the Ministry of Defence promulgated the best possible education for its officers when it made a general pre-university certificate and a university study obligatory in 1970. (Bald, 1982: 119) For this purpose the two *Bundeswehr* Universities in Hamburg and Munich were established in October 1973. Since then every future officer in the *Bundeswehr* who wishes to serve at least twelve years in the armed forces, has had to follow a university study. The study is organized and exams are taken according to the rules and regulations of the educational institutions of the respective federal states.¹⁷ The Army's main objective of this approach is the automatic adaptation of the education of its leaders to the general level, in order not be cut off from social and scientific progress. Therefore, the officer acquires an education that also qualifies him for civilian professions, which will facilitate the changeover, should he choose to leave the armed forces.¹⁸ The range of subjects corresponds with that of a medium-sized civilian German university. The officer student of the *Bundeswehr* can choose from among a range of subjects as diverse as political economy, business economics, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, information technology and aeronautics and space technology, history, political science and educational science.

The maximum target, set in 1972, of every staff officer of the *Bundeswehr* having completed a university education, had to be abandoned very soon, however: every year only two thirds of the officers obtain a university degree. Nevertheless, a solid, completed academic education greatly increases career opportunities. This is clearly shown by the

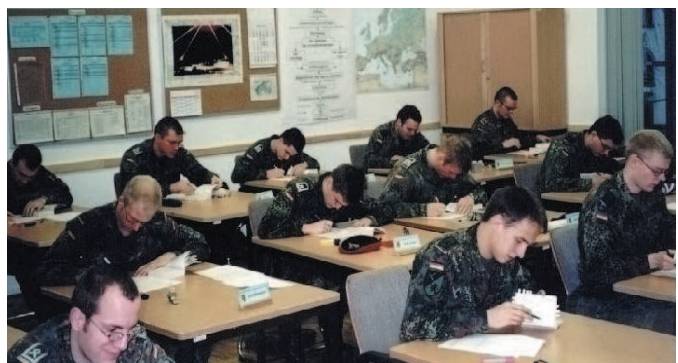
fact that the percentage of undergraduates and graduates increases with rank in the hierarchy of the organization. (Blad, 1982: 130ff) The academic background is an important foundation for the higher courses, making it unnecessary to use valuable time to acquire basic knowledge. In this respect, too, the universities of the *Bundeswehr* have established themselves over the years as an integral part of the officer education and the organization cannot very well be imagined without them anymore nowadays. (Klein & Lippert, 1993, 198)

After the end of the Cold War, however, the last few years have seemed to show a redressing of the balance into the direction of the 'practicians'. Not least as a result of the first missions abroad, which, naturally, to a large extent make a demand on the practical side of the officer profession, the voices of those who argue for an essentially stronger practical officer education become louder. (Bald, 1982: 119; Kutz, 1982: 96ff; Trull, 2002: 9) This urge is difficult to understand in the light of an environment that is becoming increasingly complex. The *Bundeswehr* officer has to be an educator, teacher and leader at the same time. In order to fulfil the no-doubt difficult duties towards his subordinates, he has to be able to understand complex subjects and to translate them in the vein of what his superiors require him to do. As only very few people can do this from birth, it has to be learned systematically. Also in this respect the study at a university is an ideal preparation for a leadership task in the armed forces of a highly industrialized service, because an officer can only live up to his responsibilities as a leader if he can fully understand the consequences of his actions. This is only possible, however, when he understands the complexities of his job, its place and meaning in the totality of things. What it leads to when the majority of German officers are not capable of doing this, the German people had to experience twice in the 20th century.

Elaboration: officer education in the German army in the beginning of the 21st century

The young people who nowadays want to become officers in the German army mainly come from civil servant families. In principle they have obtained their university entry certificate, and they are mature enough to go to university. (Trull, 2002: 9) Never before

German warrant officers
sitting a military law test



in German history have the general conditions for the education of aspirant officers been so good as in the last twenty years. Nevertheless, it is a great challenge in the so-called fun society at the turn of the century to make young people who want to become officers understand why their service is of importance for the society in which they have grown up. (Trull, 2002: 13)

The traditional contents still make up an important part of the officer curriculum in the *Bundeswehr*. The future officers will have to master the art of joined and combined warfare¹⁹, with the education in joint operations becoming more and more important (Korff, 2002, 5). In his political education the aspirant officer must internalize the values of the freedom-loving democratic constitutional state, because he is the quintessence of the society which, as an officer, he has to defend in case of an emergency. This is especially important, as, unfortunately, in their school education the young people are not made aware of this. (Trull, 2002: 12)



Infantry school

Besides, in the light of new threat scenarios, additional competencies must be built up. Since the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact and the ensuing melting away of the confrontation of only two camps, war has been subject to the rules of globalization (Korff, 2002: 2). The task of soldiers was, and is, always clearly defined by a political mandate and bound by the general national and international legal position. Friend and foe, on the contrary, cannot always be distinguished clearly, and this makes it impossible to provide uniform guidelines for a concrete pattern of behaviour. In order to enable the future officers of the *Bundeswehr* to live up to their great responsibility, to make the right decisions in each situation on their own, the basic convictions of German society are taught as a firm ethical and values-oriented foundation. For this purpose the aspirant officers get subjects such as political education, military history and military law. Along with language education, these subjects serve to increase an inter-cultural competence in the aspirant officers, which in future will allow them to understand the behavioural patterns of the people in the countries they are supposed to protect.

Coming from society that for more than fifty years has lived in true peace, to be sent to countries that find themselves in a state of war, requires a disciplined, humane and upright attitude in a military leader. In the subject of leadership great store is set by the development of this characteristic, in particular.

The missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan have shown that the officer can very quickly find himself in a situation in which, involuntarily, he has to make local level political decisions, simply because he is often the highest authority present. In the Federal Republic, so far, it has been valued, on the basis of historical experience, that the soldier behaves impartially in the execution of his duties and acts without any political considerations. Because of this, extra course material has been added to the officer curriculum, stressing the importance of thinking and acting beyond the confines of the actual military task itself. (Korff, 2002: 4) To this end the aspirant officers at the Army Officer School get classes that already prepare them extensively for their future tasks within the framework of the broader task spectrum (EAS) and peace support operations (PSO). (Korff, 2002: 4) These classes build on the general knowledge gained from subjects such as political education, military law and military history, and they should equip the officer to make confident, well-balanced decisions in cases like the ones described above. The deployment within the EAS and PSO, however, have also led to curtailments in the officer education. Thus, the commander of the Cavalry school, General Trull, complained that because of the justified claims of the units deployed abroad, the tasks in Germany itself could not be executed adequately anymore. Worse even, that parts of the officer education, in spite of great efforts, cannot not be realized anymore because the defence budget and personnel department do not provide enough personnel to fulfil all these important tasks. (Trull, 2002: 10) This is a serious development that can only be stopped by a clear political decision. Either more educators are appointed, which comes down to more vacancies and higher costs, or the decision makers spend less money on EAS and PSO tasks of the *Bundeswehr*.



German Officersschool, Albertstadt, Dresden

The process of adaptation to the new security and global situation has only just begun in the *Bundeswehr* and it will take a lot of time to bring the opportunities and demands of this new situation into line. The people in the *Bundeswehr* responsible for solving these vast problems have, however, the best possible prospects: an extensive, sound officer education, practical as well as theoretical!

A brief comparison between the modern Dutch and German officer education

The Dutch as well as the German officer education has the aim to prepare young people as efficiently as possible to assume leadership positions in their respective armed forces, in the political, social, technological and military environment of the beginning of the 21st century. To realize this, both countries have chosen a very different approach, based on their own traditions and developments. Contrary to the Dutch cadets, who receive their initial three-year education and socialization at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy at Breda, the aspirant officer of the German Army receives an education which offers a constant alternation of practice and theory, troop command and school. The climaxes of this education are the six-month officer course at the Officer School of the Army in Dresden and the three-to four-year university study at one of the two *Bundeswehr* universities. It can take up to seven years before the German officer takes up his first long-term command, after which he is immediately available as a fully-fledged platoon commander and 2iC of his company.

The advantage of the Dutch system is without doubt the Corps spirit that grows during the education at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy. Going through three years together means getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of one's fellow cadets, not exclusively of one's own year group. An identity is created and emotional ties are forged. The only thing cadets who get this very good military education lack is the practical element that their German counterparts experience from their first day of their education. The constant alternation of theory and practice is the strength of the German education. What is problematical here, though, is the early division of the aspirant officers into arms and services, which, in their eyes, are to some extent very different from each other. Because of this the arms and services rather than the officer corps (or cadets' corps) often become the identification model for the young people.

It is important for the future of both educational systems that, in order to achieve a greater efficiency of joint and combined deployments and an even closer European co-operation, the most important educational and leadership procedures of all potential partners are known. It is desirable, moreover, that in the medium term common standards in the officer education be developed, based on the co-operation established so far in the former 3 (GE) Panzerdivision and the German-Netherlands Corps.

Conclusion

The Prusso-German officer education has been a constant mix of practice and theory since 1808. In contrast with the pure 'cadets' education' of other nations the German aspirant officer first learns the practical soldiering of his arm or service on all military levels, after which he enriches this experience with theoretical knowledge acquired in special officer courses. Nevertheless, as historian Detlef Bald states:

...the to-ing and fro-ing between 'practicians' and 'theoreticians', between character building and scientific education [...] has repeatedly led to a neglect of an education that goes beyond the purely profession-related know-how, with a receptiveness to the world, problem awareness and a responsibility for the environment, with an insight into historical-political, economic and social relations' (Bald, 1982: III)

This was certainly also caused by the fact that wars time and again gave the military leadership the conviction that only the harsh reality of battlefield experiences could give the young man the adequate tools for carrying out his leadership tasks. Conversely, during longer periods of peace, in broad sections of the more progressive officer corps, the need to enlarge academic knowledge on the basis of practical skills made itself felt. Naturally, this wish was always closely connected to the need to bear in mind the technological, economic and social developments of the German society.

The Prussian army reformers of 1808, in particular Gerhard von Scharnhorst and Hermann von Boyen, laid the foundation for the German general officer education. Over the past two hundred years the importance of a comprehensive education of the officer in the German Armed Forces has steadily increased. In the course of time, the realization has taken hold that only the educated officer will be capable of understanding the consequences of his actions, and thus fulfil his task. (Nittner, 1980: 107) The discussion about the value of a general officer education developed in parallel with the emancipation of the middle classes from the nobility in Germany. Here, too, general education played a prominent role. The expenses of a broad education and a university study became a lever in the hands of the wealthy middle classes employed against the politically and socially ruling nobility. In the ever-increasing pace with which the world changed, it became inevitable to further develop the classic educational ideas. The German military was reluctant for a very long time to fundamentally change the selection and education of its new officers, that had been steeped in noble tradition. Only the fatal development during the Third Reich and World War II broke open the closed class of the Prussian officer corps and changed it into a functional professional class in a modern industrial society. (Kroener, 1991: 296) This fundamental change was of major importance for the development of the fledgling *Bundeswehr* in the first years of its exis-

tence. The education of the aspirant officers was designed on the basis of the principles of a democratic society and not those of the officer corps, as had still been the case in the Weimar Republic. It is true, at first there were still some considerable problems on account of the demands and methods of those who had taken part in the war, but this changed when the war scenarios tended towards nuclear war and the war generation was phased out. With the decision to make a university study a part of every officer's education, the *Bundeswehr* made a qualitative leap forward, which is amply demonstrated by the extent to which graduates take up key positions in the armed forces.

The education has been adapted to EAS and PSO and will be adapted to new future challenges. It is important to ensure that the 'practicians' do not get the opportunity again to change the officer education into a sort of super practice-oriented sergeant-major education, based on the alleged demands of the task. Particularly in the computer and internet era the importance of the division of labour has increased considerably in the military. It has always been the task of the officer to take decisions to implement them. This has to be done with an awareness of a multitude of aspects. In order to be able to deal with them adequately, the aspirant *Bundeswehr* officer needs an expert and competent education at the highest level, which means a broad theoretical education and training of the intellect. Only when he understands the consequences of his actions will the officer be able to take adequate decisions. History has shown more than once that especially when this fact was neglected, it resulted in poor estimates and decisions, with horrible consequences for the subordinates. After all, in critical situations in our profession, it is often a matter of life or death.

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Notes

- ¹ The expression "Prussian-German officer education" limits the history of officer education in the German states between 1806 and 1918 exclusively to the Prussian system. It was the basis for the development of the German officer education after 1918. However, any conclusions about the professional identity of the present-day *Bundeswehr* officers cannot be drawn from it.

- ² With regard to the person of Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst see: Klaus Hornung, 1985, pp. 5-20.
- ³ For a comprehensive overview of the reform of the officer education see: Marie-Nichollette Hoppe (1990).
- ⁴ For this see the propositions of Christian Trull. (...) p. 9.
- ⁵ It is only a paradox that most Prussian army reformers belonged to the nobility. Von Gneisenau, von Boyen and von Peucker had been elevated into the peerage in the course of their military careers because of their outstanding achievements for the Prussian state. Von Scharnhorst and von Clausewitz grew up as young noblemen in university towns and were thus not confronted with the problem the landed gentry faced in attempting to educate their offspring adequately.
- ⁶ For the resistance against the reforms of the officer education after 1805 see Bald: Offizier, p. 101; Demeter: Offizierkorps, p. 78f; Hackl: Ausbildung, p. 200f; Kutz: Reform, p. 13f.
- ⁷ For the criticism on these behavioural norms in the German society, see also: Heinrich Mann (1918).
- ⁸ For the consequences of the internalization of the honour code also among German intellectuals, see: Walter Flex (1916).
- ⁹ On 23 March 1921 the "provisional *Reichswehr*" became the *Reichswehr* of the Weimar Republic when the *Reichswehr* Act came into effect. For this, see: Harold J. Gordon (1959).
- ¹⁰ Friedhelm Klein, 1985, p. 19.
- ¹¹ Bernhard R. Kroener, 1991, p. 280.
- ¹² More precisely on the idea of the integration of a military apparatus into the structures of the fledgling German democracy: Martin Kutz, pp. 71-94).
- ¹³ On the person of Wolf Graf von Baudissin, see: Dieter S. Lutz, 1995, pp. 11-19. His most important monographs on this theme are without doubt 'Soldat für den Frieden' - Entwürfe für eine zeitgemässe *Bundeswehr* ['Soldier for peace' - Designs for a modern *Bundeswehr*]. Munich 1969 and 'Nie wieder Sieg!' ['No more Sieg!']. Programmatistische Schriften 1951-1981. Munich 1982
- ¹⁴ More precisely on the origin of the Centre for *innere Führung*, see: Ulrich Hundt, 1995, pp. 55-70.
- ¹⁵ BAMA, BW 2/856, Der Generalinspekteur der *Bundeswehr* [The General Inspector of the *Bundeswehr*]; Tgb. Nr. 25/27, 15 June 1957
- ¹⁶ On the present-day importance of *innere Führung*, see: Reinhard Mutz 1995, pp. 121-134).
- ¹⁷ On the curriculum and objectives of the academic parts of the officer education, see:

Paul Klein/Ekkehard Lippert, 1993, pp. 191-200.

¹⁸ Statistics indicate that around 90% of university graduates in the *Bundeswehr* find a fitting civilian occupation immediately after leaving the *Bundeswehr*. For this, see: Klein/Lippert: (1993: 197ff).

¹⁹ Deployment with all Services and together with international partners.