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GERMAN SOLDIER AND GERMAN UNITY: POLITICAL
FOUNDATIONS OF THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

by

DONALD ABENHEIM

JANUARY 1991

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The unification of Germany has transformed the political-military landscape of central Europe. Not the least of the issues raised by the union of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic is the fate of the professional soldier in a united Germany. The present study analyzes the concept of military professionalism in the setting of the two former German states, placing emphasis on the political-ethical foundations of the West German armed forces and the political mechanisms of the integration of the soldier into society. The political problems of German soldiers in the past combined with the role of the East German armed forces as an instrument of the Socialist Unity Party in the GDR pose a major major challenge to the future military of a united Germany.													
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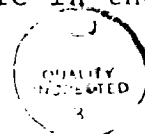
GERMAN SOLDIER AND GERMAN UNITY: POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF
THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

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* * * * *

"...with the entry into force of this treaty, the soldiers of the former National People's Army become soldiers of the Bundeswehr."² Of the challenges posed by German unification in October 1990 and beyond, perhaps the most interesting is that contained in this simple sentence nestled amid the hundreds of pages and tens of thousands of details of the second unity treaty. German soldiers of east and west, who previously served in two armies, allied to two antagonistic ideological and military blocks, now are on duty side-by-side within a single army, within a single country and a single alliance. The ranks of a transformed Bundeswehr now include men and women who have begun to put aside an ideological and military antagonism that shaped the second half of the twentieth century, and which seemed before 1989 as if it would go on much longer still.

This military aspect of the German revolution and subsequent unification only makes full sense, however, with a careful understanding of the intellectual-political foundations of the German armed forces, which forms the subject of the present essay. This understanding in turn requires a balanced reflection on the past of the German soldier and his role in the changing



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forms of state and politics in the Germany of the past three centuries. The perspective afforded by past successes and failures enables the soldiers of a United Germany to address the extraordinary tasks of unification that stand before them. German soldiers must tackle these challenges while the world struggles to create a new international system of states and Europe searches for a new and durable security order.

The peaceful and bloodless German unification of 1989-1990 naturally compelled many observers to reflect on a similar, yet distinctly different course of events in 1870-1871. For generations of Germans raised in the Borussian school of Prussian-German history, the unification of the empire in 1871 was embodied in the heroic canvas of the Prussian academician, Anton von Werner. His *Proclamation of the German Reich*, set in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, existed in various versions painted from 1877 until 1885.³ The artist depicted the moment in which Bismarck has just finished reading the statement establishing the empire and the assembled officers and officials respond to the call of the Grand Duke of Baden for three cheers for the new Emperor William I. The ensigns behind William lift high the battle flags and standards of their regiments; the officers and officials beneath William raise their spiked and plumed helmets and sabers towards the ceiling as they cheer. As Paret writes of this painting, "unification and the empire were announced in enemy country, with the ceremonial trappings of war. The new state was born on the battlefield, a fact and an image that were to remain powerful in the history of the empire to the

day of its dissolution."⁴ German unity of the nineteenth century and the course of statecraft that followed this event were closely linked to the fortunes of the professional soldier and his place in society.

The events of 9 November 1989 and 3 October 1990 await the equivalent to Anton von Werner's canvas. In our time of a cultural atomization and a splintered, post-modern aesthetic one has difficulty imagining a single pictorial image that would signify German unity, be it the denim-clad young people joyously hacking out pieces of the wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate on the night of 9 November 1989 or the "Ossies" in their Trabants roaring through the new crossing points in clouds of two-cycle smoke. But one thing is certain: whatever the future mythical, artistic representation of these events, they will contain no white and black battle standards of the Prussian regiments and the red *Lampassen* of Prussian generals. This is to say, the course of diplomacy and statecraft that fostered Prussian-German unity after the wars of unification in 1864-1871 stands in stark contrast to the bloodless and peaceful statecraft and strategy that led to unification in 1989-1990. Soldiers in uniform were nowhere to be seen in front of the Reichstag as the German black-red-gold flag was hoisted on the mast at midnight and President Richard von Weizsaecker read the new preamble to the German Basic Law. Nor did there follow, as Erich Honecker had often warned in his glory days, a victory parade of the Bundeswehr through the Brandenburg Gate and up the Linden along a path conquering armies had so often followed in the Prussian-German past.

Rather than a march of triumph along the route of the former guard regiments, the arrival of the Bundeswehr in the five new federal states took place in near silence or was accompanied in its loudest form by the music of German classicism played at a sober and low-key ceremony in the former East German Ministry of Defense in Strausberg. But more remarkable than any display of martial pomp were a series of seminars, discussions and lectures between German soldiers from east and west that began some weeks before 3 October 1990 and proceeded for several months thereafter. In these encounters between what was now called Bundeswehr-West and Bundeswehr-East, all concerned placed due emphasis on the guiding principles of *Innere Fuehrung* and *Staatsbuerger in Uniform*.⁵ These ideals, that encapsulate the spirit and heart of the Bundeswehr, emerged in the wake of Germany's military defeat and the beginnings of the Federal Republic in the early nineteen-fifties and were long surrounded by political controversy in the years of trial and final success that followed until the nineteen-seventies. *Innere Fuehrung* and *Staatsbuerger in Uniform* stand for the intellectual-political foundation stones of the inner structure of the German military. The evolution of these terms is explored briefly in the following lines that examine the need to integrate the professional soldier into German state and society.

* * * * *

As the Bundeswehr slowly appeared in the mid-nineteen-fifties, Dr. Richard Jaeger (Christian Social Union), a leading

member of Parliament and an architect of the new army, summed up a deep trauma of the German past: "Germany had in the past a good army. Today we doubtless have the start and development of a good democracy. But we in Germany have never had at the same time a good army, a good democracy, and a balanced relationship between the two."⁶ The makers of policy in the young Federal Republic struggled to understand how previous German attempts at democracy had come to such grief. Professional soldiers, long celebrated before 1945 as nation builders and as ideals of character and virtue, seemed especially guilty from the vantage point of the two lost wars. The architects of West German democracy--most of whom had served in the army--recalled vividly the civil-military antagonism of Prussian-German history that so often had placed soldiers and democrats on opposite sides of the barricades.⁷ The founders of the Bundeswehr, men and women from all walks of life, reflected on the course of Prussian-German history, and believed that the ethos of the professional soldier had too often stood in conflict with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that swept Europe and America after 1789. The Federal Republic, faced in the early cold war with the prospect of reshaping the ethos and self-image of the soldier, would have to strike an almost magical balance between the principles of freedom and the requirements of military service.

As one looked back over the century and beyond, the professional soldiers of the past offered a disappointing record. Increasingly closed off from other social groups in the course of the nineteenth century, Prussian-German officers appeared to

contemporary liberal and socialist critics as nurturing a world view in conflict with Germans beyond the barracks and the officers' mess. The professional officer all too often saw himself as the heir to medieval chivalry, whose values of honor, dash, and cold bloodedness under fire were to be handed down to succeeding generations. Too many professional soldiers, confronted with the turbulence of mass politics and the struggle for a widening of political participation in the late nineteenth century, celebrated their concept of honor at the expense of other civic virtues and social groups.

This civil-military conflict, though first present as far back as the era of revolutionary and Napoleonic warfare, emerged in its modern form amid the turbulence of the Wilhelmine *fin de siècle*.⁸ Imperial Germany struggled with the political and social effects of mass politics and the industrialization of German life, all of which after 1880 transformed the nature of war and armies. No longer was soldiering simply a calling for an armed elite based upon noble blood-lines and the imperatives of character. War was to become the business of a technocratic corps in control of mass armies relying on metal and coal sinews of war. Quite simply, the problem that confronted German professional soldiers--as indeed it did others in Europe of the time--was how to adjust the life and character of their institution to the altered politics and society of the early 20th century. Liberal, democratic and socialist forces, for their part, had to find some way to strike a balance between the imperatives of military effectiveness and the requirements of

pluralistic and democratic mass politics. Figures from liberal and socialist parties--taking a clue from the era of Prussian reform--suggested that the soldier in Imperial Germany should become more of a citizen in uniform. Their sense of service, military discipline and professional ethos should coincide with the requirements of modern and enlightened society that required not pliant and obedient subjects, but thinking and active citizens.⁹ The Wilhelmine state, however, allowed for little such compromise, a situation that only became far more disastrous with the outbreak of war in 1914 and the defeat and revolution in 1918.

Tragically enough, when events seemed to indicate that Germany might at last overcome this traditional civil-military impasse, the first German republic failed to make peace between soldiers and democrats. Despite the turbulence of revolution and civil war, the spirit of the old professional soldier carried over into the young republic. Parliamentarians for their part never effectively revived pre-1914 initiatives to re-fashion military professionalism suitable to the republic. Soldiers, unyielding in the face of defeat, bloodied by civil-war and hamstrung by the dictates of the Versailles Treaty, retreated into a cult of tradition that became a substitute for integration into civil state and society. The *Reichswehr* in its first years of existence in the middle-nineteen twenties exalted the memory of the monarchy and the old armies. This tendency fostered the rise of the apolitical soldier, who imagined himself to be above party politics and to embody the timeless virtues of a Prussian-

German state hardened by the trial of total war. Military professionalism focused ever more on the handicraft of war, which itself offered the enemies of Versailles the means to restore German national honor sullied by defeat and the dictated peace. The sum of these phenomena made the *Reichswehr* appear to its critics as a "state within a state," a phrase that fails to describe the full reality of the German military between 1919 and 1933; nonetheless, this idea was to become a standard feature of political debate about the soldier in the German state for decades to come.¹⁰

The role of the soldier in National Socialism defies easy generalizations and the quick interpretation required of this kind of essay. Yet an understanding of this era of German military history is an essential condition for any attempt to understand the challenges that now face the Bundeswehr. Even a half-century after the events, statements about the political guilt of the professional soldier in the Third Reich excite strong feelings and controversy.¹¹ Once the Nazis came to power in 1933, they had to harness the army. They too feared it as a "state within a state," but needed it to assure their survival in the state, to break the shackles of Versailles and re-establish Germany as a great power--goals that lay at the center of Hitler's program. Toward these ends, the Nazis tried to infiltrate and manipulate the military in the first years of the regime. This integration of the *Reichswehr* into the Nazi state produced mixed results of success and failure during the six years before the outbreak of war in 1939. In some sense,

professional soldiers and the Nazis shared similar revisionist and nationalist ends, although the politically conservative, and at times plainly naïve officer corps failed to appreciate fully the depths of Hitler's ambition and the ruthlessness of his methods. The Day of Potsdam in March 1933, when Hitler appeared to the officer corps as guardian of the Prussian-German military heritage, camouflaged the radical and ultimately nihilistic purposes of the Nazi regime. The Nazi statecraft and strategy of the following years steadily gained momentum towards the abyss; men in brown and field-grey re-armed the Reich and drove onward to war and conquest. Despite the enormous bravery and self-sacrifice of millions of Germans in World War II, who fought out of a sense of honor and duty for what they regarded as a just cause, there were many professional soldiers who identified with the pernicious aims of National Socialism and aided Adolf Hitler in his ideological wars of annihilation, particularly in the eastern and Balkan campaigns. While many soldiers offered partial or outright resistance to Nazi outrages, others joined in them as little more than executioners. Certain individuals and units of the German armed forces performed brilliantly in the tactical and operational spheres on widely dispersed fronts, thus setting extraordinary examples of military genius and operational art. Others became accomplices in unspeakable atrocities that sullied the record of the German soldier until the present day. For the majority of soldiers, however--that is, the many millions who served in the Wehrmacht through no choice of their own--soldiering was at best a necessary evil; once the course of the

war turned against Germany, many soldiers fought for no other reason than to protect themselves and their loved ones.

The disaster of a second defeat, and the revelations of genocidal outrages that followed in its wake, appeared to seal the fate of the German soldier---he was to vanish along with so much else that now seemed wrong and outdated in the despair of the zero hour. But within the brief time of a few years, the antagonism between the opposing ideological blocks led to the armament of the two German states. Suddenly, in a manner that few war-weary and exhausted Germans wished to confront, the makers of policy in East and West had to devise a means to integrate the soldier into the new states of east and west. The following lines describe the character of the West German military experience.

* * * * *

The generation of men and women in the Federal Republic who responded to the call of the early nineteen-fifties for a balanced relationship between the soldier and democracy took the Basic Law of 1949 as their point of departure.¹² The constitutional authors intended their work to answer the democratic failures of the German past. Despite the troubled and uncertain beginnings of the Basic Law in 1948-9, it has nonetheless proved itself to be durable and effective; this generalization applies equally to the Bundeswehr as it does to the Federal Republic as a whole. The first lines of the Basic Law, that is, Article 1, Paragraph One states that: "Human dignity is untouchable. All state power is to protect and respect

it." As the founders applied this principle to the new army on the drawing boards of the early nineteen-fifties, they conceived of a soldier as a citizen in uniform. He was to be neither an obedient subject of king and court, nor a politically blinkered, military professional in service of an anti-liberal ideal of the state; neither would he be an armed member of the racial community in service of an ideology of teutonic supremacy, nor a comrade in arms for class struggle and a world-wide workers' revolution. Rather, the soldier of the Federal Republic was to enjoy his inalienable civil rights while in uniform; the army could only abridge these rights where military necessity absolutely demanded it. But the new armed forces would be no "democratic army." The founders never intended that soldiers would first vote whether to storm a hill, as widespread American misperception about *Innere Fuehrung* would have it; rather the ideal here is of an "army in a democracy." The principles of the Basic Law were to be transferred into the new military to check past abuses of command and obedience and the chicanery of everyday barracks life.

The civil-military challenge of the newly formed army revealed three really rather daunting aspects: first, the integration of a conscription army into the new German democracy; secondly, the integration of the new armed forces into the Atlantic Alliance; and finally, the creation of an inner structure of the Bundeswehr that would accord with the principles of the constitution. Just as the Basic Law has shown remarkable strength in the face of challenges to German democracy from

within and without, the three-fold integrationist imperative of the Bundeswehr has been similarly effective and durable since 1955. This general capacity for integration, visible in the ideals of *Staatsbuerger in Uniform* and *Innere Fuehrung* have shown themselves in four major features of the Bundeswehr described below.¹³ These four traditions of integration also bear greatly on the character of the German soldier and German unity.

First, the founders of the Bundeswehr conceived of the army as being purely defensive. It is limited in its mission by the strictures of the military amendments to the Basic Law put in hand under the Adenauer government in close cooperation with parliament. The general insistence upon legal constraints on the character and mission of the armed forces represents yet another answer to the German military past. Never before had a German constitution expressly limited the mission of the armed forces solely to defense as laid down in Article 87a: "The Federation establishes armed forces for defense." The Bundeswehr, further integrated in its key command echelons and combat forces into a multi-national entity of Atlantic Alliance, threatens none of Germany's many neighbors. That is, not only does the law of the land proscribe aggressive war, but the Germans on their own cannot wage such a war because they share command and control of their forces in the integrated Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).¹⁴

In the second instance of integration, Bundeswehr defends a parliamentary democracy; in a direct sense it is nothing less than army of the parliament itself. Members of parliament,

working closely with members of other social groups, built the army together with professional soldiers. The military legislation drafted amid intense debate and anxiety in the mid-1950s anchored the new army in the executive branch of government, which in turn answers to parliament. The makers of military policy in the Adenauer era thus succeeded where their predecessors in the first republic had not--they established the primacy of parliamentary policy over the military as the men and women of the nineteen-twenties had plainly failed to do. Outstanding among the mechanisms that assures this control are the arrangements for the supreme command of the armed forces. While such command had previously rested with the king and emperor, the president of the republic, or the *Fuehrer*, the Bonn parliamentarians placed it during peacetime with the Minister of Defense; in crisis and war, then, the latter is to hand over command to the Chancellor himself. To assure that the military remains within the spirit and the letter of these principles, the parliamentary fathers of the Bundeswehr established the *Wehrbeauftragter*, as a kind of democratic protective angel for the rank and file. He also reports to parliament annually on the strength of the inner structure and the problems of military life.

Closely connected with the preceding is the third tradition of integration: the ideal of the citizen in uniform. While some might dismiss this phrase as an empty public relations gesture, it embodies an important reality that stands out from the record of past and present armies in Germany and elsewhere. That is,

there is no constitutional difference between a citizen in blue denim or grey flannel and one in olive-drab or blue grey uniform. From the very outset such founders of the Bundeswehr as Graf Kielmansegg, Graf Baudissin and Ulrich de Maizière, insisted that the soldier on duty must experience daily the same liberal and democratic values he has sworn to defend. Past opposition to the military grew from the perceived mistreatment of the common soldier by NCOs and officers, episodes made popular in such novels as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Hans-Hellmut Kirst's *08/15. Innere Fuehrung*, among its goals, seeks to banish abuses contrary to human dignity.

Fourthly, and again closely linked with the above tradition, the founders decided to draft young men to serve in the Bundeswehr. The makers of policy took this step despite calls in the nineteen-fifties for a professional army; they did so to underscore the principle that national defense stands among the duties of every citizen. The draftees also further integrate the military into society as they frustrate the rise of a caste mentality so typical of professional armies. Officers and NCOs encounter a constant stream of young civilians uninterested and unimpressed by the cult of soldierly bravery; a fraction of these young men then join the officer corps on an ongoing basis.

These traditions of integration anchor the German armed forces within the dual spheres of domestic and international politics. The primacy of parliamentary control over the military complements the integration of the Bundeswehr into the Atlantic Alliance. Just as colonels of Bonn's Ministry of Defense do not

encircle parliament with Leopard II tanks to impose a decision on the government, nor do they secretly draft war plans at SHAPE, furtively move armored divisions to the border, nor launch lightning campaigns to alter the central European balance of power.

To speak in the nineteen-nineties of these principles of integration as "traditions" of the Bundeswehr belies how long it took to make these imperatives of policy into realities of everyday life. From the early 'fifties until the nineteen-seventies, the Bundeswehr stood under constant scrutiny from those fearful of the dangers to freedom posed by its defenders. For two decades critics worried that soldiers raised in the anti-democratic and authoritarian schools of the old armies, the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht might never become good democrats. Would they not seize their first chance to return to their old militarist ways as had been the case in the Weimar Republic? One should recall as well that the Bundeswehr reformers of the first generation were veterans of these same armies. Their past notwithstanding, they fully recognized the imperative for change imposed by altered political circumstances. Their laudable efforts at military reform between 1955 and 1970 were accompanied by occasional scandals about the accidental deaths of soldiers in training and rumblings about the existence of a counter-reformation in the military leadership.¹⁵ Observers outside the military of the nineteen-sixties worried that, despite the appearance of reform, there lurked within the ranks a corps of militarists for whom the ideal of the citizen in uniform and *Innere Fuehrung* had merely

been a mask to sell the new army to its critics. At a fateful moment this group might cast off the mask of reform to reveal the old face of Prussian-German militarism.¹⁶ But even in the turbulence of late nineteen-sixties these fears remained groundless. The Bonn Republic proved itself stronger and luckier than its Weimar predecessor for many reasons, not the least because the mechanisms of military integration worked effectively in the transition from the Konrad Adenauer-Ludwig Erhard era to that of Willy Brandt-Helmut Schmidt.

By the nineteen-eighties, these foundation stones of the inner structure of the Bundeswehr seemed to have stood the test of time. The anxieties and fears about a militarist revival in the first decades of the Bundeswehr faded into memory. To be sure, episodes of controversy about NATO strategy confronted the West German armed forces with the deployment of the INF missiles in 1982-4 and with the debate about the Follow-on-to-Lance missile in early 1989. But in the rhetoric that accompanied these events, one did not hear much about the integration of the army into society. The European diplomatic revolution of 1989-1990, however, suddenly and radically transformed military affairs in Germany. The Bundeswehr stood at the turn of the year 1990-1, as Minister of Defense Gerhard Stoltenberg said, before the greatest challenge since its creation in 1955: it must integrate the soldiers of the former National People's Army into its ranks while simultaneously reducing and reorganizing itself to fit the altered political-military landscape of a uniting Europe.

* * * * *

The challenge posed by the soldiers of Bundeswehr-East fits within the grander integration of the soldier and the state in the German past. There can be little doubt that the phenomenon of one army connected to one multi-national alliance absorbing the soldiers of another army allied to an opposing block forms a unique chapter in the record of European armies in the modern era. For anyone who has been an eyewitness to this process, as is this writer, the entire event is extraordinary. But putting aside all sense of shock with the new, one should see more continuity in this process than discontinuity; that, indeed, German military unification of 1989/90 exists in a continuum that reaches back at least to the era of Prussian military reform in the early nineteenth century and has passed through several changes of political regime in Germany. Put another way, there is a kind of continuity in change even in this case. This statement fully recognizes the extraordinary hurdles that stand in the way of the present challenge of Bundeswehr-West and Bundeswehr-Ost; such integration is plainly difficult, not the least because of the important political-intellectual differences between the two armies considered in the following lines.

Each German state after 1949 attempted in its own way to anchor the professional soldier within the civil-military institutions of its form of government. The previous pages suggested the reasons for success in West Germany. In the case of the now vanished German Democratic Republic, the masters of state and society in the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of the nineteen-

fifties and nineteen-sixties imposed "Stalinist structures of power" on the armed forces.¹⁷ The foregoing statement does not dismiss the National People's Army as "the malevolent instrument of an unjust state";¹⁸ but it is no less true that first the Soviet occupiers and later the leaders of the Socialist Unity Party built the inner structure of the military and linked it in turn with other organs of party and state power, all of which strikes the observer of today as if taken from the pages of George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. While the SED integrated the NVA into the state and alliance by certain structures that might superficially resemble those of the West German case, the spirit of the East German military and its concept of discipline stood in obvious contradiction to the first lines of the West German Basic Law as regards the inviolability of human dignity.¹⁹

By means of "ideological indoctrination, the screening out of all free information, the rigid integration into the party, which itself imposed strict discipline, and through political surveillance,"²⁰ the SED made the army its own. Outstanding was the ideal of blind obedience to party and state. An exhaustive description of the political and military organizations of the GDR would overwhelm the present essay,²¹ but suffice it to say that, for reasons of conviction or self-advancement, fully 98% of the officer corps joined the SED. These men were further linked to the will of the SED through the network of political officers of the Central Political Administration (PHV) at various echelons of command as well as by representatives of the party itself, of the Free German Youth (FDJ) and even the Ministry of State

Security (MfS).

To this "Stalinist inner-structure" at the heart of the NVA, the regime further added a kind of hybrid Prussian-German face, visible, for instance, in the earth-grey uniformed soldiers on parade before the Neue Wache and the Zeughaus on the Linden in Berlin. Whereas the Federal Republic and the Bundeswehr eschewed the military pomp of silver braid, jack boots, and brass bands in favor of the ideal of an "army without pathos," the NVA used the external trappings of military tradition to integrate the soldier in the state.²² This use of traditional militaria in fact perverted the Prussian-German military heritage, which never embraced an ideal of total political control; in this sense, the SED employed the artifice of tradition not unlike the Nazis, who grafted a totalitarian ideology onto the cult of the soldierly heritage. Such a familiar Prussian-German face may have sought to foster a well-known image of the soldier in the state to the average citizen of the GDR. But from the start, east Germans took little joy in soldiering, and, as the decades passed and the strength of the regime decayed with the advent of reform in the Soviet Union in the mid-nineteen eighties, the average citizen resented ever more the burdens of national security on everyday life.

This growing popular anger with the leviathan of state power overwhelmed the self-defeating hypertrophy of SED control in the breathtaking events from the summer of 1989 until the spring of 1990. The hybrid Stalinist/Prussian-German inner structure of the NVA had grown enfeebled and dilapidated like the party and state

that it defended; and like the ossified party leadership, the forbidding border fortifications, and the rusting industrial plants, this military inner-structure began to collapse during the turn of the year 1989-1990.²³ As the inner structure of the NVA fell, it shattered the world of beliefs and the ideals of service that had motivated professional soldiers to take up arms against NATO; these events left the majority of such men dazed and paralyzed, while others remained defiant and proud.

The progress of revolution in the GDR also fostered the first signs of democratic reform within the shaken NVA. At key moments in the autumn of 1989, certain soldiers wisely resisted orders to join in preparations to put down the revolution. Seizing upon this lead from the ranks, reform circles began in December 1989 under the Hans Modrow government to free the military from the grip of the SED. Through the spring of 1990, members of the round tables in the GDR drafted reforms to key aspects of military life, borrowing heavily from the West German principles of *Innere Fuehrung* and *Staatsbuerger in Uniform*.²⁴ This process also led within a matter of weeks to the first semi-official and official contacts between the Bundeswehr and NVA; these encounters between officers, NCO and soldiers of all kinds grew through the summer and fall of 1990. They gained in intensity once Helmut Kohl and Mikhail Gorbachev agreed that a united Germany could remain in NATO and the combined strength of a united German military would fall to 370,000 by 1994. The theory and practice of *Innere Fuehrung* loomed large in these exchanges between soldiers of a uniting Germany.

The climax of this process of military "pre-unification" came at the ceremonies in Strausberg on 2, 3 and 4 October. On the 2nd, Minister of Defense and Disarmament, Rainer Eppelman lowered the flag of the German Democratic Republic and the NVA went out of existence, while the following day, Minister of Defense Gerhard Stoltenberg and Lieutenant General Joerg Schoenbohm assumed command of the 100,000 soldiers of the former NVA. Not all of these men would remain in the ranks at the end of the disarmament that is to last until 1994; some would give up military life out of disgust; some would go because their present beliefs or past actions disqualified them to serve in a military founded on the Basic Law. But a fraction of the veterans of the NVA had every right to continue as soldiers, not the least because they deserved a chance to adapt to the ideals of the German Basic Law and the self-image of the Bundeswehr.²⁵ Those who wanted to stay would undergo a probationary period and the officers would have to pass the review of an independent personnel screening committee.

An appreciation of the full gamut of problems connected with the military union of Germany would overwhelm the remainder of this essay, but as a commentator in a semi-official publication of the Bundeswehr wrote in November, 1990, this task was "more of an intellectual-psychological challenge than one of organization."²⁶ That is, the architects of military unity on Bonn's Hardthoehe might quickly draft a series of new wiring diagrams and dispatch liaison officers to join the forces and facilities of the vanished NVA/Bundeswehr-Ost with Bundeswehr-

West, but the union of mentality, ethos and self-image of professional soldiers from east and west would obviously require more time and much human effort. This task was made no easier by the disarmament agreed upon in the second half of 1990. Such diplomacy required that a large fraction of professional officers on duty on 3 October 1990 must become civilians within eighteen months.

Above all else, the process of union and the eradication of all "inner walls," to use the phrase of President Richard von Weizsaecker, demanded care and understanding from those of Bundeswehr-West as regards the psychological and ethical situation of the soldiers of the former NVA. "Nearly all my comrades and I," as one east German described his state of mind in the weeks before 3 October, "honestly believed that we served the people of the GDR as well as peace. It was and is a very painful realization for us that for all these years of military duty, we trusted a leadership that revealed itself as corrupt and incapable of guiding and leading this state. Many have fallen apart as a result of this bitter realization and see no way out of this situation; they are either resigned [to their fate] or have given up."²⁷

Among the most troublesome consequences of this bitter realization is an apparent antagonism to civilian control of the military. While the first German-German military seminars in the weeks before unification revealed that soldiers from east and west had much in common as human beings, an intense discussion of the ideals of *Innere Fuehrung* pointed to profound political and

social differences. These uncommon aspects showed themselves in the spiritual and ethical scars of cynicism and mistrust left behind in NVA veterans damaged by the SED system of total political control.²⁸

In one instance witnessed by this writer, a discussion between west and east German soldiers about the relationship of the Bundeswehr to political life--many soldiers are elected to serve in local government--prompted a forthright east German to comment that the military should have nothing to do with politics and politicians; soldiers should concentrate on the professional aspects of their craft, free of outside interference. Such sentiments, of course, have rich antecedents not only in the German past; they recall the ban of 1875 in the Prussian army against membership in political parties and the ideal of the apolitical soldier in the Reichswehr. Such an apolitical attitude, no doubt connected with the past abuses of the SED, collides with the ideal and practice of the "citizen in uniform." West German soldiers strive to participate in political life as normal citizens. They are anything but a separate and exalted warrior caste that embodies the state above special interests. Such incidents as the above require officers from Bundeswehr-West to do far more than merely explain the principles of *Innere Fuehrung* in a classroom or over a glass of beer. They must help the soldiers of Bundeswehr-Ost experience the ideals and practice of West German military reform over an extended period of time until these ideals assume a life of their own. *Innere Fuehrung* by its very nature is not something to be memorized or recited on

command.

But the military union posed a danger that, despite *de jure* equality between soldiers of east and west, the Bundeswehr might cleave into two groups for years to come: the self-confident soldiers of Bundeswehr-West versus those of the shaken and anxious Bundeswehr-Ost. The latter group, eager to remain soldiers, might remain second class soldiers in their own eyes and those of their West German peers. Having seen themselves forced by circumstances to give up old patterns of thought and behavior under the trauma of revolution, unity and military probation, their sole imperative is to adapt as quickly as possible to the political, legal and ethical world of the Bundeswehr. As with other reductions in force in modern armies, such experiences often bring to the fore base human instincts that exalt higher authority and the tendency to adapt instantly to new patterns of behavior. Similar problems affected the officer corps of the US Army in the wake of the Korean and Vietnam wars, when many officers promoted in combat could no longer survive the rigors of a peacetime army that requires the skills of finding one's way in the more static world of a garrison force. The syndrome of an opportunistic overeagerness to fit in could provoke unhappiness not only in the Bundeswehr-Ost candidate intent on a permanent position, but among his comrades in Bundeswehr-East and -West suspicious of opportunists. The leadership of the Bundeswehr responsible for policy on *Innere Fuehrung* recognized this problem at the outset as a threat to cohesiveness. They set about through an attentive personnel

policy and an emphasis on education and training to meet it as best they could. This writer's contact with veterans of the NVA also suggests that among these men there are many who are quite prepared and capable of effectively making such a difficult transition of mentality and outlook.

The present danger of two camps recalls the difficulties of *Innere Fuehrung* in its first decades, as certain veterans of the Reichswehr and Wehrmacht adapted to the reforms only amid great friction and protest in the 'fifties and 'sixties. But with the passage of time and the evolution of society after 1968, these camps made peace all the same. The Bundeswehr leadership recognizes that there can exist a diversity of opinions on certain political and social issues within the officer corps as there is in society at large. This successful process of integration of diversity within the military forms an important example of the intellectual-political foundations of the Bundeswehr that have been a prominent features of this essay.

The tension between the requirements of military effectiveness and the imperatives of democracy long plagued German politics and society. The disaster of National Socialism exacerbated this long-standing problem and required military reform once Germany began to rearm in the nineteen-fifties. A nascent Federal Republic of Germany and an untested Bundeswehr forged a new soldierly ethos for the veterans of the Wehrmacht in the first two decades of the new army. This enterprise proceeded under the suspicious gaze of a world worried that the veterans of Hitler's armies would once more sow the dragon's teeth of an army

of aggression. All too many believed at the birth of the Bundeswehr that Prussian-German militarism was integral to the German character. The founders of the Bundeswehr proved these assumptions to be quite false. They carried the ideals of the Basic Law into the barracks; they anchored the new army in domestic German politics and made the Bundeswehr an institution of the elected representatives of the West German people; the founders fitted the Bundeswehr into NATO to win the trust and confidence of the western allies. The German Democratic Republic, in contrast, borrowed the political mechanisms of the Red Army and the ideal of blind discipline as the foundation stones of the NVA. These building blocks collapsed, not the least because they belonged to the epoch of the two world wars and its political ideologies, all of which is now passing into oblivion. A mature Federal Republic and a durable Bundeswehr must now adapt to the experience and expectations of the NVA veteran, mindful of the failures of the German past that warn against an unbalanced relationship between army and democracy. The Bundeswehr must restore the NVA veteran's faith in the efficacy of civilian control of the military while giving him a chance to continue in his chosen profession.

This military union, however, affects more than merely Germany itself. Events in 1990-1991 beyond Germany's borders suggested that the requirement of 1955 to fashion "a good army, a good democracy, and a balanced relationship between the two" concerns Europe as a whole. A continent struggling to unite in the wake of the cold war still faces the scourge of a violent

nationalism that all too painfully recalls the close of the nineteenth century and the era between the world wars. Former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's startling resignation speech of December 1990, with its reference to "baby colonels in oversized shoulder-boards," pointed to the danger of militarism arising from the failure of communism. Political observers feared that turmoil in certain states of the collapsed Soviet empire might once more open the door to military dictatorship.

This danger added greater importance to the series of seminars on the political foundations of the West German military begun by the Bundeswehr for officers from certain eastern European countries. Although the founders of the Bundeswehr long described *Innere Fuehrung* as "not being an item for export," the events of 1989-1990 aroused interest in Germany's eastern neighbors for the ideal of the "citizen in uniform." Such exchange between the soldiers of Germany and its neighbors augurs well for the general attempt to heal the wounds of a divided Europe. In this sense, the union of Bundeswehr-West and Bundeswehr-East constitutes a test case of the general problems confronting the European security system. The West German military reform, begun in the wake of a disastrous defeat, has entered into a new and extraordinary phase; despite the dislocations and setbacks that must perforce come with a German military union, nonetheless, the record of the past justifies trust in Germany's ability to strike a balance between the army and democracy.

Notes

¹ The views expressed herein are the authors own and do not reflect the position of any agency of the United States government. The author wishes to express his thanks to the Research Funds of the Naval Postgraduate School for the generous support of his ongoing study of German Unity and the German Soldier.

² *Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik ueber die Herstellung der Einheit Deutschlands*, in *Bulletin der Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung* No. 104 (Bonn, 1990), p. 1011.

³ This analysis is indebted to Peter Paret, *Art as History: Episodes in the Culture and Politics of Nineteenth Century Germany* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 165-80.

⁴ Paret, *Art as History*, pp. 179-80.

⁵ The English translations of *Innere Fuehrung* are as varied as its definitions in German. It has been called "inner command," "inner leadership," "civic education and command," and "moral leadership." It has been left untranslated here to avoid any of these inadequate terms. See Dieter Walz, ed., *Drei Jahrzehnte Innere Fuehrung: Grundlagen, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven* (Baden-Baden, 1987).

⁶ *Deutscher Bundestag, Verhandlungen, Stenographische Berichte*, 93. Sitzung, 28 June 1955, p. 5228.

⁷ The following is drawn from the author's *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed*

Forces (Princeton, 1988), pp. 13-20. See also Juergen Oelrich, "Die Konzeption der Inneren Fuehrung aus heutiger Sicht," *Arbeitspapier des Zentrums Innere Fuehrung*, Koblenz, September 1990.

⁸ Karl Demeter, *Das deutsche Offizierkorps in Gesellschaft und Staat* (Frankfurt, 1965); Detlef Bald, *Der deutsche Offizier: Sozial- und Bildungsgeschichte des deutschen Offizierkorps im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1982).

⁹ Hans Martine Ottmer, "Ursachen und Hintergruende zur Entwicklung deutscher militaerischer Tradition vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis 1914," in *Tradition in deutschen Streitkraefen*, ed. MGFA (Bonn/Herford, 1986), pp. 196-97.

¹⁰ Gustav-Adolf Caspar, "Die militaerische Tradition in der Reichswehr und Wehrmacht, 1919-1945," in *Tradition in deutschen Streitkraefen*, ed. MGFA (Bonn/Herford, 1986), pp. 209-58.

¹¹ See discussion in this author's work on tradition in the Bundeswehr, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, pp. 256ff.

¹² Oelrich, "Konzeption der Inneren Fuehrung," p. 3; this process embodied far more discussion and reflection than indicated here; an overview is contained in this author's *Reforging the Iron Cross*, pp. 11-164.

¹³ Oelrich, "Konzeption der Inneren Fuehrung," pp. 5ff.

¹⁴ See *Verteidigung im Buendnis: Planung, Aufbau und Bewaehrung der Bundeswehr, 1955-1972*, ed. MGFA (Munich, 1975).

¹⁵ See among the several works on this subject, Dietrich Genschel, *Wehrreform und Reaktion: die Vorbereitung der Inneren Fuehrung, 1951-1956* (Hamburg, 1972); Ulrich Simon, *Die*

Integration der Bundeswehr in die Gesellschaft: Das Ringen um die Innere Fuehrung (Heidelberg, 1980); Hans-Juergen Rautenberg, "Zur Standortbestimmung fuer kuenftige deutsche Streitkraefte," in *Anfaenge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1982).

¹⁶ These events of 1966-1970 are described in this writer's *Reforging the Iron Cross*, pp. 227-55.

¹⁷ The phrase comes from Kapitaen zur See Wolfgang Scheler, Friedrich Engels Akademie, Dresden: "Die geistige Situation der Zeit und die Neubestimmung der Werte: Die Globalisierung der Sicherheit." September 1990. Manuscript in the possession of the author. I am grateful to Major General Werner von Scheven, Deputy Commander of Bundeswehrkommando Ost for alerting me to this speech. Also see among other comparative works, DOKZENTBW, R 9344, W.D. Skodowski, "Integration von Nationaler Volksarmee und Bundeswehr in Staat und Gesellschaft, ein Vergleich," *Jahresarbeit der Fuehrungsakademie der Bundeswehr*, Hamburg, 15 November 1984.

¹⁸ Scheler, "Geistige Situation," p. 12.

¹⁹ A comparative analysis of the legal foundations of the two armies is contained in DOKZENTBW DD 9858, Hans-Jakob Schmitz, "Der Auftrag der Streitkraefte nach dem Grundgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland and der Verfassung der DDR--ein kritischer Rechtsvergleich" *Jahresarbeit der Fuehrungsakademie der Bundeswehr*, Hamburg, 30 January 1989.

²⁰ Scheler, "Geistige Situation," pp. 12-13.

²¹ The standard work on the NVA has been that of Thomas Forster, *Die NVA: Kernstueck der Landes-verteidigung der DDR*

(Koeln, 1983); the recent writings of a handful of Bundeswehr officers with close contacts with the NVA/Bundeswehr Ost complements the pre-1989 image, see for instance, Klaus-Juergen Engellien and Hans-Joachim Reeb, "Wer bist Du Kamerad? Der Versuch einer Beschreibung des ehemaligen NVA Offiziers," in *Truppenpraxis*, 6/1990, pp. 650-53, and by the same authors, "Der Soldat der NVA: Hilfen zum Verstaendnis und zum Umgang," *Arbeitspapier des Zentrums Innere Fuehrung*, September 1990.

²² See discussion in Hans-Peter Stein, *Symbole und Zeremoniell in deutschen Streitkraeften* (Herford/Bonn, 1984).

²³ Scheler, "Geistige Situation," pp. 1-17; these events are interpreted by Gunter Holzweissig, "Die Nationale Volksarmee nach dem Umbruch in der DDR," in *Aussenpolitik* (XXXXI: 1990) 4, pp. 399-404.

²⁴ See: Hans-Joachim Reeb, "Deutsche Armeen in Ost und West: Betrachtungen zur Militaerreform der Nationalen Volksarmee im Vergleich zur Inneren Fuehrung der Bundeswehr anhand ausgewaehlter Dokumente," *Arbeitspapier des Zentrums Innere Fuehrung*, Koblenz, June 1990; the chief source on the reforms themselves was the periodical, *Militaerreform in der DDR: Mitteilungen, Positionen, Dokumente, Meinungen*, December 1989--July 1990.

²⁵ Lieutenant General Joerg Schoenbohm expressed these sentiments in his maiden speech at Bundeswehr Kommando Ost on 4 October 1990 (in the possession of the writer and reproduced in edited form in "Die Einheit auch in der Bundeswehr gestalten," in *Soldat und Technik* 11/1990, p. 776).

26 Werner Baach, "Zuversicht," in *Truppenpraxis* 6/1990, p.

561.

27 Engellien/Reeb, "Wer bist Du Kamerad?" *Truppenpraxis*, p.

651.

28 *ibid.*

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