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# FOR KING AND KAISER!

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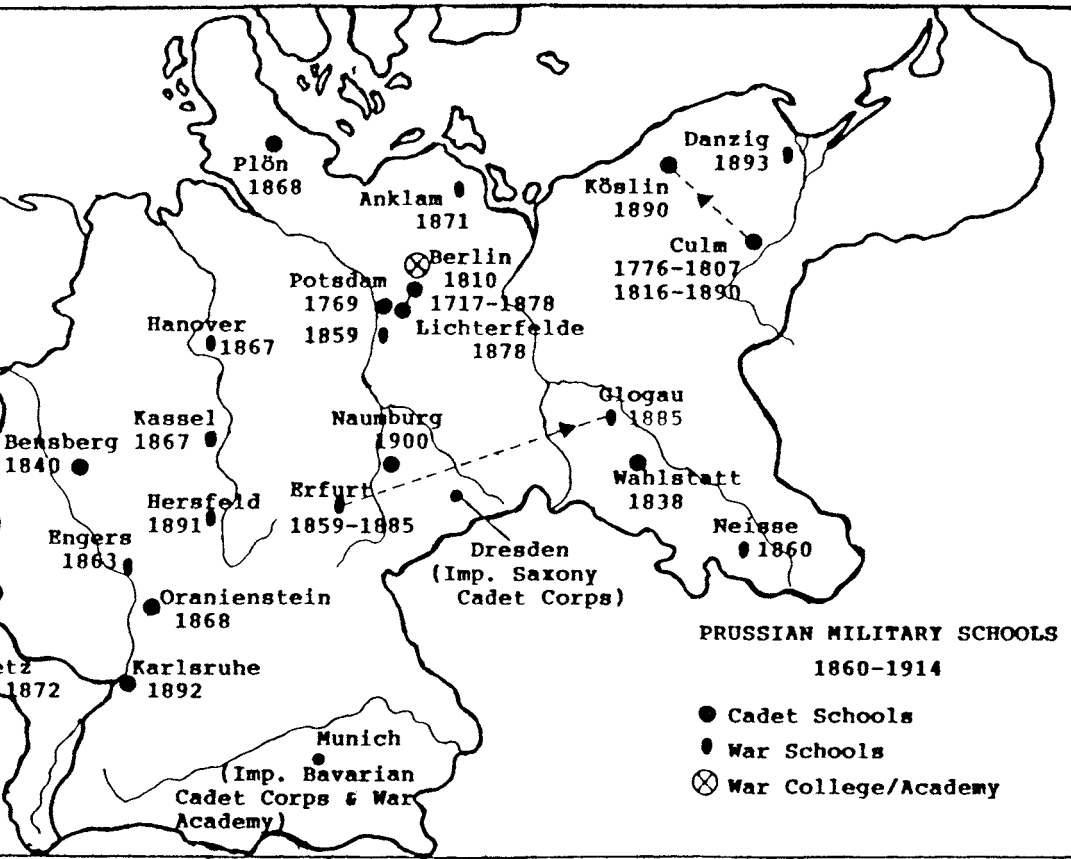
The Making of the Prussian Army Officer, 1860–  
1914

**Steven E. Clemente**

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FOR KING  
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# FOR KING AND KAISER!

The Making of the Prussian  
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STEVEN E. CLEMENTE

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## Preface

Wise is the author who recognizes the importance of others in the preparation of his work. The University of Oklahoma Library System provided invaluable assistance in the acquisition of materials and saved much travel. The cheerful diligence, particularly of aides Shelly Clement and Joyce Cross, did not go unnoticed. The staffs of the following also played major roles in the initial phase: the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz and the Senatsbibliothek in Berlin; the Zentralbibliothek der Bundeswehr, Düsseldorf; the Universitätsbibliothek at Munich; the U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, housed at Carlisle Barracks; the Library of Congress; and the Military Archives Division of the National Archives.

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# Introduction

*In every direction we see the necessity to improve the intellectual development of the army.*  
Gen. Friedrich von Bernhardt, 1914(1)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, one sociopolitical force that contributed greatly to the state of increased vigilance within governments of the European powers was socialism. In Prussia the Hohenzollerns had blunted the bourgeois-liberal surges of 1848 and the 1860s, but soon faced an additional threat from the working class drive for political and social equality. As the middle class slowly resigned itself to the continued role of the Prussian king as emperor of a unified Germany, the monarchy and its government nevertheless harbored an enduring suspicion regarding the bourgeoisie's true political loyalty. But in the case of the socialists, suspicion became outright fear. Would the revolutionary fervor of 1848 return and, with the addition of this new and more radical ideology, succeed in destroying the crown and the traditional social order? Increasingly, the imperial regime believed so and came to rely on the army to preserve the conservative status quo against the threat of a socialist or liberal-democratic takeover.

In his classic work on the Prussian army, Gordon Craig observed that the Prussian military after 1871 adopted two policies in an attempt to protect itself and the crown from the "forces of revolution." First, it reorganized the internal bureaucracy in order to remove the most important army matters from the

only military office that had to deal directly with Parliament—the War Ministry; and second, it managed the officer selection process in such a way as to ensure that no aspirants with "unorthodox social and political ideas" would invade the closed society of the officer corps—"the bulwark of royal absolutism"(2). It was the latter policy, officer selection, that formed the initial focus of this study.

My original intent was to investigate the question of how the Prussian officer corps, from the reorganization of the 1860s to World War I, used the officer selection and training process to maintain traditional feudal values and preserve as far as possible its social and political homogeneity. It proved impossible, however, to address this central theme without evaluating the entire selection and education system and thereby reaching some conclusions as to the effect the policies that produced the Prussian officer had on the overall quality of the corps. Accordingly, this study expanded (as if by its own power) to include a description and assessment of the professional education that prepared the officers who led the army and the nation into battle.

The selection process proved to be a difficult one for the officer corps. How could the increasing officer quotas be met without admitting more middle-class candidates; and if that proved impossible, how could the army ensure the social and political loyalty of a predominantly bourgeois officer cadre? Middle-class aspirants were suspected of harboring liberal views that constituted a potential threat to the traditional order. Consequently, all who evidenced such social or political ideologies had to be rejected regardless of their education or ability. The entire process from nomination through commissioning would seek to make certain of the candidate's loyalty to the crown above all else. In addition, the officer corps worked to guarantee that every available candidate from the preferred classes—aristocracy and old officer families—secured a commission. Amid such discrimination, the system underwent changes which the army claimed were designed to raise the admission standards and professional education of its officers. Faced with these seemingly conflicting goals, the officer corps used, altered, bypassed, and, when necessary, ignored the regulations in order to achieve its ends.

To understand the shaping process, one also must be aware of the various educational and social origins from which the aspirants emanated, their treatment, and the training and professional education they

received. Those candidates, noble or middle class, who came from the civilian schools were, as a rule, better educated than their comrades from the Cadet Corps, even if they had not completed the entire secondary curriculum. However, the middle-class aspirants were more likely to complete their studies while the nobility could, if necessary, rely on official help in bypassing the minimum educational requirements. In comparison, those from the Cadet Corps not only received an inferior education, but often endured brutal physical and emotional treatment that, by reason of their young ages, promoted the formation of a callous attitude toward suffering.

While hailed by many contemporary observers as a model to be emulated, Prussian officer education actually declined in quality during the imperial period. Despite the liberal beginnings of Scharnhorst, professional curricula throughout most of the nineteenth century, and especially during the imperial period, were increasingly confined to purely military studies. Providing a broad view of events, ideas, and peoples was, if not publicly scorned, determined by the army to be the business of secondary schools and universities, not the armed forces. The state controlled school system, however, did little below the university level to promote critical thought. Consequently, the officers, some of whom had not completed the last three years of their secondary education, learned little that would aid them in dealing with civilians, contemporary ideas, or anything other than armies, soldiers, and the socialist scourge. Amidst the lessons that glorified war and the Germanic race, obedience and conformity rated far above individual initiative and thought.

Although continuously monitored for suspicious behavior, once the candidates were accepted into the commissioning process, the authorities worked to make sure that all met with success. The result was an officer corps that varied widely in education and intellect. While exhibiting martial skill, many who made it to the top echelons lacked sufficient formal training in broad areas outside of military studies. This, along with the rigid authoritarianism, led to a general lack of creativity(3). The middle-class candidates, the majority of whom had completed their secondary education, often found acceptance only in the less glamorous arms (e.g., the engineers and heavy artillery), where the opportunities for attaining high command positions were decidedly diminished. The officer corps did not lack for men with impressive qualifications. However, the manipulation

of selection and training allowed many noble and "old officer" candidates to advance beyond their ability.

In addition to exerting a subtle influence upon the professional quality of the officer cadre, the selection and training process successfully integrated the middle class into the corps. Despite the fears of the reactionary elements, bourgeois candidates had received from family and school the necessary ideological instruction. Thus, they easily accepted the demand for loyalty to the monarchy and the corps and assumed the proper political and social stance. Even as their numbers came to dominate the corps before World War I, the attitudes and loyalties of the middle-class officers paralleled those of their "aristocratic brothers-in-arms"(4). The so-called "middle-class militarism," which favored a modern authoritarian/military system with a diminished role for the Kaiser, was not yet in evidence—except perhaps, among those few officers, like Ludendorff, who achieved positions that allowed them to observe firsthand the incompetency of the Kaiser and certain noble officers. The overwhelming majority of officers, noble and middle class, held instead to the old "conservative militarism," which argued for a maintenance of the traditional social and political order based upon the supremacy of the crown and its protector, the army(5).

As a result, and despite the increased importance of modern technology and the General Staff's willingness to accept more middle-class officers(6), the social and political position of the officer corps in 1914 differed little from that of the mid-nineteenth century. The main domestic enemy, however, was no longer to be found in the liberal bourgeoisie, but rather in the working class adherence to socialism. Regardless of the apprehension of the army high command and the Kaiser, the middle-class officer saw himself as fully committed to preservation of the monarchy and the traditional values of the officer corps as his noble and old officer comrades. Like them, he remained ready to move as quickly against a socialist "mob" as against a foreign enemy. His schooling, selection, and professional training sought to make sure that he would act effectively and without question or hesitation.

## NOTES

1. Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Germany and the Next War*, trans. Allen H. Powles (New York: Longmans, Green, 1914), 223.

2. Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955; reprint ed., 1964), 218-19.

3. Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps, 1890-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 3.

4. *Ibid.*, 27.

5. Stig Förster, *Der doppelte Militarismus. Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik zwischen Status-quo-sicherung und Aggression, 1890-1913* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 7. For a discussion of middle-class nationalist pressure groups during the Wilhelmine period, see Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980).

6. Kitchen, *Corps*, 7 and 24.

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# Tradition

*The chief strength of the army is the power and force of tradition.*

Wilhelm II(1)

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, no army came to be respected as highly as that of Germany, or to be more specific, of Prussia. From an organization deemed too weak to stand up to Austria in 1850, it was transformed by the reforms of the next two decades into an efficient fighting force that scored quick successes in the wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870-71(2). Following the unification of Germany, the army became an important instrument in the quest for empire and a constant reminder of German power. The Prussian officer corps stood as the most visible symbol of that power. Guardians of a military tradition dating back to the Teutonic knights, its leaders nevertheless recognized that the requirements for waging a modern war demanded an even greater commitment from those commissioned to lead the nation into battle. The old days of officering only during wartime had disappeared. Events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought "regularization" and "true professionalism" to the military trade. Few professional officer corps existed prior to 1800, but by the beginning of the following century, every army of any size boasted one(3). In Germany the Prussian corps set the example for the other states while at the same time providing an envied model for most foreign armies.

The modern corps originated with the large-scale

participation of the landed aristocracy inhabiting the vast regions of Silesia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, and East Prussia. Initial involvement, however, had not come voluntarily. The process bringing about the domination of the officer corps by the crown began during the reign of the Great Elector, Frederick William of Brandenburg (1640-1688), but was not completed until well into the eighteenth century. The most effective leverage in initiating what was at first a forced partnership between ruler and aristocracy came with the ruling by the Elector's courts that the Junkers' estates constituted a portion of the royal domain(4).

Subsequent rulers (kings after 1701) realized the potential of the court rulings and used the resultant confusion and growing impoverishment of many Junker families to force noble sons into the officer ranks. The aristocracy protested at first. But in recognition of this loss of independence, the crown granted them status as the first estate of the land and material as well as social privileges. The most important concession, however, came during the reign of Frederick the Great (1740-1786) when the claim of royal prerogative over the Junker estates was abrogated and full right of ownership restored. In return for these concessions the King expected, and received, "feudal loyalty" (*Vasallentreue*) and a perennial supply of nobles for his officer corps. As the other nations of western Europe gradually abandoned feudalism, Prussia continued to base its officer corps on the traditional concept of a vassal's bond to his lord. This allegiance to the king above all else remained the distinguishing characteristic of the Prussian corps until the fall of the monarchy in 1918(5).

At first the Junkers preferred to send their sons to the cavalry regiments, and these units remained noble enclaves. But many aristocrats could not afford the increased personal expense entailed in the officer's purchase and maintenance of horse and equipment. An acceptable alternative was found in the infantry and light artillery, especially the elite Guards regiments. With the traditions fostered during the wars of Frederick the Great, service in these units became as "chivalrous" as that in the cavalry(6).

With few exceptions, the remainder of the complement of officers contained only the sons of those non-noble families with histories of career military service. The bourgeoisie were expected to remain content with their "freedom to earn profits." Initially, Frederick refused to permit any middle-class

officer aspirants to disrupt the social homogeneity of the corps. But like his father Frederick William I (1713-1740), he eventually had to fill wartime shortages with such men who would then be summarily purged when peace returned. Frederick even preferred foreign nobles over Prussian/German middle-class candidates whose primary duty, as the King saw it, was to increase the state's economic wealth(7).

While the heavy losses of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) forced Frederick to recruit a large number of middle-class officers, he never accepted their standing as equals alongside the Junkers. The nobles were his "knights." They had sworn allegiance solely to the sovereign who in turn had agreed that the officer corps should remain forever their personal domain. If the King had to resort to the use of bourgeois officers, they would be used to fill the gaps in the less glamorous and highly technical heavy artillery and engineer units(8).

Despite the repeated exigencies of war, Frederick never wavered in his repugnance for middle-class officers. There is the story that when officer cadets paraded past him in later years, he would strike bourgeois cadets out of the ranks with his crutch. This animosity even reached the point where he refused to allow noble officers to take middle-class wives. It is therefore not surprising that at the time of his death, middle-class officers numbered less than 10 percent of the corps, and almost all were isolated in artillery and engineer units. Whether hereditary or recently ennobled, aristocrats occupied virtually all of the higher ranks. Middle-class officers made up only 3 percent of the total above the rank of captain(9), and it is safe to assume that most, if not all, originated from traditional officer families.

In addition to forcing the recruitment of middle-class officers, the Seven Years' War also revealed the need for an improvement in the education of all those commissioned to wear "the King's Coat." But Frederick wanted only an increase in instruction of practical military value; general education received no emphasis. As a result, the latter was usually of poor quality or nonexistent. The adjustments to military education included the founding of two junior cadet schools in East Prussia (Stolp and Culm) for aristocrats sons, the expansion of instruction at the only complete cadet school (Berlin), and lectures during the winter months on geography and fortification for gifted officers stationed at the larger garrisons. However, both the schools and the lectures were too few to result in any real

improvement. Moreover, many of Frederick's senior officers protested even this modest effort, viewing any increase in intellectual activity as a sign of bourgeois incursion. In disgust, the King remonstrated his commanders, "If experience were all a great general needs, the greatest would be Prince Eugene's mules"(10).

Frederick's uncourtly analogy serves to illustrate the repeated difficulty and frustration experienced by those who worked to improve the general and professional education of the officer corps. The struggle continued into the twentieth century, but in 1800 the corps still served more as a welfare system for the nobility than an organization committed to professional modernization. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Prussian army had dutifully emulated the other major European powers in setting up technical schools for the artillery and engineer officers. But, as was the case with middle-class officer recruitment, it failed to anticipate the importance of such training in future conflicts. It took the disasters at Jena and Auerstädt to expose the defects of the Frederician system and produce a resolute demand for reform. Serious attention to the questions of officer education and bourgeois recruitment could be ignored no longer.

Hajo Holborn postulated that the Prussian army of the nineteenth century owed its creation to four men: Frederick the Great, Napoleon, Gerhard von Scharnhorst, and Neithardt von Gneisenau. Frederick had contributed the tradition and memories of past victories. Notwithstanding, it required the defeat by the French in 1806 and the toil of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau to show that the old ways would provide little else in the new century(11). Adaptation to the changing demands of warfare became mandatory for survival. However, the Prussian system muddled on much in the fashion of the previous century. By 1806 the percentage of bourgeois officers had only risen from 3 percent to between 8 and 10 percent while the size of the officer corps had grown ten to twelve times. The command structure harbored many old and even decrepit generals (four were past eighty) who often acted independently of any central control. And fully one-fourth of the regimental and battalion commanders exceeded sixty(12).

The problem was not the lack of qualified replacements. The well-educated and growing middle class was more than large enough to provide its share of candidates. But Frederick the Great's immediate successors, Frederick William II (1786-1797) and

Frederick William III (1797-1840), exhibited no great love for the presence of the bourgeoisie in the officer corps, and they, like their famous predecessor, would take action only when forced upon them. Frederick William III found himself in just such a position in 1806. Fortunately for him, and for Prussia, he possessed the statesmen and soldiers with the intellect and skill necessary to carry out the required changes.

Those charged with the task of army reform recognized that the officer corps must include more than the nobility and those of the middle class from traditional officer families. To that end, the King announced on July 25, 1807, the creation of a Commission for the Reorganization of the Army to address the nineteen questions he had personally drawn up. In point five he broached the problem of the social composition of the officer corps with the query, "Should not some change be made as regards the admission of bourgeois, and more of them admitted?"(13) For the next century this question remained at the forefront of army officer selection. With the King's near apologetic suggestion, the aristocracy was now openly pitted against the middle class in the quest for army commissions. Viewed by the majority of the nobility as a struggle for the maintenance of traditional privileges as well as the quality of the officer corps, the extent of the reformers' demands astonished the old guard.

On August 6, 1808, a royal decree promulgated from Königsberg revealed the totality of the reformers' commitment to change. Entitled "Regulations for making Appointments to Vacancies among Ensigns and for the Selection of Officers for the Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery," the order was explicit:

Applications for commissions will in future be considered only on grounds of attainments and education in time of peace, and on grounds of outstanding bravery and general outlook in time of war. . . . All advantages hitherto enjoyed by the [noble] Estate in the Army are hereby abolished and all men, regardless of their origins, shall have the same duties and rights.

In addition, the regulation stated that henceforth all officer aspirants for each arm of the service would be required to pass a test measuring the extent of their general education(14).

While the decree was a bold concession to education and equality, it also included the qualifying

declaration that "the chief requirements of a good officer are not knowledge and technical ability alone but presence of mind, rapid perception, punctuality and accuracy, not to mention proper behavior." As Karl Demeter observed, much could be discerned from this passage concerning the uncertainty of both reformer and conservative on the relative value of the elements of education and family origin(15). The uncertainty, however, existed only in the minds of the reformers who realized they were treading on hallowed ground. The old guard had no doubts about the clear and open threat to their traditional domain and offered immediate resistance. Change came, but only after close scrutiny and, oftentimes, open and fierce opposition.

Also in 1808, the new War Ministry gained overall control of the military. Although leadership was shared between the conservative Count Karl von Lottum and the young reformer Scharnhorst, the latter dominated by the force of his high intellect and strong personality. In this pivotal position, Scharnhorst used his influence and skill to initiate a radical change within the Prussian system(16).

Gerhard von Scharnhorst (1755-1813) maintained more than egalitarianism as his motive for seeking a liberalization of officer selection and promotion of officer education. The son of a Hanoverian farmer who had served as a noncommissioned officer, he had been fortunate enough to attend a military school and obtain a commission in time to serve in the first wars against revolutionary France. His rationalist sentiment found fertile ground with observations on the reliance the French army placed on education and merit in the selection and promotion of officers. In 1802 he transferred to the Prussian army as a lieutenant colonel in the field artillery. His remarkable ability resulted in rapid advancement to the unofficial post of chief military staff assistant to the King.

Once at his post, Scharnhorst did not wait until the 1806 debacle to institute reform. In 1804 he reorganized the Officers' Military Institute in Berlin and renamed it the Academy for Young Officers. He also established a military discussion society in the capital where those who participated included the young Clausewitz. Applying himself with tireless energy, no facet of military science and the Prussian system escaped his knowledge and awareness of the need for change(17).

In addition to the 1808 decree on equality in officer selection, Scharnhorst supported another

order that revoked promotion by seniority in favor of examinations testing the officers' general as well as military education. By such regulations he hoped to promote a new spirit of broad participation, merit selection and promotion, and respect for all types of education—factors he believed were behind the successes of Napoleon's armies. Aided by Hermann von Boyen and Karl von Grolman, Scharnhorst initiated shortly before his death in 1813 a reorganization that transformed the reserves (*Landwehr*) in only one year into an army largely led by middle-class officers and possessing a quasi independence in times of peace. Such changes, he felt, would work to quell the notion that the army and the nation were separate entities. However, the regular army officer corps refused to accept the *Landwehr* officers as either professional or social equals(18).

Class prejudice continued as a major obstacle for the reformers. The belief that the officer corps represented an appendage of the royal house, founded upon the ancient bond between lord and vassal, numbered many influential defenders. In contrast, the reformers believed that equality in selection and advancement based upon education and merit rather than lineage would strengthen the monarchy by promoting a fresh spirit of national participation.

As Minister of War from 1814 to 1819, Boyen planned for a regular army officer cadre selected solely on merit and examination with no consideration for birth. As expected, conservatives both in and out of the army reacted in anger and dismay. Their concern was not only for the social classes to be allowed in, but also for those from the traditional sources who might be rejected. As a class, the Junkers resisted the acquisition of a broad education—a notion reinforced by the social upheaval attending the Enlightenment(19). If they were suddenly forced to compete with the middle class only on the bases of education and merit, the latter would hold a distinct advantage. Many of noble lineage could expect to be bypassed in either selection or advancement since their parents had regarded as unnecessary or were financially unable to provide for a broad liberal education.

In his plans for reform, Scharnhorst had even considered the abolition of entrance exams altogether. Selection would be dependent solely on the completion of a required level of formal schooling. The first major examination, for promotion, would not come until at least five years after commissioning and would include nonmilitary subjects as well as those

of professional importance. The nobility's privileges were to be diminished even in their most hallowed preserve—the Cadet Corps. Boyen wanted to open the aristocratic military schools to the sons of all civil servants. However, the old guard moved rapidly to head off the invasion. The King agreed to refuse admission to any save those whose *officer* fathers had fallen in battle or who had received his personal approval. Since most officers with sons of cadet age belonged to the nobility and the King continued to favor them above all others, cadet enrollment remained unaltered(20).

Despite the setbacks, the middle class was making serious inroads into the officer corps. By 1817 bourgeois officers dominated the complement of Landwehr commissions while the numbers were only 4,138 to 3,367 in favor of the nobility in the regular army. With the reductions of the following year, the aristocrats' majority narrowed still closer to parity (3,605 to 3,053). Fearing a complete bourgeois takeover, the Junkers moved quickly to reverse the tide(21).

Aided by the general reactionary trend throughout post-Waterloo Europe, the opposition to reform began to bear fruit. In 1819 pressure on the King led to the regular army regaining full control over the Landwehr. Both Boyen and Grolman (Chief of the General Staff) soon resigned their posts in protest over the course of events. With Scharnhorst long dead from wounds suffered in the liberation wars and Gneisenau having lost the King's favor, the path lay open for the Junkers to reestablish unchallenged dominance. Once again, the officer corps assumed the role of feudal defender of the crown which in turn pledged to uphold the prerogatives of its noble protectors(22). If the reformers exerted any lasting effect upon the corps, it was, paradoxically, to strengthen the Junkers' resolve to resist any future incursions. That resolution would be tested repeatedly in the century ahead.

The order of August 6, 1808, had technically abolished all class restrictions for entry into the officer ranks. At the same time the authorities had instituted a thorough set of education and examination requirements(23). Although these regulations remained on the books, the failure at reform meant a return to the old discriminatory selection practices. Lower-class applicants could expect a brusque rebuff, regardless of education, and bourgeois aspirants were admitted only out of necessity and usually into the technical arms. In these units it was felt

that the middle-class penchant for the sciences would be of greater practical value. In truth, few from the aristocracy had the technical foundation or desire for these positions. Tradition painted the noble as a gallant, mounted, sabre-waving officer—not a "mechanic" or a gunner.

Notwithstanding the Junkers' containment of middle-class encroachment, the question of preparatory education continued to demand attention. In 1825 a Royal Commission chaired by Prince William looked into the state of education for officer candidates and potential staff officers. It found that many lacked sufficient schooling, especially in the sciences. The Commission held the general belief that by age eighteen or nineteen, when most officers received their commissions, the mind was no longer as receptive to many basic technical precepts. As a result, those young men lacking the proper foundation would experience retarded progression in the military training schools and in professional advancement. The committee's recommendations thus included increasing the educational requirements prior to entry. Hedging against the expected opposition, the determination also contained a strong suggestion that, whenever possible, preference should be given to those candidates of old and respected lineage. Also, the state should bear the expense for educating any officers' sons unable to pay their own way. While rendering lip service to equality, the Commission maintained that "the true interest of the army cannot be served if the mediocre and uncultured are merely helped, at state expense, to the point where they learn to claim higher titles without having raised in themselves the capacity for greater achievements"(24).

Regardless of personal wealth, the fathers of potential officers from traditional sources believed that the state was obligated to help defray the cost of their sons' education. By the late 1820s they were complaining of the hardships entailed in providing the necessary schooling and, with the support of many in the army, demanding that the state follow the Commission's recommendation. Their petitions prompted the Crown Prince (Frederick William) in 1835 to consult the aging Boyen for advice. The old reformer did not hesitate to offer it. All classes of citizens paid the taxes that maintained the army, he argued. Therefore, the state could not justify granting a particular social group any preferential claim to commissions, but must accept the best qualified. Also, if an officer was to retain the respect of the entire citizenry, he must have

an "adequate cosmopolitan knowledge for the needs of the times"(25). For the general, a sound preparatory education still held greater value than one's social origins.

While eloquent, Boyen's counsel was not without effective opposition in high places. General von Hake, the reactionary Minister of War from 1819 to 1833, had privately expressed the sentiment that it was sufficient for an officer to know only how to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. But Frederick William III, like the Crown Prince, also listened to diverse opinions. The result was a directive from the War Ministry on December 17, 1836, instructing all officers to make an effort to increase their general knowledge in order to maintain the respected status of the corps. Frederick William IV's Royal Ordinance of February 4, 1844, reaffirmed his father's position by expanding the educational requirements for those candidates entering from the civilian schools. Concurrently, he ordered an adjustment of the Cadet Corps curriculum in an attempt to bring it more in line with that of the civilian program. In the preamble the King admitted the lack of sufficient general and professional education among his officers. As he saw it, an increase would be of benefit not only to the army, but also to those officers who returned prematurely to civilian life(26). Nothing, however, was said concerning the continued preference for candidates of old Prussian stock over those emanating from the nonmilitary middle class. The spirit of the feudal bond remained inviolate.

The overall level of officer education did rise somewhat, but aristocrats in positions of power continued to circumvent the regulations that, if closely followed, would have ended the nobility's dominance of the officer corps. The disrespect for education manifested itself most in the cadet schools. Through these boarding institutions boys springing from the traditional sources were almost guaranteed a commission by age seventeen or eighteen regardless of academic level attained or quality of education received(27). Such entrenched indifference was not likely to change with the issuance of royal decrees. Without the driving force of a king committed to reform or facing a national threat, the conservatives regarded the directives on education as rules to be met with as little effort as possible or evaded altogether. The noted historian Friedrich Meinecke concluded that "the corps of officers turned the intellectual achievements of the day to account, but it did not take them to heart; it adopted the

practical lessons to be drawn from them rather than the ideal they represented"(28).

In the fight against increased educational requirements, the old guard retained a powerful and vocal friend in Prince William. Ironically, the brother of Frederick William IV had chaired the 1825 commission that recommended an increase in requirements. Still, in a letter to Boyen (who had returned briefly as War Minister in 1841) he questioned the ability of the poorer noble and traditional officer families to provide for the additional preparatory education. Such demands, he believed, would increase the number of middle-class officers and bring about a radical alteration of the character of the officer corps. In order to prevent this, William advocated a strengthening of the Cadet Corps and the establishment of free places within the appropriate civilian secondary schools for needy boys from officer families(29). The free seats were never created, and it is not difficult to ascertain why. Such a move would have raised again the problem Boyen had addressed in 1835. Since the civilian secondary schools received part of their financial support from taxes paid by all classes, it would be blatant discrimination to provide a free education to students selected solely on the basis of their social origins and future profession. While state revenues also went toward the maintenance of the Cadet Corps, the admission prejudice practiced by that institution was removed from public scrutiny and thus generated little serious opposition.

Given the goals of the 1844 Ordinance, officer entrance requirements still remained at a level below that desired by some of its supporters. The Inspector General of Military Training and Education, von Luck, wanted the standard set at fitness for admission to a university. The approved options, however, fell far short of Luck's request. Each aspirant was required to either present a certificate of eligibility for the final level (*Prima*) of the classical Gymnasium(30) or pass the ensign's (*Portepéefährnrichs*) examination. Whichever path he chose, this would be the only time the candidate exhibited the breadth of his general knowledge. From then on training assumed a professional line in preparation for the officer's examination. The so-called "division schools" that provided this instruction offered little general education, certainly not enough to make up for the abbreviated secondary study(31). Nevertheless, the officer and noble families who benefited by the regulations evinced no opposition. The desire of most to have their sons commissioned as soon as possible

outweighed any concern over the effects of a curtailed general education.

The upheaval of 1848 generated little effect upon officer selection and training. The Frankfurt Parliament called for an end to the cadet and division schools, preferring that the education of those destined for the officer corps be left to civilian secondary schools and specially created departments within the universities. However, such dreams lasted only as long as that ill-starred assembly(32). Almost as audacious was the proposal made to Frederick by War Minister von Pfuël that some vacancies in the Cadet Corps be held open to the sons of citizens of all classes who had "earned special merit from the fatherland"(33). Other similar recommendations may have been temporarily entertained by the King, who labored under immense political pressure; but soon after the crisis, he reverted to the position that the Cadet Corps should exist primarily for the sons of officers and the nobility.

In 1858 Frederick William IV suffered a complete physical and mental collapse. His death three years later elevated William, his brother and regent, to the throne. In William I the aristocracy gained an unwavering ally in the struggle to preserve its position and interests within the officer corps. Having spent his life in close contact with the army, the new monarch cherished deep feelings for the martial spirit and firmly adhered to the old feudal pledges. Historian Gerhard Ritter perhaps best characterized William's commitment to the spirit, if not the original intent of those bonds. Even with the influx of middle-class officers, the members of the corps served on as the "paladins of the Hohenzollern throne, loyal followers of the monarch to whom they had sworn personal fealty; and . . . he in turn would . . . protect their privileges"(34).

In William's mind, however, loyalty to the nobility would not prevent improvement. While army conservatives initially questioned his loyalty to their interests, the King moved to upgrade the quality of his officer corps. In 1859 he made attendance at the recently created officer candidate schools, or War Schools (*Kriegsschulen*) as they were officially known, mandatory for all but a select few from the Cadet Corps who had already received similar instruction at the Senior Cadet Academy in Berlin. Thereafter, both the War School system and the Cadet Corps experienced an expansion that continued after his reign(35).

William's alterations of the system were not made