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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: The Reorganization of the Prussian Army After 1807

Author: Oberregierungsrätin Janina Weber

Thesis: At the end of the 18th century, Prussia had become an unmodern state that, compared to much of the rest of Europe, lacked profound changes of the political, social, and military system. Despite the necessity for reforms the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III, continued his retrogressive policy in accordance with the conservative nobility. Only after the French defeat in 1806 did the king realize the urgency for comprehensive reforms. For the reorganization of the army he established the Military Reorganization Commission and involved conservative as well as reform oriented officers. Despite the resistance of the conservatives, between 1807 and 1812 the reformers managed to conduct innovations that led to a fundamental modernization of the Prussian Army.

Discussion: As a consequence of the peace agreement of Tilsit in 1807, Prussia had to deal with the loss of almost half its territory, the French occupation, the reparations, and the limitation of the Prussian Army in terms of quantity and quality. Despite these limiting factors within a few years Prussia succeeded to gain strength again, helped to defeat Napoleon Bonaparte, and became one of the strongest and most modern armies in Europe and beyond. Primarily a small group of military and state reformers was responsible for this positive development. They clearly analyzed the military, social, and political weaknesses that had led to the defeat and managed to implement reforms regarding the political situation, the administration of the Prussian state, and the education and structure of the Prussian Army. The military reformers did not manage to establish all the reforms they wanted since they had strong opponents within the conservatives and the military nobility. Most representatives of these groups wanted to maintain the status quo, since a lot of the reforms declined their privileges. Despite this, a lot of the conducted military reforms proved themselves as useful and lasted.

Conclusion: Between 1807 and 1812 the military reformers managed to establish trend-setting innovations in areas like organization, leadership, education, and jurisdiction which led to a fundamental modernization of the Prussian Army and contributed to the advancement of Prussia to a great European power.

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PREFACE

The reorganization of the Prussian Army after the defeat in 1806 has strongly influenced the development of the Prussian Army in the 19th century and beyond. Driven by humanistic and liberal principles between 1807 and 1812 the reformers managed to establish trend-setting innovations in areas like organization, leadership, education, and jurisdiction of the Prussian Army and the Prussian state. These reforms contributed to the rise of the Prussian Army to become one of the most effective armies in the 19th century and the combination of the successfully implemented military and state reforms build the basis for the modern Prussian state as a great European power. The reforms also still have great influence on modern armed forces today.

As a former student of Political Science and now a Civil Servant in the German Ministry of Defence with close ties to German Armed Forces, I find this militarily, governmental, and educational decisive part of the German history is very interesting. Through researching the topic and writing this paper I could increase the knowledge of my country's history and gain detailed knowledge about the origin of some military, governmental, and educational principles which are part of the foundation the Federal Republic of Germany is built on.

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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the development of the Prussian Army after the peace agreement of Tilsit in 1807. After this great humiliation for the whole Prussian state and the French occupation, for a period of time it was not even clear if Prussia would continue to exist as an independent state.

The interferences of the victor, Napoleon Bonaparte, were heavy and parts of the Prussian population were all too willing to follow the new leader. Despite these oppressive conditions, the loss of almost half its territory, the reparations, and the limitations to the Prussian Army that came with the Peace Agreement of Tilsit, within a few years Prussia succeeded to gain strength again. It even became part of the European coalition that finally defeated Napoleon Bonaparte and his army. After this decisive success, the rise of the Prussian Army continued further and the Prussian Army became one of the strongest and most modern armies in Europe and beyond.

Primarily a small group of military reformers, like Gerhard von Scharnhorst and August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, and state reformers like Karl Freiherr vom Stein and later Karl August Fürst von Hardenberg, were responsible for this positive development. The *Preußischen Reformer* (Prussian reformers) clearly analyzed the military, social, and political weaknesses that had led to the defeat and managed to effectuate fundamental changes. They implemented reforms regarding the political situation and the administration of the Prussian state, the education and structure of the Prussian Army as well as the grounding of the army in the Prussian society. In addition, other developments, like the educational reform carried out by Wilhelm von Humboldt, contributed to the rise of the Prussian State and the rise of the Prussian Army.

Already before the defeat in 1806 progressive military officers had expressed critique regarding the old fashioned military system of the Prussian Army. Unfortunately, neither the political nor the military leaders paid attention. Only after the catastrophe in 1806 was the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III., willing to approve reforms and allowed to establish the

Militär-Reorganisationsorganisation (Military Reorganization Commission) led by Gerhard von Scharnhorst who later also became the head of the Ministry of War and the head of the General Staff. The members of the Military Reorganization Commission tried to enforce their ideas of profound reforms like a new structure of the army, new provisions for the selection of officers, the foundation of new schools for cadets and officers, the reform of the military justice, the establishment of a Ministry of War including a modern general staff, or the implementation of the universal conscription. Even though the impact of the conservatives and the noble elite stayed strong and Scharnhorst and the other reformers were not able to implement all their target changes, they still managed to create a modern army with principles that still today are considered fundamental for modern armed forces.

This study will elaborate on the changes that the military reformers successfully implemented. It will analyze the impact of the reforms on the Prussian Army in that period of time and also address the impact the reforms still have on modern armed forces today.

THE SITUATION IN PRUSSIA BEFORE 1806

In the 18th century Prussia was a typical state of the enlightened absolutism. Especially under the regency of Friedrich der Große (1712-1786), Prussia had developed to a modern and reform orientated state which had started to implement the ideas of the enlightenment. After his death, the Prussian state stopped developing further. Necessary social modernizations did not take place, and the feudal system survived and was the basis for the Prussian state system.

Several contemporary scholars had figured out, that the Prussian state was in the need of profound political, social, and military reforms. Among others, Karl Freiherr vom Stein and Karl August Fürst von Hardenberg had published according memoranda in which they claimed to start the necessary reforms. In the military field Gerhard von Scharnhorst was one of the modern thinkers who pointed out the urgent need of reform for the Prussian Army. He joined a military reform society in Berlin, the *Militärische Gesellschaft*, and became the president of this club.

Under his leadership the club became the forum for reform discussions in the Prussian Army.¹ These officers wanted to transform the antiquated army into a modern organization. They wanted universal military service through short-term conscription, changes in the strategic and tactical doctrine, and a general staff that would only design, move, and supply the army.² In contrast to the current system, which solidified positions by family rank and social status, Scharnhorst was convinced that officers should get the opportunity to rise through merit. Seeing the French Army as a role model, Scharnhorst wanted to create a citizen army where educated and merit officers had freedom in command and would give allegiance to the state and not to the king.

With this conviction Scharnhorst challenged the current command structure of the army as well as the social class system of the whole state.³ The conservative officers did have problems with Scharnhorst's ideas regarding structural changes, e.g. the adoption of new formations like

divisions and corps, or a different utilization of the services in battles. Their concerns were about the overall political ideology that was behind Scharnhorst's claims and that would change the complete Prussian society.

The enforcement of some timid reforms

Scharnhorst, completely convinced of the need for profound changes, found an ally in Karl Freiherr vom Stein, who in October 1807 became the head of the government. He clearly saw the necessity for overall state reforms. His main claims were the abolition of serfdom and the establishment of a modern municipal system. He also was a strong defender of the idea to unify the German states under a single government. A unified, democratic Germany with a citizen army would even be able to contain France. Scharnhorst's convictions regarding the Prussian Army and von Stein's ideas regarding state reforms perfectly fit together. Nevertheless, the cooperation with von Stein also had negative outcomes for Scharnhorst, since "The association of military reform with political change brought Scharnhorst into even deeper confrontation with conservative royalists who began to view him as a French revolutionary."⁴

While vom Stein tried to establish political reforms, Scharnhorst managed to implement changes in the military education. He convinced the king to establish a staff school within the *Kriegsschule*, (War School) and gathered around him some of the most promising students of the army, like Carl von Clausewitz and Karl von Grolman and inspired them with his ideas. The staff school became the cadre factory for reform orientated officers.⁵

Altogether, the king appreciated Scharnhorst's work at the *Kriegsschule* and approved Scharnhorst's modernistic idea to establish a general staff system within the Prussian Army. In 1805 each of the new formed corps had its own chief of staff. Unfortunately, the staff officers could not really have an effect. Since they were graduates from the *Kriegsschule*, the majority of the conservative leading officers refused to give real authority to these 'college-men'. They

believed this would undermine the importance of the old school Junker system of landed aristocracy. Although well aware of the fact, the king did not force the generals to appoint the staff officers to responsible tasks.⁶

In one case the reformer and the conservatives were of the same opinion. Both agreed that Prussia needed to increase the strength of its army in order to get prepared for a possible war with France. While Major Karl von Knesebeck wanted to extend the current system, Scharnhorst wanted to create the *Landwehr*. This force would consist of trained reservists that were easy to mobilize in national emergency cases and the soldiers would not lose their rights of citizenship during times of active duty. In this case von Knesebeck came out on top, and the king approved his suggestion to establish a conscription system with liberal exemptions. Thus, the conservatives managed to hold the upper hand regarding military issues.⁷ Indeed, soon the assumption regarding a possible war with France would turn out to be right and the reorganization of the Prussian Army would come to a halt, since all military personal would be sent to the battlefield.

THE PRUSSIAN DEFEAT IN 1806

Despite the poor condition of the state the conservative parts of the high ranking civil servants and the nobility strongly opposed against any reforms and as well did the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm III. William O. Shanahan clearly states that “Frederick William III was not inclined to assume responsibility and remained timid and hesitant. His esteem for the military technicians was unfortunate and none of his military aides could be called a radical reformer.”⁸ In 1805, Napoleon Bonaparte started his campaign against Russia and Austria. Despite the empathic warnings of the reformers to join a coalition against France, the king hesitated to go on war against Napoleon. He followed the advice of conservatives like Prince Friedrich von Hohenlohe and Field Marshall Wichard von Mollendorf, not to go against Bonaparte. According to Jonathan R. White, Friedrich Wilhelm III. was:

one of the most indecisive leaders in Prussian history. Whether dealing with matters of state, court, or war, Frederick William found it difficult to act with vigor and confidence.

Wanting to be loved by all, the king usually agreed with the last person he encountered. As all Europe looked to Prussia for action, the king hemmed and hawed, leaving his country in the most disadvantageous position imaginable.⁹

The king’s indecisiveness brought Prussia into a weak and desperate position. When Friedrich Wilhelm III. finally decided to go on war in 1806, it was far too late and could only lead to a military disaster. For now, the debate between the reformers and the conservatives came to a decline, since both sides were called to war.

SOCIAL AND STATE REFORMS AFTER THE DEFEAT

As a consequence of the retrogressive policy and the decision to go to war only after Russia and Austria were already beaten, the Prussian Army lost the war against France and was occupied by Napoleon Bonaparte. The defeat led to the Peace Agreement of Tilsit in July 1807, which was a heavy burden. The Prussian territory shrank from 5,570 square miles with 9,752,731 inhabitants to 2,877 square miles with 4,938,000 inhabitants.¹⁰ In addition, Prussia had to deal with heavy contributions to the French, and 18,000 soldiers of the occupation force had to be fed and accommodated. Only after he signed the Peace Agreement of Tilsit and foreign occupation did the Prussian king realize the urgency for social and military reforms.

Even though this paper focuses on the military reforms in Prussia after 1807, it is also important to take a short look at the social and state reforms that took place in this period of time. The military reforms cannot be profoundly analyzed without considering the other developments that promoted the transformation of the Prussian State. The work of state reformers like von Stein and von Hardenberg significantly influenced the military developments, since their understanding of a modern state led to a complete change of the social system in Prussia. After the defeat the state reformers finally convinced the king to establish significant social reforms that would enhance the Prussian State. Among others, the big land reform in 1807, the abolition of serfdom in 1807, the new municipal ordinance in 1808, and the emancipation edict for Jewish citizens in 1812 led to a significant modernization of the Prussian state system. These reforms initiated the transformation of the ancient Prussia into a modern state that respected the rights of all its members.

All these reforms required a new kind of civil society. The reformers wanted citizens that were able to act independently and as individuals. An indispensable precondition to achieve this was a better education for the Prussian people. Therefore, the educational reform carried out by

Wilhelm von Humboldt, was one of the key reforms in that era. Humboldt established a new educational system in which public state schools replaced all other bodies of education.

Compulsory education was introduced, and the state controlled the curricula for the *Volksschule* (board school), the *Gymnasium* (grammar school), and the University. Performance criteria recognized by the Prussian state were established as preconditions to join the public service. Education and performance should be decisive criteria for promotion and no longer birth and status. In 1810 Humboldt founded the *Berliner Humboldt Universität*, which became a role model for the liberal idea of the unity of research and education.

The social and state reforms pointed in the exact same directions as the military reforms. All the reforms that took place in Prussia after the defeat in 1806 stimulated each other and aimed at a modern state with enlightened and educated citizens that were able to deal with their own issues.

PRUSSIAN MILITARY REFORMS

The Military Reorganization Commission

In July 1807, the King entrusted the reformation of the Prussian Army to the *Militär-Reorganisationskommission* (Military Reorganization Commission), whose first tasks were to supervise the demobilization of the army and negotiate the release of officers that were taken prisoner by the French forces. The *Militär-Reorganisationskommission* consisted of reform oriented officers like von Scharnhorst, von Boyen, Major von Grolman, and von Stein and conservative members like Major General von Massenbach, as well as the Lieutenant Colonels von Lottum, von Borstell, and von Bronikowski.¹¹

This mixture of representatives of different opinions was according to the king's character, since he did not have to frustrate one of the parties. Unfortunately, the rivalry between the two schools of thought was so intense that it impeded the progress of the work. As a consequence, in December 1807 the king announced Scharnhorst as the leader of the commission, which was a success for the reformers. Besides the conservatives, who strongly disliked this surprising decision, even Scharnhorst himself was astonished. In a letter to Clausewitz, he wrote:

Ohne dass ich es vorher wusste, avancierte mich der König und übertrug mir die Reorganisation mit einer sehr heterogenen Kommission, bei der nur Gneisenau und Grolman höherer Ansichten fähig sind. Der v.K.¹² war halb rasend, viele anderen waren untröstbar, dass ein so dem Inneren der Armee unkundiger da gebraucht werden sollte, wo es auf langjährige Erfahrung ankam.¹³ (Without any foreknowledge, the King approached me and assigned me to the reorganization of a very heterogeneous committee, in which only Gneisenau and Grolman are capable of higher opinions. Count von Kalkreuth was furious,

many others were inconsolable, for the fact that someone so ignorant about the core of the army had to be used right there, where it was necessary to have years of experience).

Regardless of this important appointment, the conservative generals still had a very strong influence on the king. Von Lottum had become his General Adjutant and for this reason he had strong opportunities to influence the king.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the appointment of Scharnhorst as the leader of the *Militär-Reorganisationskommission* finally allowed its members to implement sound reforms. Stein, Scharnhorst, and Gneisenau shared their views regarding the political, social, and military situation. They all believed that the nation must take over responsibility for itself. Scharnhorst expressed his views regarding the role of the nation in a letter to Clausewitz in late 1807. He wrote:

*Man muss der Nation das Gefühl der Selbstständigkeit einflößen, man muss ihr Gelegenheit geben, dass sie mit sich selbst bekannt wird ... nur dann erst wird sie sich selber achten und von anderen Achtung zu erfahren wissen. Darauf hinzuarbeiten, ist alles was wir tun können. Die alten Formen zerstören, die Bande des Vorurteils lösen, die die Wiedergeburt leiten, pflegen und sie in ihrem freien Wachstum nicht hemmen, weiter reicht unser hoher Wirkungskreis nicht.*¹⁵ (We must kindle a sense of independence in the nation; we must enable the nation to understand itself and take up its own affairs ... only then will the nation acquire self-respect and compel the respect of others. To work towards that goal is all we can do. To destroy the old forms, remove the ties of prejudice, guide and nurture our revival without inhibiting its free growth – our work cannot go further than that).

Before the defeat in 1806, Scharnhorst wanted to establish army reforms within the existing state system. After the defeat, he was deeply convinced that the military reform had to be based upon a reformed and modernized political and social system. According to this understanding the reorganization of the Prussian Army took place.

Universal Conscription/ Articles of war/ Reglement of 1806

The idea of a nation that takes responsibility for itself also included the belief that the population and the different bodies of the state had to be brought closer together. The reformers agreed that the universal conscription was one driver to reach this aim. Military training should be considered as an honorable period in life that teaches the individuals the ideals of duty and prepares them for a later participation in public life.¹⁶ The reformers knew, however, that to gain the support of the people for a national army that is based on universal conscription, the common fear of the terrible punishments in the military system had to be eliminated. Accordingly, Scharnhorst wrote to Stein on 3 July 1808: “A universal conscription . . . could not be combined with the existing caning system Military life must be made more agreeable to the nation by removing its hateful aspects. All regulations must carry out this purpose and enliven anew the soldierly spirit. The elimination of blows of the cane is indispensable to this end.”¹⁷

The reformers managed to make the military life more agreeable to the nation with a new system of military justice. The new *Kriegsartikel* (Articles of War), which were published on 3 August 1808 (the king’s birthday), built the basis for the citizen army of the future. The *Kriegsartikel* abolished the former barbarous punishments that often were arbitrary and counterproductive, protected the rights of the individual soldier, and established a new right of military justice.¹⁸ Together with the *Kriegsartikel* also the *Verordnung wegen der Militärstrafen* (Orders on Military Punishments) and the *Verordnung wegen der Bestrafung der Officire* (Orders on the Punishment of Officers) were announced. Both documents led to more consistent and comprehensible punishments, and by that the tyranny of single officers was strongly stemmed. All strict punishments required the approval of military courts subject to the king’s confirmation, and only the king could impose the death penalty.¹⁹

The *Kriegsartikel* also clearly aimed for universal conscription, as the following passage reveals: “In the future every subject of the state, without regard for birth, will be obligated to perform military service under conditions of time and circumstances still to be determined, so that the army hereafter will consist almost entirely of natives.”²⁰ Even though, the *Kriegsartikel* did not immediately lead to the implementation of a universal conscription law, they still were a big success for the reformers. The above mentioned passage “was the only legal statement of universal obligation to bear arms promulgated in the era of reforms before 1813. It represented the high point of the king’s enthusiasm for the idea of a nation in arms.”²¹ The articles were a basis for the practical implementation of the universal conscription and for a national army, truly consisting of Prussian citizens. Scharnhorst believed this moment in time, when the terrible defeat by the French was still common memory, would be the best moment to establish a national army in which personal skills would be decisive for leadership selection.²²

Subsequently, the *Militär-Reorganisationskommission* in December 1808 officially suggested the implementation of universal Conscription in Prussia. According to the ideas of the reformers, a competent and professional officer corps would lead the army and leadership would be open for all classes. Attitude and knowledge should be the criteria for entering the officer’s corps.²³ Stein was convinced, that the nobility was “a burden to the nation, because there are too many nobles, and they are, for the most part, poor and greedy for stipends, offices, privileges, and preferment of every kind.”²⁴ These ideas evoked heavy protest from the conservatives, who wanted to keep the status quo and did not like the idea of a nation in arms since that would threaten their privileges. The aristocracy wanted to keep a knightly officer corps, which exclusiveness was not threatened by a national army, any educational program, or from the educated sectors of the society.²⁵ As a consequence, the reformers did not succeed to implement universal Conscription, yet. Substantial changes to the canton system were only made in 1813.²⁶

Even though, they did not manage to establish the universal Conscription, with a new *Reglement*, published on 6 August 1808, the reformers enforced new provisions for the selection of officers. In its opening paragraph the document states:

A claim to the position of officer shall from now on be warranted in peacetime by knowledge and education, in time of war by exceptional bravery and quickness of perception. From the whole nation, therefore, all individuals who possess these qualities can lay title to the highest positions of honor in the military establishment. All social preference which has hitherto existed is herewith terminated in the military establishment, and everyone, without regard for his background, has the same duties and the same rights.²⁷

With this *Reglement* everybody who met the qualification standards could become an officer. However, initially the practical impact of the law was rather low since the average citizen could barely meet the required standards. Therefore, the composition of the officer corps did not shift significantly. That changed in 1813, when Prussia joined the coalition to fight against Napoleon and introduced universal conscription. The higher number of soldiers required more officers, and therefore the requirements to become an officer were qualified.²⁸

Military Education

According to Scharnhorst, a precondition for a nation in arms and was to improve the standards of military education and the military schools. So far, the military education had been disorganized and uncoordinated, since there were no standards regarding the curricula for the different institutions. There were Cadet Institutes and Inspection Schools, but these did not provide a sufficient military education and the quality of the instructions was rather poor, but “Instead of narrow technical schools educating specialists, Scharnhorst wanted institutions giving a profound but general military education.”²⁹ Scharnhorst developed a new, three-tier education

system that started with schools for cadets and ended with an advanced school for selected officers.

Scharnhorst started to make the first proposals for a new educational system in 1808. Finally, his plan got implemented in May 1810. The first level was the Cadet Schools, which prepared boys at the age of twelve in four years for their cornet examinations. Commissioned officers courses at three newly established War Schools in Berlin, Breslau, and Königsberg, lasting nine months, formed the second level. In addition, the school in Berlin had attached a special War School that offered a three years course in advanced military science for fifty selected officers. This War School was the third element of the new educational system. According to Scharnhorst's understanding of organized and systematic education, all institutions of military education were put under one director, who coordinated the different bodies and syllabi.³⁰

In addition to the new educational concept the king also appointed commissions to develop new manuals for the infantry, the artillery, and cavalry. All three commissions were led by Scharnhorst. The commissions finished their work in less than one year. One of the new implemented methods of fighting was the concept of *Auftragstaktik* (mission tactics). This new operational theory was based on the assumption that every soldier was capable of leadership and responsible to permute the "mission concept" of his superior at all times. The striking innovation was that the leader was expected to conduct the mission concept at all times, even if that meant he had to act contrary to earlier given orders because the situation developed different than expected.³¹ This concept of *Auftragstaktik* was based on the superior's trust in the leader's character and capability. Scharnhorst was convinced that the new educational system and the establishment of intellectual qualifiers as preconditions for an officer carrier cleared the way for the education of autonomously thinking officers that were able to apply the *Auftragstaktik*.

The Ministry of War

Another practical obstacle towards sufficient and modern armed forces was the disordered military administration in Prussia. Stein and Scharnhorst were aware of that and saw the creation of a single oversight body that coordinates all army affairs as a solution. In 1808, Stein went even further and proposed a plan to unify the Prussian state administration under only four coordinating ministries. The leaders of the ministries would have executive power and form a council to advise the king.³² The third of the ministries was supposed to be the Ministry of War.

In December 1808, the reformers finally managed to enforce the creation of such a ministry exactly according to their ideas. The War Ministry, existing of two main departments, began its work in March 1809. Scharnhorst was appointed to lead the War Department, which was made up of three divisions. The first division dealt with army personnel and the second division basically dealt with the training, conscription, education, mobilization, and supplies. The third division handled artillery, engineers, miners, pontoons, and the maintenance of the fortifications, as well as arms and ammunitions.³³ The second division, initially also led by Scharnhorst, also had the function of a general staff and would become the general “instrument of education” for all junior officers of the army.³⁴ The Military Economy Department was led by Count Lottum and consisted of four divisions. The first division was the Military Treasury, the second division dealt with food supply, the third division managed the supply of uniforms, and invalids were managed by the fourth division.³⁵

Neither Scharnhorst nor Lottum had the right of direct audience with Friedrich Wilhelm III, and their authority was equal. The men’s personal relationship was not too easy, since Lottum was a representative of the conservative officers. Nevertheless, their work and the establishment of the war ministry significantly improved the administrative procedures of the Prussian Army. Centralized and monitored processes contributed to the efficiency of the whole army. The

creation of the War Ministry was one the most important steps of the Prussian Army reform, since it profoundly modernized the administrative procedures in the Prussian Army and by that eliminated the useless competitions between the former agencies.

The new structure of the army

The very first plans of the commission to form the army into six divisions corresponding to the provinces of Prussia could not be implemented, since the signing of the Treaty of Paris in September 1808 limited the strength of the army to 42,000 personnel and forced the disbandment of some regiments.³⁶ In accordance with the limitations, the structure was adjusted, and a Cabinet Order of November established six brigades which still retained the formerly proposed provincial names. Every brigade consisted of seven to eight battalions as well as twelve cavalry squadrons.³⁷ Through the Brigade system, for the first time the infantry and the cavalry trained together. The different units were supposed to fight together in battles, but so far they never had broadly trained together in peacetime. The Brigade organization enabled the units to practice in peacetime what they were expected to do in a battle, to cooperate. Therefore, the new system set the conditions for a more sufficient training of the Prussian Army.

CONCLUSION

Before the Prussian defeat in 1806, Scharnhorst did not have a complete change of the Prussian Army in his mind. He rather wanted to improve the capabilities of the army within the existing system. He was especially interested in improving the education system of the soldiers. Early in his career he understood the importance of sound education. He started to publish military journals and used them as fora to discuss contemporary actions and the art of warfare.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is obvious that Scharnhorst before the Prussian defeat in 1806 was still cleaved to the military system established by Friedrich dem Großen.

After the defeat his assessment changed completely. He no longer wanted improvements within the existing system, but he wanted a complete reformation of the whole Prussian Army. He and the other reformers analyzed that Prussia had lost the war not only because of its indecisive leader and the stronger combat power of the French Army, but also because of the backwardness of the Prussian military and the Prussian state. They agreed in the belief that a holistic reform of the Prussian state was indispensable, and finally also the king understood the necessity of reforms. After the German defeat in 1806, Scharnhorst was deeply convinced that the military reform had to be based upon a reformed and modernized political and social system. According to this understanding the reorganization of the Prussian Army took place.

Scharnhorst and the other reformers did not manage to establish reforms in all the areas they wanted to, since the king kept being inconsistent and did not approve all the reformers' suggestions. The noble elite still had a strong impact on Friedrich Wilhelm III and managed to prevent him from approving some of the reformers' ideas. For example, the universal conscription was only established in 1813, even though the reformers had suggested it long before. The aristocracy wanted to keep a knightly officer corps, in which their aristocratic exclusiveness was not threatened by a national army, any educational program, or from the

educated sectors of the society. Despite this, a lot of the changes that were successfully implemented by the reformers, like the new tactics in warfighting, the ministry of war, the improved administration system, and the new structure of the army increased the capabilities of the Prussian Army significantly and therefore lasted. The Wars of Liberation starting in 1813 were the first chance for the Prussian Army to show its improved efficiency and combat power.

Driven by humanistic and liberal principles between 1807 and 1812, the reformers managed to establish trend-setting innovations in areas like organization, leadership, education, and jurisdiction of the army, which led to a fundamental modernization of the whole Prussian Army. The establishment of the Universal conscription and the abolishment of the terrible punishments brought the army and the citizens of the state closer together and helped to increase the respect for the military profession. The citizens started to consider the service in the military as an honorable time.

Overall, the social and state reforms pointed in the exact same directions as the military reforms. All reforms that took place in Prussia after the defeat of 1806 stimulated each other and aimed at a modern state with enlightened and educated citizens that are able to deal with their own issues. The successfully implemented military and state reforms were the foundation for a new kind of civil society and built the basis for the modern Prussian state as a great European power. Humboldt's educational reform and his idea, that education and performance should be decisive for promotion instead of rank and birth, strongly corresponded to Scharnhorst's ideas. Humboldt's liberal notion of the unity of research and education which he utilized at the university in Berlin became a role model and still exists today.

A lot of procedures, tactics, elements, and manuals that Scharnhorst developed between 1807 and 1812 are still used in the German Armed Forces and other armed forces today. His ideas of practical and theoretical education of individuals as well as his ideas regarding the education of military units in the fields influence the curriculum of military schools around the

world. One of Scharnhorst's most important innovations in the educational and operational field was the implementation of the concept of *Auftragstaktik*. Scharnhorst was convinced that every soldier was capable of leadership and responsible to permute the "mission concept" of his superior. With this striking tactical innovation he increased the combat power of the Prussian Army decisively. In combat situation the units could act a lot faster, since individual leaders could make decisions on their own and quickly communicate their decision to their troops. Scharnhorst was convinced that the new educational system and the establishment of intellectual qualifier as preconditions to start carrier as an officer, cleared the way for the education of autonomously thinking officers that were able to apply the *Auftragstaktik*.

The concept of the *Auftragstaktik* still plays a very important role in the educational and operational concept of the German Armed Forces. It is a fundamental part of the German military system which is still applied in all German deployments. As well, Scharnhorst's ideas regarding his understanding of profound education is a part of the curriculum of the School of Advanced Warfighting at the Marine Corps University. The according lesson card states that "Scharnhorst believed that the proper method for educating young officers is to impart "correct theory," followed by encouragement to think independently to clarify their own concepts. This creates a sound basis for analyzing experience. In doing so, he restated the conceptual framework of the Enlightenment; that is, war, like any other art, has two parts: the mechanical part, open to theoretical study, and the other part, dominated by creativity and experience."³⁹

By implementing the long pending reforms, the *Preußischen Reformer* managed to overcome Prussia's backwardness. Their reforms led to a significant modernization of the Prussian state and the Prussian Army and built the basis of Prussia's rise to a main European Power in the 19th century. A lot of the implemented reform elements are still core components of our educational and military system today.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Jonathan R. White, *The Prussian Army. 1640-1871* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 198.
- ² *Ibid.*, 193.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 202/203.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 204/205.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.
- ⁸ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 86.
- ⁹ Jonathan R. White, *The Prussian Army. 1640-1871* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 210.
- ¹⁰ Shanahan, William O., *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 98.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 100/101.
- ¹² Here Graf von Kalkreuth, a conservative officer, is meant.
- ¹³ Ralph Thiele, *Gerhard von Scharnhorst – Zur Identität der Bundeswehr in der Transformation* (Bonn: Bernhard&Graefe Verlag, 2006), 57.
- ¹⁴ , William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 102.
- ¹⁵ Ralph Thiele, *Gerhard von Scharnhorst – Zur Identität der Bundeswehr in der Transformation* (Bonn: Bernhard&Graefe Verlag, 2006), 59.
- ¹⁶ Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 133.
- ¹⁷ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 137.
- ¹⁸ Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 133.
- ¹⁹ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 137/138.
- ²⁰ Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 133.
- ²¹ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 138.
- ²² Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 135.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 134.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.
- ²⁶ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 128.
- ²⁷ Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 135/136.
- ²⁸ , William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 133.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 134.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*,
- ³¹ Charles E. White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 139.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 137.

³³ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 145/146.

³⁴ Walter Görnitz, *Kleine Geschichte des deutschen Generalstabes* (Berlin: Haude und Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 41.

³⁵ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 146.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁸ From 1788 to 1805 Scharnhorst and his friend published a well read military journal called the “*Neue Militärische Journal*”.

³⁹ School of Advanced Warfighting, LESSON: 7103-OA-15, CLASS TITLE: Prussian Reform, 3.

APPENDIX A: Important Persons of the Prussian Reforms



Figure 1. Gerhard von Scharnhorst

Source: <http://www.counter-currents.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/ScharnhorstGerhard.jpg>



Figure 2. Karl Freiherr vom Stein

Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_Friedrich_Karl_vom_und_zum_Stein



Figure 3. August Neidhardt von Gneisenau

Source: <http://www.counter-currents.com/2010/09/the-vanguard-system/>



Figure 4. Karl August Fürst von Hardenberg

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_August_von_Hardenberg



Figure 5. Carl von Clausewitz

Source: <http://www.businessbelt.com/2012/01/01/car1-von-clausewitz/>



Figure 6. Karl Georg Wilhelm von Grolman

Source: <http://www.balsi.de/Sonstiges/Personen/G-/Grolmann-Karl-wilhelm-von.htm>



Figure 7. Wilhelm von Humboldt

Source: http://www.planet-wissen.de/alltag_gesundheit/lernen/abitur/humboldt.jsp

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