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LEADERSHIP

FROM WITHIN

Major Henry G. Gole, United States Army

God grant me the composure
to accept those things
I cannot change,
The courage to change things
I can change,
and the wisdom
to draw distinction's line
between the twain.

FRIEDRICH OETINGER
1702-82*

* Displayed in the foyer of the Schule
der Bundeswehr für Innere Führung, Koblenz,
Federal Republic of Germany

TODAY, the US Army would seem to be as unpopular as it has been since the *From Here to Eternity* era of the 1930s. A case could be made, and documented with ease, that the situation is worse now than during the pre-World War II period since the Army of James Jones was a largely ignored subculture. The Army of the 1970s is, and promises to remain, an easy target for the barbs of the press, assorted intellectuals and pundits. What is easily forgotten as soldiers beat their breasts despairingly and critics beat soldiers gleefully is that, in the absence of a national crusade and public war fever, the Army has never been a popular institution in the United States.

A colonel or sergeant major approaching 30 years of service and a well-earned retirement might well be perplexed in 1972. For the first 25 years of his service, he enjoyed popular support, even acclaim, from his countrymen as he fought in the crusade that was World War II and as he later represented goodness and justice in his Cold War role as champion of something called "The West." About five years ago, the champion became a nefarious monster, a representative of the military-industrial complex and an oppressor of the already oppressed.

The press refused to believe him,

LEADERSHIP

the Nation's youth refused to join him, and his neighbors looked upon him with suspicion. While he served in an undeclared war, his wife received menacing phone calls, and some of his son's friends, if not his son, marched under the banner of his enemy. His Congressman seemed more concerned for the welfare of the old soldier's enemy than for the welfare of US troops.

At cocktail parties between tours in Southeast Asia, difficult questions were posed. Worse yet, his best efforts to answer the questions were received with obvious skepticism. All the while, he remained the same chap



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—a hero for 25 years, a villain for five. He will go into retirement where he will either withdraw completely from the perplexing dilemma, or he will try to understand what happened to the profession he practiced with pride.

Those of us who will continue in the profession do not have the choices available to the pensioned gentleman. We must understand exactly what happened, how it happened, and where we go from here. In all probability, the indefinite future will be more like the experience of the past five years than that enjoyed for 25 years by our retired friend. Withdrawing or turning inward is categorically ruled out as a possible alternative for those of us serious about the purpose of our profession—defending American society.

Good public relations efforts are, one is forced to admit, a necessity in the age of the word, but only the very foolish would confuse a good package with a good product. Let others worry about the packaging. The concern of the professional soldier serving in the US Army in 1972 is the excellence of the substance, the quality of the Army itself.

The issue and the challenge become not the selling of the Army, but the complete identification of the interests of the Nation and the Army serving it. This is a time for introspection, not despair, for purification, not withdrawal. The burden is the Army's. Soldiers must know now, more than ever before, just what makes our society function. We must learn how to lead the youth of our country in the performance of unpleasant tasks in the environment of unpopularity and suspicion.

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in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on a hill overlooking the ancient city of Koblenz.

The German Case

From the end of World War II until 1956, Germany was without armed forces. In 1956, the *Bundeswehr* was established following passionate debates in the *Bundestag*, extensive coverage in the press, and protest demonstrations in the streets. While it can be convincingly argued that an antimilitary mood in the Germany of the middle 1950s is readily understandable, it may well be that the depth and intensity of the mood has never been appreciated outside Germany. Perhaps the American people of today are in a frame of mind which would allow them to begin to understand the German mood after World War II. It may even be that we are prepared to accept the wisdom and applicability of a plan that is not stamped "Made in USA."

When the *Bundeswehr* was created in an environment distinctly hostile toward soldiers, the FRG recognized that the new army would have to represent a clear departure from the past and, further, that the confidence of the German people had to be won.

To create a new ethos in the new armed forces, a school was established, or, more accurately, a course of study searching for a home was established and named the *Schule der Bundeswehr für Innere Führung*. The name itself states the general purpose of the school—The Federal Forces' School for Leadership From Within.

Before examining the details of the entire concept of leadership from within and the manner in which a truly revolutionary set of principles were promulgated in the new army, let us first look into the "why" of

the school. Perhaps we might conclude that, despite our very different histories, the United States should be as willing to adopt a German military innovation now as we were when Baron von Steuben brought Prussian drill to our Army.

There are at least two reasons which explain why one hears so much about *Innere Führung* in the German military, in the *Bundestag* and in the German press. One reason is historical and general, requiring some explanation to describe the unique position occupied by the army and, above all, by the officer in the Prussian state for three centuries. The other reason is historical and specific: the complete catastrophe which was the Second World War.

Centuries ago, Prussia was described as "an Army with a State." The Hohenzollern kings, and later emperors, regarded themselves almost without exception as the first soldiers in the state. Organization, discipline and, above all, a powerful army would transform the barren eastern corner of the Germanies into the center of a powerful unified Germany.

The Junker class provided the king with a dedicated officer corps in return for the privilege of running their estates with minimum interference from the outside world, in general, and from Berlin in particular. This arrangement survived at least until the First World War. This was a kind of Social Contract—Prussian style.

Industrialization in the 19th century threatened the agricultural Junker class, but the threat was overcome by the so-called "alliance of corn and coal." This was, in brief, a series of agreements between the captains of industry in the West and the



Federal German Forces Leadership School

Junkers of the East. The alliance took the form of protective tariffs which fitted nicely into the nationalistic notions of economic self-sufficiency while satisfying the pillars of the state. In this way, the medieval practices on the Junker estates continued to exist side by side with the most advanced technological developments in the Ruhr.

Liberalism, after 1848, was subordinated to the drive for unification at a time when it seemed that Germany could be either united or liberal. Western liberal forms were adopted, but the superheated patriotism, stoked by the successful wars of 1864, 1866 and 1871, insured the special status of the soldier and of the soldier-Kaiser. Germany chose unification and centralism.

Even the great Bismarck had trouble controlling the military which, in 1866, wanted to march on Vienna after the Austro-Prussian War had already been won at Königgrätz. Pressure from the military was also evident after the successful war against France in 1870-71 when

the soldiers sulked because the war-concluding treaties left too much of strategic value in the hands of France.

The military never accepted the primacy of politics over strategy despite the teachings of one of their own, the philosopher of war, Clausewitz. The failure to understand the relationship which must exist between politics and strategy would produce the disastrous results of 1918, results growing out of the military dictatorship of Ludendorff and Field Marshal Hindenburg in the last two years of the war.

After Bismarck, the civilian chancellors' problems with the military became even more acute. Military attachés reported through a system leading directly to the Kaiser, bypassing both ambassador and the Foreign Office. The wise council of professional diplomats was ridiculed by the Kaiser who preferred the bombast and the martial pose of his friends, the soldiers. One illustration of this point can be found in the reports of the German Naval Attaché

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in London who was convinced that the British would not fight in 1914. The ambassador, who arrived at different conclusions and reported them, was regarded as "too flabby" by the Kaiser. He was fired.

In July 1914, Emperor Franz Josef was receiving contradictory reports from German diplomatic and military sources regarding German support of Austrian policy vis-a-vis Serbia and Russia. His question "who is running the Foreign Office in Berlin?" was a good one. At the last moment, a technical military consideration, the Schlieffen Plan, made German policy. A further indication of the special position of the soldier, this one on a social level, could be found in polite society during the period 1871-1914.

In Berlin social circles, it was all-important that a gentleman, whatever his profession, have the words "Reserve Officer" printed on his calling card. Even after the First World War, when Germany was limited to a 100,000-man army by the Treaty of Versailles, there was a conspiracy of silence by the officials of the Weimar Republic who knew that this clause of the treaty, among others, was being flagrantly violated.

Government offices with the most innocent titles painted on the doors were filled with Prussian military officers in civilian clothing making plans for the future, and German troops and equipment were being tested on Soviet soil during the inter-war period. Much of this activity was rationalized by the famous "stab in the back" theory. How could one feel defeated when long ranks of German soldiers returned intact at the end of the war? Certainly, it was not the army which could be held responsible. The cause had to lie elsewhere.

So much for the traditional role of

the army which is simply described in the phrase "a State within a State." But one more comment upon a symbol. The corporal stick or swagger stick, which seems to appear and disappear in the history of the US Army, had a practical purpose in the Prussian Army. It was larger than the model you can see today at the Army NCO academies and was used by the Prussian NCO to beat soldiers. Frederick the Great said that his soldiers should be more afraid of his officers and NCOs than of the enemy. The only duty of the ordinary Prussian soldier was *Kadaver Gehorsamkeit*—corpse-like obedience.

The second "why" of *Innere Führung* can be more briefly explained. The catastrophe of World War II did not end for Germany in 1945. The crimes of the concentration camps and the Nuremberg trials were publicized, German cities were in ruins and the surrender was unconditional. The Thousand-Year Reich had lasted 12 years. Many Germans, innocent and guilty, were ashamed to be Germans.

In the middle Fifties, the question of rearmament was widely debated in West Germany. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) fought the re-establishment of a German army saying "never again." Germany had had enough of soldiers in its history. The slogan among German youth was: "*ohne mich*"—that is, if there was to be an army, it would have to get along "without me." Nevertheless, in 1955, the *Bundeswehr* was legislated into existence, and, in 1956, the first soldiers of the new army were seen in uniform.

The leadership of the new army had to be politically clean, and the first tasks of the Defense Ministry became the search for leaders who

LEADERSHIP

were, at the same time, competent soldiers and untainted by the Hitler era. The next chore, and related to the first, was to make the military acceptable to the society it was created to defend. Another task was to establish what would be the proper relationship between soldiers and their military superiors since iron discipline was inconsistent with the newly proclaimed status of the soldier, the "citizen in uniform."

This historical review describes the why of *Innere Führung*. Germans were afraid. The very thought of an army brought too many ugly memories to mind. It is now time to discuss the *Bundeswehr's* attempt to dispel these fears.

A German Answer

Innere Führung is the concept under which the military seeks to explain to the soldier why he serves; to explain to the leaders how citizen soldiers in a democratic state are to be led; and to explain to the society just what the military is and what it does. It emphasizes the leader's role as a teacher.

At its best, *Innere Führung* is education; at its worst, it is public relations.

It is taught in all of the leadership schools of the *Bundeswehr*. Basic trainees, noncommissioned officers, cadets and officers attend lectures and discussions in history, political philosophy, the behavioral sciences, current events, communism and leadership. Motivation through education and understanding is stressed and contrasted to the old methods of coercion and punishment by external forces.

The theoretical basis of the whole system is that a soldier is best motivated by his own convictions. The ob-

jective is to convince the soldier and the leader that the values of a democratic state best resolve the ancient tensions between the self-seeking individual and the social unit called the state. The US Army's Troop Information and Education Program lacked the intensity and universality of application of *Innere Führung* since our historical experience has been so different, but the general objectives are similar.

At the apex of the whole system is the school for *Innere Führung* in Koblenz. The school exists to conduct research and to expose leaders to a course of study which, through the leaders who attend, is intended to permeate the entire defense system. The school has an interesting history.

In the summer of 1956, Artur Weber, then a colonel, was chosen to head the *Innere Führung* project because of his combat and peacetime experience as a general staff officer. He posed the following question to his civilian and military assistants:

Shall we spend the next year quietly thinking out our problems, drafting manuscripts, and compiling curricula, and then present the forces with a *fait accompli*—or shall we get a few courses going right now? If we do, we shall have to be prepared to weather a few misunderstandings which are bound to crop up both in the forces and amongst the public.

No one favored delay. The *Innere Führung* program was to grow with the infant forces risking the criticism which was sure to come due to the unpopularity of the military at that time.

Lacking a permanent facility, "extramural lectures" began. Small lecture teams of three to five instructors took to the road visiting barracks and



schools and using public houses or hotels for ad hoc lecture halls. One day in November 1956, Chancellor Adenauer visited one of the mobile courses and joined in the discussion. At the close of the proceedings, he remarked, "So you are sort of hawk-ing your wares from house to house?!" He promised help.

In February 1957, the school was given a home; the officers' mess and quarters built for the French occupation forces in 1952 on Pfaffendorf Heights near Koblenz was evacuated in 1956. The school is still in the same building. It was now possible to commence long-term planning of courses and to augment school personnel. Even today, however, teaching teams take to the road to supplement courses held in Koblenz.

As one would expect, a great deal of interest has been shown in this rather unique military experiment. In addition to officers and noncommissioned officers on active duty, civilians, reserve personnel and foreign students have attended the school. In 1966, the school could report that 3500 civilian and military visitors from 42 nations had visited the

school, while hundreds of foreign students from 28 countries had actually attended courses. Foreign interest continues to this day.

Needless to say, German journalists, students, intellectuals, church and civic groups have shown a great curiosity in just what happens at the military school on the hill and are invited for orientation briefings. It can be safely stated that, today, the German society accepts and approves of the school's activities despite early criticism ranging from charges of brainwashing to softness in the military.

From the beginning, "modern military leadership" has been the primary meaning of *Innere Führung*. This does not suggest the haphazard adaptation to the fads of the day, but, rather, the recognition of the need for a clear break with the past and the development of a military spirit consonant with a liberal democratic constitution. The historian might assert that the effort comes 100 years too late. Much human suffering and material damage might have been avoided had similar good faith been made official policy under the Kaiser

or during the Weimar period, but the fact is that the effort is being made now.

Another essential task of *Innere Führung* is "intellectual armament," a natural product of the ideological struggle implicit in the Cold War atmosphere which pervaded the world during the birth of the school. Lectures and seminars focus on such issues as totalitarianism, propaganda, infiltration methods and the dialectics of Communist argument, and attention is given the specific psychic stress the soldier is likely to face in modern warfare.

A great effort is made to teach the order of values and life of a liberal constitutional state. All of this is done in the name of arriving at an understanding of why one serves in the military and just what one seeks to defend. It brings to mind a statement made by Scharnhorst as he described the sense and purpose of the Prussian military reform which followed the disastrous defeat inflicted upon Prussia by Napoleon at Jena:

To raise and animate the spirit of the Army, to bring Army and nation closer together, and to point the way to its great and essential purpose—that is the system on which the new order of affairs is based.

The school is conducted on a level approximating that of an American college or university. Seminars led by competent military or civilian teachers are sophisticated, and discussion is characterized by free exchange of ideas, case studies and reference to current problems in the *Bundeswehr*. One finds 12 to 15 students in a seminar and roughly 30 students in a lecture hall.

The main task of the school is the instruction of commanders, chiefs of directorates, unit commanders, com-

pany first sergeants, and—as a part of their command and staff college training—up-and-coming general staff officers of all three services. Special courses are run on a need basis for generals, for civil servants or for any other group requiring an insight into the military services. The system seems to satisfy a real need as it brings the nation and the soldier close together thereby preventing what remains a nightmare to thinking Germans—the establishment of a state within a state. It is, rather, a school for citizenship.

A Solution

The US Army should establish something like the German school for *Innere Führung*. The confluence of events at this time—an unpopular war, racial tension, drug abuse, the attempt to end conscription, revolutionary change in the society—is a threat to values deeply held. There is a danger that, tired of being the target of barbs from the press, universities and the public at large, the Army might withdraw to a corner to lick its wounds.

It is not unusual for a threatened subculture to barricade itself against the menacing mob. A turning inward in self-defense would be dangerous and could lead to a sense of estrangement from society at the very moment in which the society and its Army should be brought together, for neither can exist without the other.

To avoid alienation from the American society, the military leader must now, more than ever before, be closely attuned to his society. His professional ethics must be clearly stated and scrupulously adhered to while his integrity and understanding of national values are demonstrated by the officer as he performs his duty. Par-

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ticularly at a time when the military services might be deprived of the transmitter of civilian values—the conscript soldier—a strenuous effort must be made to maintain close contact with the society he is sworn to defend.

The real temptation to despair as values held dear are daily subjected to erosion and outright attack must be resisted. Flights of emotional rhetoric will not suffice, but an intelligently conceived and professionally executed course of study designed to replace resentment with understanding might.

The situation of the US Army in the context of a rapidly evolving American society is well beyond the cut-and-paste efforts of public relations experts. It is time for substantive change, not glib publicity. An intellectual base, not glossy charts and promotional gimmicks, is essential to demonstrate that some values do not change with the seasons.

One might ask why it is not possible to develop the deep sense of social awareness prescribed in the existing Army school system. All new officers are exposed to nine weeks of instruction before joining troop units. All captains attend the respective advanced courses of the various branches. And, one-half of our field grade officers attend staff colleges. On the surface, it would seem that the dragnet approach would be effective. That is, the rudiments of psychology, sociology, personnel management, along with ethics and contemporary human problems, could be taught within the existing system. In fact, the subjects are currently being taught, but, unfortunately, they are not being taught well.

That last contention will probably be badly received by those conscien-

tious officers administering our schools and teaching in them. Nevertheless, we must confront reality even when it hurts. Not every officer is capable of reaching into a deep background of experience and formal education, and that is exactly what the student has a right to expect of his teachers.

A thorough course in methods of instruction is not enough for the instructor who simply lacks the background in the substance of the matter being taught. It could well be that a thin veneer of knowledge only raises the questions, provides few answers, and creates frustrations for the serious student whose curiosity is aroused by an instructor beyond his depth in a potentially volatile area.

Qualified instructors do not exist in sufficient numbers to staff our entire school system. It is better to assemble a limited supply of valuable resources in one place than to dilute the supply by scattering to the winds.

Fully qualified personnel are sought out by intelligent superior officers. Often, the same excellent officer can teach, command our units, and do an excellent job in responsible staff positions. Unless a relatively small number of highly qualified officers is concentrated at one place, in a school designed to develop social awareness, we will find ourselves doing many things badly rather than doing the few essential things very well. Qualified officers and civilians must be stabilized in one place to teach well those subjects essential to Army officers in the 1970s.

This recommendation is not pure poetry. It is based upon the reality that is the *Schule für Innere Führung* and can be seen by anyone choosing to visit the school on the hill outside of Koblenz.