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KING FREDERICK WILLIAM II AND THE DECLINE OF THE PRUSSIAN ARMY, 1786-1797

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KING FREDERICK WILLIAM II
AND
THE DECLINE OF THE PRUSSIAN ARMY, 1786-1797

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Table of Contents

Introduction

When Frederick II mounted the Prussian throne in 1740 the event was of little note in Europe at large. The young king became the head of a realm inconsiderable in size, population or natural resources.[1] Prussia had no natural barriers to invasion. Many of her borders were indefensible, since a large portion of the richest and most fertile of her lands were scattered across Western Germany (even beyond Germany proper) in little enclaves and small principalities.[2]

Eastward lay the substantial province of East

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[1]Hans Rosenberg, "The Rise of the Junkers," American Historical Review, XLIX, No. 2 (January 1944). See also F. L. Carsten, The Origins of Prussia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), for a view of the demographic state of pre-Frederician Prussia.

[2]Herbert Rosinski, The German Army (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966) p. 20.

Prussia. But this former holding of the Teutonic Knights was wholly surrounded by the lands of the decaying Polish Kingdom, which still claimed the East Prussian Lands as a fief. East Prussia did provide the Hohenzollerns with an impressive eastern bulwark but at the expense of perpetual contact with an expansive and aggressive Russia and an increasingly deliquescent Poland.[3]

Only the central core of the Prussian state, the provinces of Pomerania and Brandenburg (formerly an Electorate in its own right), was stable. There the social and religious uniformity that obtained almost universally freed these provinces from the internal tensions that are bred by an excessive diversity of race and creed. This central region was the true "heart" of Prussia: physically, economically and spiritually.[4]

The Prussian Kingdom was consequently exposed to very dangerous involvements with larger states both to the east and west of her capital at Berlin. Further, as a perceptive German writer pointed out, this danger was not

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Brandenburg-Pomerania were territories almost wholly Lutheran in faith and generally lacked any sizeable minority of non-German peoples. On the other hand, East Prussia had a sizeable population of Poles and Lithuanians, mostly farm laborers, and, in the area called the Ermland, a considerable concentration of Roman Catholics of German stock--a heritage of the days when the district was ruled by the Jagiellon Dynasty of Poland.

only constant but could arise simultaneously from all quarters:

> Only by a policy of exceptional ability and daring could a dynasty maintain itself in these circumstances, and even to maintain itself was not enough. Brandenburg-Prussia, owing to its geographical position, was forced either to rise or else go down altogether.[5]

The scattered possessions of the Hohenzollerns forced the strong and imperious rulers of this dynasty to keep their fingers on a multitude of royal and political pulses and to maintain policies of such flexibility as to enable them to adapt with rapidity to the changes of front and shifts in policy of the great states that surrounded them. The Hohenzollern rulers acquired early on the ability to play one rival monarch off against another and combined this with a nearly infallible sense of timing that enabled them to change alliances at just the right moment.[6] With these skills there also came a reputation for political trickery and unreliability that was to cling to the ruling House of Prussia for the remainder of its tenure of the throne.[7]

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[5]Rosinski, German Army, p. 21.

[6]Ferdinand Schevill, The Great Elector (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 124 ff.

[7]Otto Hintze, Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werke (7. Auflage Berlin, 1916), pp. 85-87. Hintze gives some prescient views of the policies of the Hohenzollerns and their consequences.

The first exponent of "survival tactics" was Frederick II's great-grandfather, Frederick William, the "Great Elector." A vigorous and supple ruler, the Great Elector formulated that very flexible policy of alliance manipulation, opportunism, and studied betrayal which enabled Prussia to exercise a freedom of action during the waning years of the Thirty Years War almost unheard-of for such a relatively small state. Prussia's role in these years was even more remarkable considering the size and rapacity of her neighbors.[8]

Despite all of his remarkable political talents, Frederick William was unable to totally free his state from dependence upon foreign subsidies. Although Prussia maintained a generally neutral stance during the Thirty Years War, she was not able to prevent persistent violations of her territory by the major contestants. This convinced the Great Elector of the need of armed forces of a strength sufficient to ensure respect and security for Prussia. But at the beginning of his reign Frederick William maintained an army of barely ten thousand men.[9]

Regardless of the considerable internal and exter-

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[8]Schevill, Elector, pp. 195-196.

[9]Gordon A. Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 2-4.

nal burdens that encumbered him, the Great Elector succeeded in creating an efficient and impressive military force. The factors involved in his success are illustrative: first, of the great difficulties besetting him and, second, of the atmosphere in which this crafty and patient monarch had to operate.

From the moment of his accession Frederick William discovered that military matters could not be divorced from either civil administration or local politics. The parlous state of the Prussian forces in 1640 (the beginning of the Great Elector's reign) was to a great extent the result of the scattering of many governmental controls among the provincial nobility--especially taxation. The Elector depended upon the noble Estates of Cleves, Mark, Brandenburg and East Prussia (which was in open disaffection in 1640) for all funds with which to support his administration and maintain his troops.[10]

The Estates were reluctant to free the monarch from annual dependency upon them by granting too generous funds. But so excessively parsimonious had they been in

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[10] Ibid.
See also Gustav Schmoller, "Die Entstehung des preussischen Heeres von 1640 bis 1740," Deutsche Rundschau xxii (1877).

granting even basic monies that the only troops initially at the disposal of the Great Elector were some thousands of mercenaries and stragglers from the armies of the main contestants of the Thirty Years War--men of the lowest quality and morale, generally incapable of conducting operations against organized forces, often a menace to those areas they were hired to protect.[11]

The Elector's main task was to replace this miserable rabble with a reliable armed force. To achieve this required the aid of the Estates and to obtain this assent the Elector directed his efforts:

> He started with a gesture that could not help but propitiate the jealous estates of Brandenburg, by proceeding ruthlessly to eliminate from his existing forces all unruly elements. In the first years of his reign, the undesirable and the unfit were purged; the rebellious colonels who had blackmailed the citizens of the fortress town were arrested or driven into exile; and the most incompetent of the foreign mercenaries were discharged.[12]

This sweeping purge left a remnant force of only about 2,500 men, but a force freed of the dross which had for so long encumbered it.[13] The Brandenburg Estates, relieved to be free of the tyranny of military anarchists, happily supplied the necessary money to re-equip this lit-

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[11]Schmoller, "Die Entstehung . . .", pp. 250-257.

[12]Craig, Politics, p. 3.

[13]Schevill, Elector, pp. 195-196.

tle army and to recruit supplementary troops of better quality.

Taking advantage of this generous mood, Frederick William began an intensive campaign of recruitment and rebuilding that increased in tempo as the great conflict waned. By 1648 Prussia had a force of some 9,000 men, about the same size as in 1640 but much superior in equipment, training, and physical quality. This force is considered one of the reasons for the generous concessions won by Brandenburg in the peace settlements at Westphalia.[14]

The ending of the Thirty Years War saw the Estates put pressure upon Frederick William to reduce the military establishment. But the Elector was too skillful and prescient to accede to this demand. By pursuing a course of deliberate evasion, concession and frugality, he maintained the build-up of the army until its position was too strong to be overturned.[15]

One of the decisive events in the Elector's ob-

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[14]In particular Curt Jany, Geschichte der königlich-preussischen Armee bis zum Jahre 1807 (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1928) i. pp. 192-3.

[15]In the early 1660's he forced his Catholic Rhineland possessions to recognize his right to organize and maintain units inside their borders and ten years later he had finally subdued local privilege and obstructionism within recalcitrant East Prussia. See Carsten, pp. 210-253 and Ludwig Tümpel, Die Entstehung des brandenburgisch-

taining of this desired goal was the 1653 compromise with the Brandenburg Estates:

> In return for a grant of 530,000 thalers, payable in installments over a period of six years, the Great Elector made a sweeping grant of power to the great landholders who had been the most intransigent of his antagonists. The estates of these so-called Junkers he transformed from fiefs held in compensation for military and other services into allodial estates held in absolute ownership. Eliminating the legal restrictions which had bound the Junkers in the past, he recognized them as the only class authorized to acquire estates, he specifically exempted them from payment of taxes, and he gave them the right of an absolute control over their peasants. Finally, he recognized the authority of the Junkers in local affairs, while simultaneously commissioning them as his agents in all matters that concerned Brandenburg as a whole.[16]

Although it appeared at the time that Frederick William had given much he felt, justifiably as it was to prove, that he had gained much more.

The funds granted the Elector were sufficient to maintain his cadre force and to enable him to pursue further recruitment for the standing army without hindrance. The outbreak of war between Sweden and Poland in 1655, with the danger of Prussian involvement inherent in the geographical configuration of this struggle, allowed Frederick William to justify massive recruiting drives in

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preussischen Einheitsstaates im Zeitalter des Absolutismus, 1609-1806 (Breslau: n.p., 1915), pp. 49-60.

16 Craig, p. 4.

all his scattered domains and gave him an excuse to levy a new series of taxes to support the new soldiers.[17]

Pursuing recruitment, increasing military expenditures and further disregarding the hesitations of the increasingly-impotent Estates, Frederick William continued to augment the size and the efficiency of the Prussian Army.[18] At the time of his death, in 1688, the Great Elector left an army establishment of about 30,000 men, five times the size of the force he inherited upon his accession.[19]

But even more than in mere numbers the Prussian Army of 1688 was quite altered in character from its predecessor. The former method of recruitment by contracting with mercenary colonels for units of specific size in return for independence in discipline and command was gradually abolished. In 1655 all troops were placed under the general command of General Freiherr von Sparr, a friend and subordinate of the Great Elector.[20]

Sparr created an advisory staff and a Generalkriegskommissariat, which was responsible for the assem-

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[17] Jany, i. 193.

[18] Hintze, p. 22

[19] Jany, i. pp. 300-301.

[20] Ibid., pp. 152-3.

bling, billeting, provisioning and paying of the army. These new institutions (the first the forerunner of the German General Staff) promoted both unity and uniformity within the army.[21]

> Incomplete as they were, these efforts in the direction of centralization were reflected in an increased efficiency in the field. During the reign of the Great Elector the army of Brandenburg-Prussia not only demonstrated that it was capable of defending the territories of its ruling house but, by its victories at Warsaw and Fehrbellin, won the consideration and respect of the Great Powers of Europe, a fact adequately demonstrated by the eagerness with which its aid was solicited in the Elector's last years. More tangible benefits were denied him, thanks to the bewildering shifts of the diplomatic alignments of the period; but when his son assumed the title of 'King of Prussia' in 1701, the failure of any of the Powers to dispute the new title was a belated recognition of the increased stature of the Hohenzollern state and a vindication of the Great Elector's belief that military power alone could made a ruler 'considerable.'[22]

The weakling who followed Frederick William was in many ways an inadequate monarch. But like his father he early realized that the army was the main pillar of his authority and he continued to maintain it at full strength. More, he increased it until it at last numbered nearly 40,000 men. Further, Frederick I encouraged his son to nurture the growth of the army as the primary

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Craig, p. 7.

objective of his domestic policy.[23]

Frederick William I (1713-1740) was not less strong or imperious than the greatest of his dynasty. In his youth he had fought under Marlborough and Eugene at Malplaquet and had come to the conclusion that the position of the prince in the eyes of the world was determined mainly by the numbers of troops he could put into the field. He said as much frequently and openly to all and sundry:

> He said on one occasion, referring to certain of his father's ministers, 'they say they will obtain land and people for the King with the pen; but I say it can be done only with the sword, otherwise he will get nothing.[24]

In his later years Frederick William I incessantly impressed this fact of life upon his son and heir:

> 'Fritz, mark my words,' he said in 1724, 'always keep up a large efficient army; you cannot have a better friend and without that friend you will not be able to survive. . . . Believe me, you must not think about imaginary things; fix your mind on real ones. Have money and a good army; they ensure the glory and safety of a prince.[25]

True to his own words, Frederick William I bent all

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[23]Rosinski, p. 21.

[24]Robert Ergang, The Potsdam Führer: Frederick William I, Father of Prussian Militarism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 42.

[25]Pierre Gaxotte, Frederick the Great (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 18.

his efforts to increasing the size and effectiveness of the army and, at the same time, making available more monies from domestic sources for the pursuit of military efficiency. This latter goal was an outgrowth of increasing Hohenzollern reluctance to be dependent upon foreign sources for subsidies and the concomitant involvement in foreign quarrels which benefited Prussia little.[26]

To further this desired development the king introduced a series of financial and administrative economies, including the reduction of court expenditures to a scale no more elaborate than that of the household of a country gentleman.[27] This economic policy largely succeeded in freeing Prussia from her dependence upon foreign subsidies and increased the size of the military establishment from 40,000 to 83,000 men, almost as large an army as that possessed by the Austrian Empire.[28]

This immense increase in forces was achieved by

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[26]Ergang, p. 63. See also Craig, p. 8.

[27]Nancy Mitford, Frederick the Great (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 15-16. Perhaps one of the reasons for Frederick William I's frugality was a reaction against the witless profligacy of his father, the feeble Frederick I. In a pathetic attempt to emulate Louis XIV, Frederick I overspent on such unproductive items as silver, furniture and pictures. Although he left some beautiful buildings, he also left his son and heir a treasury totally depleted.

[28]Rosinski, p. 21.

the organization of the resources, indeed the whole life, of the nation, for the sole purpose of serving the needs and demands of the army. In the period 1713-1732 Prussia spent four to five million thaler a year on the average on the army, but only about one million thaler upon all other areas of government obligations combined.[29] Frederick William I, however, went still further:

> The greatest achievement of Frederick William I's reign, next to the stabilization of his exchequer, was the mobilization of the human resources for the reconstruction of his army. . . . The Great Elector had broken the resistance of the Junkers, his grandson completed his work by converting the erstwhile rebels to his service and transforming them into the most trustworthy pillars of his state and army. Under him the aristocracy of his manifold domains . . . learned to feel itself a homogeneous body, proudly called by the name of 'Prussian,' and to consider the service of its king and country not only as the most honorable, but as its natural, profession.[30]

Nevertheless, resistance to service as royal officers continued to exist, especially in turbulent East Prussia.[31] As this resistance was politically dangerous, as well as militarily destructive, Frederick William I re-

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., pp. 22-3.

[31] Frederick William I was so incensed by the obstinate resistance of the East Prussian Junkers that he swore to ruin their authority once and for all. Otto Hintze, Historische und politische Aufsatze (Berlin: Staats Verlag, 1908), i, p. 18.

solved to crush it:

> At the beginning of his reign he made it illegal for members of the nobility to enter foreign service. At the same time he ordered lists prepared of all young noblemen between the ages of 12 and 18 years and, on the basis of these, personally chose those who were to be admitted to the cadet corps in Berlin, which was the gateway to the officer corps. For a time this practice met with spirited opposition, especially in East Prussia, where some of the hapless candidates attempted to prove that they were not members of the Prussian nobility and hence ineligible for service, while others sought safety in flight. But the king had little patience with such evasions and was not above sending police agents or detachments of troops to round up his prospective officers and march them to Berlin in gangs.[32]

By 1724 the battle was largely won. By that time the sons of the nobility were in the officer corps--to stay. This triumph was achieved less by force than by the "carrot" held out to the proud nobles in the form of various perquisites attached to the position of Prussian officer:

> To the sons of families which often possessed more pride than economic means, he offered an education, a standard of living higher than they could otherwise expect, an opportunity to rise to positions of great military and political authority, and a social position second to none in the state. They were offered also the less tangible but no less attractive, advantages of association with the king in an honorable calling on terms of complete social equality. In the new officer corps Frederick William wore the same coat as did his captains and lieutenants; with the sole exception of the generals no officer bore any designation of rank, and the ruler and his nobles comprised a closed society governed

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[32]Schmoller, p. 270.

by the laws of professional competence and feudal honor.[33]

But an effective force is not solely, nor even primarily, composed of officers--they must, after all, have someone to command. To the problem of filling the ranks with competent and reliable soldiers Frederick William I also directed great efforts.

The king sought to escape from difficulties brought on by his initial policy of enforced recruiting abroad (by methods often little short of kidnapping),[34] coupled with severe discipline. This method of filling his ranks had involved Frederick William I on the one hand in disputes with neighboring rulers who justifiably resented his high-handed infringement of their territorial privileges, and, on the other hand, with a constant struggle to keep his reluctant conscripts from deserting.[35]

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[33]Craig, p. 11.

[34]Sometimes the methods did not stop short at kidnapping at all. For example the case of an exceptionally tall Italian priest who was sandbagged by Frederick William's agents while he was saying mass. Fletcher Pratt, The Battles That Changed History (New York: Hanover House, 1956).

[35]Between 1713 and 1740 the total number of desertions from the Prussian army was 30,215. Craig, p. 8. See also Walther Von Schultz, Die preussischen Werbungen unter Friedrich Wilhelm I und Friedrich dem Grossen (Schwerin: n.p., 1887) pp. 8-17.

In an attempt to obviate these problems the king sought to make service in the standing army legally binding upon all of his subjects. Prior to this emergency defense measures had largely devolved upon local levies, or militias, which were activated only in times of great danger. As this system had never been fully or consistently applied, unit training had been irregular and not at all uniform. Too often the militia became a refuge for those who sought to evade regular military service. In 1714 Frederick William I summarily dissolved the extant militia formations and declared anyone who left the kingdom to avoid service in the army to be a deserter and liable to punishment as such.[36] (This has frequently been interpreted as establishing a universal draft liability.)[37]

Out of this and later decrees covering the next twenty years the king gradually developed the institution which, together with the mobilization of the aristocracy, constituted the base upon which rested the Prussian Army. This institution is best known as the "cantonal system." Under this system every army regiment was assigned a specific recruiting district. In this district all young men

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[36]Ergang, pp. 72-73.

[37]Max Lehmann, "Werbung, Wehrpflicht und Beurlaubung im Heere Friedrich Wilhelms I," Historische Zeitschrift, lxvii (1891), pp. 265-266.

were enrolled upon a regimental recruiting list, to which the unit recruiters had recourse when the annual quotas were not filled by voluntary enlistment. Any discrepancy between needed men and volunteers was made up from the eligibles on the roll.[38]

> Although all subsequent canton orders reaffirmed the universal obligation to serve, and although that obligation came to be generally accepted in customary law, neither Frederick William I nor his successors attempted anything approaching universal conscription of Prussian subjects.[39]

For even in soldier-hungary Prussia, artisans and traders, not to mention public servants, the middle stratum of society, were largely exempted. The burden for cantonal service fell most heavily upon the poorer peasantry, agricultural workers, and the tradeless in general. For the peasantry, at least, the period of peacetime service was short. In order to ensure a reliable supply of agrarian labor the peasant recruits were released from active duty after a two month period of "basic training" and sent home to work. In peacetime the army was at full strength only in April and May.[40]

But even with the limitations of class and exten-

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[38]William O. Shanahan, Prussian Military Reforms, 1786-1813 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 41-60.

[39]Craig, p. 8.

[40]Jany, i, pp. 690ff.

sive furloughing the canton system was an excellent institution. In effect it guaranteed the standing army a large and trained reserve, which could be quickly mobilized and was inexpensive to prepare and maintain (always an important consideration for a poor nation like Prussia). The system also ensured that a majority of the Prussian troops would be Prussian nationals, although a considerable number of foreign mercenaries remained within the ranks. The army, as a result of this system, became not only larger but more reliable.[41]

The cantonal levies became, and remained until 1807, the backbone of the army:

> Recruited from the same district and bound by regional and personal ties, they were less inclined to desert each other in a tight corner than were mercenaries gathered from all over Europe. The cantons themselves not only vied with each other in sending their best men to the colors, but proved themselves an inexhaustible reserve of manpower. Without the canton system Frederick the Great would never have overcome the ordeal of the Seven Years War.[42]

Having now obtained a national basis for his army, and a nationally-oriented supply of loyal and devoted officers, Frederick William I addressed himself to advancing the uniformity and centralization of the armed forces. In

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[41]Shanahan, pp. 41-42.

[42]Rosinski, pp. 26-27.

1714 he personally composed the first Infantry Regulations the army had ever been issued. In these regulations were promulgated instructions that from then on governed and directed every aspect of the soldier's life in war and peace.[43]

Because of the low social status and level of education of a great proportion of the recruits, discipline was extremely severe. Flogging through the line became, and remained, the punishment for talking back to an officer. A man who struck his superior was simply shot on the spot, with no further ado. With this ferocious discipline went unceasing drill, drill, drill, day in, day out. The royal parks of Potsdam and Berlin were made over into drill-fields and parade grounds and on them, rain or shine, the drilling and training went on and on, till the men moved like machines, more by reflex than thought.[44]

This training and building of men was supervised by Field-Marshal Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, cousin and closest friend of the king, known affectionately as "The Old Dessauer." A willful, violent man, Leopold was also a superb strategist and a great instructor. He is credited by many authorities with being the inventor of

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[43]Ergang, p. 66.

[44]Pratt, p. 207.

modern drill, of marching in step, and of having originated most of the words of command used at the present time. In addition he also developed a new system of musket-handling which reduced the number of movements required to load and fire, and introduced the iron ramrod which increased the fire-efficiency of the army considerably. (Other armies used a wooden ramrod.)[45]

The intensive drill and rigorous training to move without thinking, merely to react to a word of command, combined with an improved weaponry and fire techniques, transformed the Prussian infantry into a "Moving wall of fire to which no other army had anything to oppose."[46] By 1740 the Prussian Army was the fourth largest in Europe, this despite the fact that Prussia was tenth in territorial size and thirteenth in population.[47] In quality the army was far superior to any in the world.

This was a fact largely unnoted in Europe at the time. Frederick William I's personal idiosyncracy of creating a regiment of "giants," (exceptionally tall men

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[45]The Old Dessauer had fallen in love with the daughter of a druggist, murdered her fiancee, and had married her, a step of shocking novelty. The marriage was recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor and their children were made Princes of Anhalt-Dessau. See Mitford, p. 16.

[46]Rosinski, p. 27.

[47]Ibid.

recruited from all over Europe) who acted as his personal guard, was the subject of a great deal of merriment at foreign courts.[48] This together with the Prussian ruler's reluctance to employ his army in battle, or at least in any adventure which might jeopardize the lives of his precious troops, led many foreign observers to make mistaken appreciations concerning the efficiency and reliability of the Prussian troops.[49]

Here, then, was the military establishment of Prussia, the major gift bequeathed by Frederick William I to his son: a force superbly trained and equipped, officered by skilled and loyal men trained from childhood in the exercise of arms and of leadership. Under their command were predominantly native Prussian troops, patriotic and well-disciplined, trusting their officers and confident of their ability to deal with any foe on more than equal terms.

But it was an army as yet untried in the fire of real combat; its men drilled but not blooded. If it possessed great confidence in itself, it did not yet enjoy either reputation or respect abroad--and its leaders were regarded as either timid and gullible or devious and unreli-

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[48]Mitford, p. 17.

[49]Indeed an Austrian report stated that the Prussian soldiers had been flogged so much that they would desert at the first fire. See Pratt, p. 207.

able. That is, Prussia in 1740 owned neither the fear nor the respect of Europe. Frederick II was to win both for his soldiers and for his nation.

Chapter I

Frederick II and the Prussian Army, 1740-63

If Frederick William I had been reluctant to hazard his army on the field of battle, the same could not be said for his brilliant, ardent son, Frederick II. As Crown Prince, the young man had chafed at Prussian passivity and had come close to feeling shame for his country.[1] In his early writings Frederick declared his intention to so bolster Prussia's position and prestige that: "she can stand on her feet and do credit to the name of her King."[2]

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[1]G. P. Gooch, Frederick the Great: The Ruler, the Writer, the Man (New York: Harcourt Brace Co., 1947), p. 10.

[2]Heinrich von Treitschke, German History in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Macmillan Co., 1915-19).

Although Frederick William I had left his son a splendid military machine, he had also included in the bequest the task of warding a sprawling realm so scattered as to be virtually indefensible in toto. Frederick was aware that consolidation of territories was vital if Prussia was to be militarily viable (i.e. defensible). He was further aware that consolidation could only be accomplished through the acquisition of new territories and that gaining these new territories was possible only through the use of force. The young monarch thus faced the prospect of waging an aggressive war for defensive purposes.[3]

The new Prussian King soon found an opportunity for his defensive-offensive war as a result of the accession of Maria Theresa to the Austrian Throne in 1740. Capitalizing upon the turmoil within the Austrian Empire resulting from this flagrant contravention of the Salic Law, Frederick II marched across the frontier of the Duchy of Silesia on 16 December, 1740, claiming it as his own and inaugurating a whole generation of bitter and desperate conflict.[4]

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[3]Pratt, The Battles . . . , p. 207.

[4]Legally the claim was exceedingly flimsy. It rested on a 1537 agreement between the Duke of Liegnitz (then ruler of Silesia) and the Markgraf of Brandenburg that if the male heirs of either line ran out the other should inherit. In fact, the Hapsburgs had controlled the area for many years and had been universally recognized as the legitimate rulers of the province.

On 10 April, 1741, after some five months of marching and of countermarching, occupation of undefended localities and the besieging of fortresses, Frederick was finally given opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of his military machine. This occurred at Mollwitz, against a somewhat larger army commanded by a noted Marshal of the Empire, Neipperg.[5]

On the field the Austrian cavalry, always the senior and the most prestigious arm of a Habsburg army, heavily outnumbered the Prussian house. Conversely, the Austrian infantry numbered less than the Prussian; and in artillery the Prussians mustered sixty guns to the Austrian eighteen.[6] Frederick II, still untested as a field commander (Feldherr), took his station with the cavalry on the right wing (in a probably-conscious imitation of the great Swedish commander of the Thirty Years War, Gustavus Adolphus.)[7] Due to the cramped nature of the field, the

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[5]Maria Theresa brought Neipperg out of prison in order to command the relief army. He had been put in jail by her father, Charles VI, because he had surrendered Belgrade to the Turks.

[6]Accounts of Mollwitz are legion. For a brief and lively description see Pratt, The Battles . . . , pp. 208-209.

[7]Gustavus customarily took this position, possibly because at the battle of Breitenfeld, the flight of the Saxons before the onrush of Pappenheim's "Black Cuirassiers" had uncovered the Swedish right.

young King, of necessity, stationed part of the Prussian infantry on the right wing at an angle, forward toward the enemy (en potence).[8]

As usual, the battle was opened by the artillary. The guns of Prussia, outnumbering their foes by three to one, soon drove the Austrian artillery from the field. Turning then upon the massed Austrian cavalry ranks on Austria's left, the Prussian pieces so galled the enemy horse that these charged without orders. The Prussian cavalry, doubly outnumbered, and in any case no match for the veteran riders of the Hungarian Plain, was soon driven from the field in something approaching a route--carrying with them their discomfited sovereign.[9]

The Austrian cavalry then wheeled in on the flank of the Prussian infantry to sweep them away in turn. But Frederick's foot-soldiers, drilled and trained by Frederick William I and the "Old Dessauer," refused to be swept away. Instead they stood their ground in perfect rank dress and shattered the oncoming Austrian cavalry with volley after volley of musket-fire. Six times the Austrian cavalry rallied and came on and each time the Prussian foot

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[8]Pratt, The Battles . . . , p. 209.

[9]Mitford, Frederick . . . , p. 100.

repulsed them with numbing losses.[10]

Immediately following the final repulse of the cavalry, the Prussian infantry hurled themselves as one "with the greatest steadiness, arrow-straight, and their front like a line,"[11] at the Austrian left, now as naked as the Prussian right had formerly been. The Prussian infantrymen, their drill and iron ramrods enabling them to fire five shots for every two of their foes, now caught the latter in deadly enfilade. This storm of fire was joined by the Prussian cannon and soon swept the remnants of old Marshal Neipperg's force from the battlefield in confusion and prone rout.[12]

But Mollwitz did not demonstrate or illuminate the military reputation of Frederick II. The King had, after all, been driven from the field early on in the fight and his men had won the victory in his absence. Training,

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[10]Pratt, The Battles . . . , p. 209.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid. See also B. H. Liddell-Hart, Strategy (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 112.
Liddell-Hart made the observation that Mollwitz demonstrated to the Powers that the military strength and efficiency of a state is not always proportionate to its size or resources.

fire-control, march and line discipline, all these combined with weight and push had won Mollwitz. To the outside observer Frederick's role had been very minor indeed.

But appearances were deceiving: If Frederick was not present physically while most of the battle ran its course, and the men on the spot who broke the Austrians were merely going through the maneuvers laid down by Frederick William I and Prince Leopold, it was both untrue and unfair to dismiss Frederick II as merely a spectator. For it was the young King who placed the right wing en potence, and, while an accident of ground may have dictated this placement, it is certain that Frederick divined from this his master stroke: the striking with a heavy-weight wing on the enemy flank at an oblique angle, a tactic that was to be repeated time and again in subsequent battles.[13] Whether the use of this oblique attack was an initial accident or not it did demonstrate that an army trained and disciplined in the manner of Frederick William I could indeed accomplish results with it upon command.

Perhaps as importantly, Mollwitz demonstrated to the King that the military establishment left him was structurally sound and capable of meeting and mastering

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[13]Walter L. Dorn, Competition for Empire (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 140.

even the most critical of battlefield situations. Frederick gained a confidence in his soldiers which he was never to lose, even in the most desperate of times.

The one major defect in the Prussian Army, the King felt, was the cavalry. After Mollwitz he turned his energies to the conversion of this arm into a reliable support of the infantry. For the next few months, while the remains of the Austrian Army fell back into Bohemia, and France was encouraged to join with Bavaria in an attack on Austria (which opened the War of the Austrian Succession), Frederick laid the foundations for a new and effective Prussian cavalry.[14]

The training of the cavalry followed the guidelines already created for the infantry. Careful and constant drill was the main ingredient, and coordination and precision movement became, and remained, the standards most desired of achievement. To lead this increasingly-formidable war arm there appeared a group of colorful and efficient cavalry officers, men like Ziethen, Seydlitz, and Rothenburg. If the Prussian infantry was the creation of Frederick William I, the Prussian cavalry had Frederick II as its father.[15]

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[14]Liddell-Hart, p. 112.

[15]Jay Luvaas, ed., Frederick the Great on the Art of War (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 12.

Of course the infantry needed no improvement; merely a continued refining and honing, both of tactics and equipment. The King introduced modifications into infantry drill to some extent: Under his new tactical system the infantry was to fire a platoon volley, advance four paces behind the cover of the smoke left by the discharge, reload and fire another volley and then, when close enough to the disordered enemy line, fall on with the fixed bayonet. That is, Frederick wanted firepower combined with shock and push in an attack from an oblique angle.[16]

Retaking the field in May, 1742, Frederick determined to prove that Mollwitz was no fluke. Coming up with the Austrian main force at Chotusitz, the new Prussian cavalry swept their mounted Austrian foes from the field and secured the victory laurel for their royal commander without help from the infantry. As a result of this battle a peace treaty was negotiated with the chastened government of Maria Theresa which gave all of Silesia to Prussia.[17]

In August, 1744, Frederick re-entered the war and continued his string of victories, capping it in June,

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[16]G. Von Pelet-Narbonne, Geschichte der Brandenburg-Preussischen Reiterei (Berlin: Kunstel Auflage 3,1905), i, pp. 341-46.

[17]Luvaas, p. 13. See also Carlyle, V, pp. 127-8.

1745, with a crushing triumph over the combined forces of Austria and Saxony at the very murderous battle of Hohenfriedberg. In this encounter both the Prussian cavalry and infantry routed their respective opposing arms in creditable actions on separate portions of the field. In September, the Battle of Sohr confirmed the result of Hohenfriedberg[18] and the Austrians, further savaged by the "Old Dessauer" at Kesselsdorf in December, were glad to make yet another peace which confirmed Silesia as Prussian.[19]

These impressive military performances earned Frederick an international reputation, and the appellation "the Great." In all of his battles he had used the essential tactics of Mollwitz: the pushing forward of a heavily-loaded right wing, taking the foe at the oblique, and rolling up his line through a combination of firepower and push. This basic battle pattern was to remain the ideal of all Prussian leadership down to the catastrophe of Jena.[20]

But alas, having raised Prussia to a pinnacle of

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[18]Mitford, p. 115.

[19]After Sohr, where he beat an Austrian force twice the size of his own, Frederick declared that now he knew he could beat the Austrians anywhere! Gooch, p. 139.

[20]At this Peace of Dresden, Friedrich demanded, and got, the county of Glaztz in addition to Silesia.

prestige and power, to a position as military arbiter of Europe, Frederick II now found yet another, and harder, task thrust upon him: the maintenance of this position among the armed Powers of the European Continent:

> The task . . . became the central purpose, the determining influence in Frederick's life, absorbing his thoughts and energies, molding his character, exhausting his forces. To that supreme duty, embracing and overriding all others, he sacrificed himself body and soul: the quiet of his days and the sleep of his nights, all thought of personal happiness, even his feelings, which he schooled himself to curb and to suppress so as to preserve his will power unweakened and undiverted, until at last he became almost bereft of human sentiment, petrified into insensibility like an image of stone.[21]

But the true test of Frederician fortitude came in the great struggle which Prussia waged almost alone against the combined might of Continental Europe for seven long years (she did have the distant, intermittent aid of Britain). In the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the Prussian Army tasted both the heady wine of victory and the bitter dregs of defeat. The Army was tested in the fire of adversity and in this testing found a spirit compounded of pride and fortitude which in its turn provided a lasting military tradition. This tradition was to maintain the Prussian Army unbroken, in devotion to king and country, through change and disaster for most of the following century.[22]

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[21]Luvaas, p. 18.

[22]Rosinski, p. 30.

But the cost was high. For most of the struggles, most of the marches and battles, most of the great victories and defeats, were achieved on Prussian soil. If Rossbach in 1757 was a supreme example of Frederick's genius, of the steadiness and intelligence of the Prussian soldiery, and resulted in cheap, swift, victory,[23] such a reverse as Kunersdorf in 1759 showed how dangerous and how unpredictable could be the tide of military fortune.[24]

Nevertheless, the brilliance of such victories as Mollwitz, Rossbach, Leuthen and Torgau overshadowed the defeats at Hochkirch, Kunersdorf, and Kolin, that fight which contained so many signs and portents of danger for the Prussians had they only observed them.[25]

The fortitude of Frederick, the stubborn devotion of his dwindling armies in the black years from 1759 through 1762 (the disaster at Kunersdorf to the death of

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[23]For a detailed view of the Seven Years War Carlyle is still quite good. For a more modern, if far less detailed, survey see the work by Walter L. Dorn.

[24]Allied casualties at Rossbach were 7,700 killed and captured against a derisory Prussian loss of 541! Liddell Hart, p. 110.

[25]In this battle Frederick lost 25,000 men--largely through his own fault, for he threw his troops against an entrenched Austro-Russian Army superior in numbers to his own. The Prussian troops had been two days without rest and had to attack uphill. As it was, Austro-Russian casualties were nearly as heavy as Frederick's (23,500) and they were so disorganized as to be unable to pursue the retreating Prussians. Dorn, p. 335.

Tsarina Elizabeth), the stoical acceptance of suffering on the part of the Prussian people, all these won admiration and applause from even Prussia's enemies. The achievement of a final, although qualified, victory of Prussia over her combined opponents did not cause the admiration of the world to lessen.[26]

> In the fire of the Seven Years War the reconciliation between the king and his nobles was . . . completed, and the officer corps became the embodiment of the spirit of devotion to the Crown and the state, while the common foot-soldier gained a consciousness of his own ability which, handed on to his successors, was to make Prussian troops the finest soldiers in Europe. . . . The achievements of the army crowned with success the change in the European balance of power and established beyond question Prussia's title to Great Power status.[27]

But in the final twenty-three years of his reign, Frederick the Great was to underwrite the persistence of certain weaknesses within his marvellous military creation. Some of these shortcomings were probably unavoidable, but others could have been corrected had they not been over-

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[26]J. F. C. Fuller, The British Light Infantry in the 18th Century (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1930). Fuller's thesis in this work is that Frederick's lack of light infantry and his failure to create a reliable force of the same was a major defect in his military system.

[27]Dorn maintains that the generally accepted view that the Tsarina's death saved Prussia from certain destruction is excessive: "If his (Frederick's) powers were nearly exhausted, his enemies also had fought it to the stumps." It is true that France was financially exhausted and Maria Theresa forced to reduce her army by 20,000 men. Dorn. p. 342.

shadowed by the headiness of the victory and the arid parsimoniousness which came more and more to govern the outlook of the King in his later years.

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[28]Craig, pp. 13-14. See also: Roger Parkinson, Clausewitz (New York: Stein & Day, 1971).

Chapter II

The Prussian Army 1756-63: Challenge and Change

Thus did Frederick triumph over all odds and opposition. To be sure, his game was near-run and purchased at immense cost.[1] Nevertheless it was a victory. The King now determined to devote his energies during the time remaining to him to rebuilding his ravaged state and establishing his magnificent military machine on a permanent, invulnerable, base.

The creation and maintenance of an army capable of defying the forces of Europe's great land empires and car-

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[1]Frederick himself estimated that one-ninth of the Prussian population had perished during the fighting. Oeuvres Militaires de Fredéric II, Roi de Prusse, 31 vols. (Berlin, 1846-57), Volume 4, p. 361.

rying off the prize of victory had been made possible only through a total and unremitting subordination of all internal national energies to the task of supporting the army:

> The institutional framework, the economic activity and even the social organization of Prussia were determined in large part by the needs of the army; and if the Prussian state thus created was a masterpiece of conscious design, it was, nevertheless, essentially an artificial creation, incapable of natural growth or independent development.[2]

While the above assertion is a trifle excessive and has in it elements of exaggeration, it is true that the military establishment occupied a position of dominance in Prussia that was scarcely to be equalled in any other European social structure. It is also true that Frederick determined that the foundations of this subordination, and the great military machine it supported should long survive.

Frederick's determination propelled him into a policy of governmental centralization which he hoped would ensure military dominance through binding the interests of the civil government with those of the army. Here, as elsewhere, his predecessors had prepared the way for him (as they had prepared the foundations of all his policies):

> The uniqueness, the extraordinary strength, but also the weakness of . . . Prussia lay in the fusion of the economic and military power of its nobility

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[2]Craig, p. 17.

> with the order, system and efficiency of its bureaucracy. The combination of these two basic elements of the Prussian state warded off the rising tide of the strongest currents of nineteenth century liberal thought.[3]

This Prussian bureaucracy has been referred to as "the most creative force in Prussian history."[4] But if its tap root runs back to the time of the Great Elector, its real, enduring foundation lies in the reign of Frederick William I. Later, of course, it was to play a pivotal role in the transformation of Prussia into a fully modern state in the decades following Napoleon's fall.[5]

But at no time during the entire span of its existence did the bureaucracy rise to a greater height of expertise, or face a greater challenge, than during the second half of the reign of Frederick the Great. With this able and ruthless exemplar at its head, the Prussian civil service addressed itself to the problem of continuing to provide, from the poorest sections of Germany, the poorest even in peacetime, a constant and reliable public revenue.

That the government was able to do this seemed in-

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[3]Walter L. Dorn, "Prussian Bureaucracy in the Eighteenth Century," Political Science Quarterly, XLVI (1931), p. 403.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

credible to many contemporary observers. But it did do so: to produce a public revenue greater than that of Russia's at the accession of Catherine the Great (1762), and yet to impose a tax that was, per capita, less than that paid by the French.[6] More than this, the Prussian government:

> Managed to support the army of a first-rate power on the resources of a third-rate state and at the same time accumulated a large reserve in the public treasury: it opened up the mining industry in Silesia . . . it carried through a project for extensive internal colonization in urban and rural districts which added upwards of 300,000 inhabitants to the sparsely populated provinces of Prussia, thus making in 1786 every fifth inhabitant a colonist; it did much to introduce the improved British agricultural methods among the backward Prussian peasantry; it liberated the craft guilds and adapted them to the needs of a capitalistic industry while it endeavored to execute . . . a comprehensive plan to industrialize an almost wholly agricultural country. . . . After 1770 and even before, no Prussian official was appointed to office without having undergone a special training and passed several examinations.[7]

This considerable achievement was purchased by Frederick only at a price of unceasing labor and personal deprivation. Although only fifty-one in 1763, the King already had the appearance of a careworn oldster. His physical infirmities, which had afflicted him since his early twenties, had greatly increased and his once cheery

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[6] Ibid., pp. 404-405. See also Gustav Schmoller, "Historische Betrachtungen über Staatenbildung und Finanzentwicklung," Jahrbüchen für Gesetzgebung und Verwaltung, xxxiii (1909), pp. 1-4.

[7] Dorn, p. 405.

demeanor and gallant contempt for adversity had altered into a calm sarcasm.[8] Even so he set an example of untiring labor that was the motor-energy which powered the machinery that revived Prussian internal prosperity.[9]

Perhaps in the area of his beloved army was Frederick's labor to prove least fruitful: The dreadful battle-losses of the great, sanguinary battles (victories and defeats alike), had forced the King into some desperate measures. These measures, which were often continued in peacetime, contained some long-run dangers for the future Prussian military, particularly in the area of recruitment and training.

Unlike his father, Frederick the Great had never been chary about using foreign mercenaries and turncoat prisoners of war in his army. Even before the Seven Years War the King only enrolled about 50,000 native Prussian conscripts in a force of some 132,000 men.[10] And if this proportion of foreigners decreased during the war years,

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[8]Rosinski, p. 40.

[9]Although criticized for not delegating more supervisory power to subordinates, it was really Frederick's nature to take a personal role in everything. This element in his emotional nature prevented his passively distributing duties to others.

[10]Rosinski, p. 33. However, many of these "foreigners" were natives of other areas of Germany.

the reason would appear to lie not in any change in Frederick's attitude, but in the simple fact that accessibility to foreign recruitment-areas was largely denied him.[11] Indeed, after the Peace of Hubertusburg in 1763, the proportion of foreign troops within the army rose again, finally achieving near-parity with native troops in 1804, the eve of Prussia's supreme trial.[12]

Frederick's reasoning in this matter was closely connected with his concern for the internal economic health of his state. Tacitly admitting that he had drastically watered-down the effectiveness of the canton system (see Introduction, pp. 15-19), and also conceding that native troops in general fought better than mercenaries, the King still maintained that respectable Prussians were of far more use to the nation as workers and as taxpayers than as soldiers.[13]

He set a definite limit on the numbers of native draftees declaring that no more than three or four percent

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[11]For a discussion of this area of Prussian military problems see F. von Tempelhoff, Geschichte des Siebenjahren Krieges in Deutschland, 6 vols. (Berlin: n.p., 1783-1801). In particular see Volume 4, a classic study of all aspects of the Seven Years War.

[12]Jany, iii, pp. 50, 436.

[13]E. Dette, Friedrich der Grosse und sein Heer (Göttingen: Universitäts Verlag, 1914), pp. 12-15.

of the total native male population should ever be called to the colors--even if nominally Prussian units should in consequence be diluted with foreigners and prisoners of war. He baldly stated that:

> Useful, hardworking people should be guarded as the apple of one's eye, and in wartime recruits should be levied in one's own country only when the bitterest necessity compels.[14]

Although criticized even by admirers for this policy, the King felt obliged to persist in it. The fearfully ravaged Prussian countryside continued to shake him whenever he viewed it,[15] but the sight in turn strengthened the monarch's resolve not to deprive the internal recovery program of even one more unit of production than was strictly necessary. Every foreign trooper released into the economy one more rebuilder of the state and perhaps also provided Prussia in the long run with a new resident to aid in the policy of repopulation.[16]

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[14] Werke Friedrichs des Grossen (Berlin, 1913-14), vi, pp. 226-7.

[15] For details concerning the spectacular but ultimately indecisive raid by Count Hadik and Austrian light cavalry units, see the German General Staff study, "Zur Geschichte der Einnahme von Berlin . . . im . . . 1757," Urkundliche Beitrage und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Preussischen Heeres, I, No. 4 (1902), p. 52. It was when Frederick returned to Berlin to view the damage done by this raid that he first became aware of the severe devastation in the Prussian countryside.

[16] Rosinski, p. 33.

In addition to extensive foreign recruitment, Frederick also followed a policy of frequently exempting native troops from the bulk of their military service. This was done in part to encourage the people in newly acquired areas, such as Silesia, not to flee abroad, but remain on the land to produce for Prussia.[17] The other motive was to return to domestic production a partly-trained man who could be recalled if needed but who would, in the meantime, be working within the domestic economy. His place would be taken, even in the older "core" areas, by a foreigner.[18]

The destruction of so many of the best of the Prussian troops at such sanguinary battles as Torgau and Kunersdorf also had an effect upon Frederick. Those good troops who survived had been augmented by foreigners drawn from the scum of their varied populations, deserters and felons,[19] and the younger native troops had been hastily

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[17]Dette, pp. 8-12.

[18]Frederick flatly laid down the rule that serving native troops should never exceed 3 percent of the total male population and thus even the oldest native Prussian regiments sometimes had to accept foreigners. Craig, p. 23.

[19]This is Rosinski's judgment and may be too harsh. But it is that generally held by even such fervent admirers of Frederick as Heinrich von Treitschke in his German History in the 19th Century, Vol. I, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1915-19).

raised to take the places of the fallen and were often ill-trained and hesitant, where their predecessors had been skilled and bold.

A period of re-training and integration was necessary for these new elements before they could be capable of performing the precise and elaborate maneuvers so necessary for Frederician victories.[20] And until they were so capable the King viewed them (and treated them) with harsh contempt.

> Unpleasant experiences helped to fill him with unjustified bitterness, until, as the tension of that terrible struggle increased, we find him more and more cursing his men as 'canaille,' as 'brutes,' claiming that the soldier should fear his officers more than the enemy.[21]

The traumatic experience of watching his army decline in skill and fervor as the war progressed increased Frederick's obsession with discipline.[22] The dangers of

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[20]This fact undoubtedly is a major reason for those occurrences in the later battles of the Seven Years War when the hitherto flawless timing of the Prussian Army became unhinged. In such battles at Torgau, the Prussian cavalry under Ziethen arrived almost too late to salvage a needlessly-costly Prussian victory. In this sanguinary fight the Austrians lost 20,000 men to the Prussian 13,000. For a study of the campaign and battle of Torgau see Luvaas, pp. 241-250.

[21]Rosinski, p. 35.

[22]Peter Paret, Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 16-17. The author claims that Frederick's reign was the height of Prussian severity in discipline.

desertion, always a factor in the armies of the eighteenth century,[23] were heightened by the influx of foreigners. To minimize this the King directed his thinking more and more toward formation-maintenance and march-discipline, and this resulted in his growing reliance upon the close-line unit formation which was most easily controlled.[24]

In the years after 1763 the discipline of the Prussian Army, always a byword for strictness, acquired a new severity that bordered upon savagery. Even when the guns were silent deserters were punished by flogging and even death.[25] The cane and the club, the fist and the rope-end, were used with increasing frequency to remind troops to pay attention to drill and to orders.

Discerning during the war that firepower, not push, was the decisive factor in winning battles, Frederick increasingly concentrated upon complex tactics of alternate volley-fire and advance, with the shock of a bayonet confrontation used only as a last resort.[26] This

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Frederick II, "Les principes generaux de la guerre, appliques a la tactique et a la discipline des troupes prussiennes," Oeuvres, XXVIII, pp. 4-7.

[26] W. Eckardt and O. Morawietz, Die Handwaffen des Brandenburgisch-preussisch-deutsch Heeres (Hamburg: n.p., 1957), pp. 30-35.

increased reliance upon musketry, with its attendant loading drill (extremely complex, often requiring twenty or more separate moves to load and fire a round),[27] made necessary a more rigid emphasis upon line discipline. The fact that the weapons of the day were extremely inaccurate, the Prussian more than most,[28] helped matters not at all. Frederick and his contemporaries felt that massed volley-fire, without individual aiming, was the only valid solution.[29]

One consequence of this viewpoint was Frederick's determination to simplify the basic infantry weapon. If the individual accuracy of the soldier meant nothing, then the only important factor to consider was a weapon easy to load and fire. Thus more volleys could be gotten off in a given time and the increase of the wall of fire would negate weaponry possessed by the opposition, even if the latter were more accurate. The muskets issued to Frederick's troops, as a result of this thinking, were inaccurate, cumbersome and unbalanced.[30] They were described by Clausewitz as "unqualifiedly the worst in Europe."[31]

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[27] Ibid., pp. 35-41. [28] Ibid., pp. 43-45.

[29] Luvaas, p. 243. [30] Eckardt and Morawietz, p. 44.

[31] Carl von Clausewitz, "Nachrichten über Preussen in seiner grossen Katastrophe," Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften X (1888): 426.

As Frederick's ultimate goal was to commit all possible pieces to a given volley, he of necessity found himself forced to lengthen the regimental firing-line and, consequently, to decrease its depth. But if this increased the unit's firepower it also made it more fragile through eliminating its reserves. This could lead to an increased danger of successful enemy assaults upon weakened portions of the line and breakthroughs that could not be sealed off.[32] In order to meet this new threat units had to be bunched closely together in continuous lines of limited mobility. This in turn demanded intensive training and a constant supervision of the troops in order to submerge their individuality into the unit. This was vital, for the safety and security of the Prussian formation lay in the extent to which all its members could act in unison. Frederick described his ideal formations as "moving batteries," and his enlisted soldiery as "des animaux grossiers et mecaniques."[33]

All of these factors combined to convince Frederick that it was absolutely necessary to maintain and increase the severity of Prussian discipline. Lacking any

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[32]Hans Delbrück, Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte, Vol. IV (Berlin: Stadtsverlag, 1962), p. 317.

[33]Frederick II, "Refutation du Prince de Machiavel," Oeuvres VIII, p. 242.

understanding of the nascent nationalism already beginning to emerge in Western and Central Europe and that would invest some nation's soldiery with renewed inspiration to defend their country, Frederick looked elsewhere for sources of motivation. He found these in fear, force, habit and compulsion and upon these he continued to rely.[34]

But even the King was aware that more was needed to inspire his officers. If the enlisted man, especially the foreigner, was isolated from Prussian society the same could not be said of his leaders. In Prussia (as in all of Germany from 1870 to 1945), the officer held a unique position in relation to the monarch and the state. But Frederick's view of his officer's loyalty was curiously old-fashioned, even feudal, and this view was, in the long run, to contribute to the internal weakening of the moral strength of his beloved army.

One of Frederick's most far-reaching and controversial policies that he adopted after 1763 was the extensive purging of middle-class officers. In undertaking this step Frederick was acting in conformity with the philosophy he had followed all of his life: the philosophy of an age of absolutism, of benevolent despotism.

The view of the state and its inhabitants, held by

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[34]Paret, pp. 15-17.

most men of the ruling classes of the day, not only by the King of Prussia, included the sincere conviction that all men were born to certain duties and privileges. If certain classes had greater privileges than others, their responsibilities and consequent commitment to these responsibilities were correspondingly greater.[35]

Carrying this belief a step further, Frederick believed that command could truly be wielded only by those born to command, that is "those to the manner born" (or "manor"), the nobility.[36] This class remained the pillar of the feudal officer corps, as the officer corps was the pillar of the army, and the army the pillar of the state. If it was true that during the dreadful years of the Seven Years War the flower of the corps had been decimated and their places taken by foreign nobles and bourgeoisie, it was equally true that this replacement was but temporary:

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[35]In any case life was not excessively pleasant for any Prussian officer, no matter what his station. Promotion was exceedingly slow, pay was niggardly, particularly for officers below the rank of major. Even the highest ranks were not free of the King's close scrutiny. And if many retired officers did enter the civil service (See Dorn, "Prussian Bureaucracy . . . ," pp. 267-268), it was not always certain that they should. Such entry was a mark of the King's favor and this favor could be as quickly withdrawn as extended. For a view of life in the Prussian officer corps at this time see Delbrück, IV, pp. 289-293.

[36]Frederick II, "Memoires depuis la Paix de Hubertusbourg . . . ," Oeuvres, VI, pp. 94-95.

Following the Peace of Hubertusburg the new officers were either summarily dismissed from the service or relegated to the technically-vital but less-prestigious engineers and artillery.[37]

This was more the case with the bourgeoisie than with foreign nobles, who were, after all, from the desired social class. But the exclusion of middle-class officers produced a gap, a shortage of trained and experienced leaders, a gap that simply could not be filled by the depleted native nobility. Consequently, in order to maintain standing strength and replace dismissed technicians, the King had to continue the practice of commissioning noble foreigners. If this practice attracted excellent men, it also attracted some dubious characters of doubtful quality.[38] And this recourse to foreigners also watered down the national character of the officer corps and left some elements of it alienated from the native inhabitants.[39]

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[37]One of the best comparative studies of the proportion of untitled to titled officers in the less prestigious areas of the Prussian Army see Paret, Appendix 2, Table 2, p. 266.

[38]One of these noble foreigners was Gerhardt Scharnhorst. Craig, p. 25. For a general discussion of the character of the foreign officers see Treitschke, I, p. 86 and Detter, p. 61.

[39]Craig, p. 26.

Now all of this was perfectly in accord with Frederick's view on the maintenance of a viable military. He held that only the nobility possessed the requisite cultus of honor, as members of the elite, bound by this native honor to the royal service.[40] But if this was generally to prove the case an obverse side of the coin also existed: The officer corps, whatever its origins, viewed the pursuit and maintenance of honor, both as individuals and as members of a group, as ends in themselves. So conditioned, even native Prussian officers tended increasingly to view the mass of their soldiers with contempt and suspicion. Camaraderie might exist in the Prussian Army, as well as personal affection, but the extent of these things became increasingly horizontal, not vertical, in application. And this in the long run could only have effects that were deleterious.[41]

Even during the reign of Frederick William I the educational level of the Prussian officers had been low.[42]

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[40]Hintze says that "It was primarily the nobility (i.e. the noble officers) that became the carrier of that Prussian sentiment for the state which the King exemplified for his country." Otto Hintze, "Die Hohenzollern und der Adel," Historische Zeitschrift, CXLI (1914), p. 495.

[41]Ibid.

[42]During the reign of Frederick William I "a general could not be regarded as uneducated even though he often could barely write his own name." Suspicion was often leveled at any officer who pursued intellectual enlarge-

Frederick II did little to rectify this state of affairs. True, during the years of war he could do little, but after 1763 he would do no more.[43]

The insistence that the Junkers send their sons into the army at extremely early ages did nothing to further the cause of good education in the officer corps, succeeding only in creating junior officers who were: "callow and boorish youngsters . . . not incapable of valor, but who lacked the intelligence to make it effective."[44] And an already-traditional contempt by Prussian officers for education and intellectualism became sharper and more pervasive under Frederick the Great.[45]

At first this defect did not seem crushing: The King of Prussia demanded blind, mechanical obedience to superior orders from all junior officers and subalterns, and rewarded such compliance with far more generosity than

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ment. See Jany, I, p. 735.

[43]Dette, pp. 62-63.

[44]Craig, p. 26.

[45]Frederick was concerned to produce better training facilities for staff officers and younger men selected for future staff positions. Several higher military academies were formed after 1763 by Major von Rüchel and others and some attempt was made to reform the cadet schools, but graduates from the higher-level institutions were too few in number to change the overall tone of an officer corps which remained openly and boorishly ignorant and crass.

he did individual initiative.[46] The most unfortunate result of this policy was the fact that most higher officers were equally hesitant to depart from the absolute letter of their instructions, trusting to the skill of their men and in a Dickensian hope that "something would turn up" to extricate them from any catastrophic situation into which blind obedience to their orders had gotten them.[47]

But not even absolute obedience to higher orders and whims could ensure an officer's safety or immunity from disfavor. The King, his health and strength grievously overtaxed by the self-imposed burden of trying to oversee all aspects of Prussian rebuilding, was often impatient and unjust with his servants. Officers who incurred the King's displeasure, oftentimes without knowing they had done so,[48] were denied promotion, sent to duty posts in insalubrious areas, even cashiered.[49]

Frederick also developed the lamentable habit of making whole units, even entire corps, liable to punishment for the failings of their commanders. Promotion of

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[46] Rosinski, p. 41.

[47] Ibid. See also Treitschke, I, pp. 170-175.

[48] Rosinski, p. 39.

[49] Ibid.

even junior officers would be suspended for long periods, retirement benefits (which included jobs in the civil service)[50] would be denied, and even enlisted men were unable to obtain veterans benefits and honors due them.[51]

As if this were not enough, the exaggerated emphasis placed on absolute discipline inclined the monarch to support superior officers against their subordinates regardless of circumstances. Thus the younger officers felt helpless to oppose even unreasonable actions by their superiors, and in consequence hesitated to put forward suggestions or tentative plans for increasing efficiency of troop performance.[52]

Certainly discipline was achieved, but it was a stultifying discipline, discouraging original thought or innovation and hostile to tactical or strategic developments outside the realm. Prussian officers increasingly sought preferment and security through an unquestioning

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[50]Although Frederick preferred to fill the highest posts in the civil service with noble officers--as a reward for having "defended the state." Gerhard Ritter, Friedrich der Grosse: ein historisches Profil (Leipzig: Verlage, 1936), p. 198.

[51]This latter case was exceptional however and was chiefly invoked against foreign mercenaries. These lived lives of the utmost wretchedness in squalid cantonments and were despised for their brawling ways and disorderly private lives. Jany, III, p. 447.

[52]Rosinski, p. 42.

adherence to the rote of drill, obedience and acquiesence. As a result, Prussia became comfortably insulated. The ideal vision for Prussian officers found expression in viewing Seydlitz' charge at Rossbach and the destruction of Daun at Leuthen by the line infantry as the ultimate in military excellence.[53]

In addition to commitment to a policy of harsh discipline, Frederick also pursued the not-too-compatible policy of frequent and indulgent exemption of native conscripts. He fell back more and more on the old practice of furloughing these valuable economic units for most of the year and by reducing the period of annual maneuvers in order to reduce the army payroll.[54]

This policy of extreme liberality concerning furloughing and leave, combined with savage disciplinary practices, produced a military machine that was, in certain ways, schizophrenic: Having destroyed, through a policy of arrogant elitism, the close relationship of trust and confidence which had existed between Prussian officers and men, Frederick the Great further impaired efficiency by reducing the vital training period for recruits and then arming them with inferior weapons. The re-

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[53]Paret, pp. 44-46.

[54]Craig, p. 24.

sult of all this was that the Prussian state had the worst of both worlds: an army that was alienated in the ranks, ignorant at the command level, and inefficient in nearly all operational areas.[55]

As military institutions rapidly fossilized, tactics and strategy followed suit. The linear formation, with its wall of fire and defensive brittleness, became the standard battle unit. The soldiers having now been reduced to mechanical and unquestioning obedience, the main problem for the army commanders was to place them in a position to bring to bear their rigid, formalized firewall on whatever foe they faced. Consequently, the main thrust of tactical and strategic operations was to ensure that the Prussian regiments arrived on the field able to immediately take up their "proper" order of battle. Once this was achieved, the area of maneuver and line of fire was determined, main strength was concentrated on the pre-determined decisive flank and the main attack was launched as soon as possible.[56]

The main defect of this form of tactics was that it was so obviously predictable. It took no towering genius to discern the main direction of movement of a Fred-

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[55] Ibid. See also Parkinson, Chapter I.

[56] Paret, p. 19.

erician army, even taking individual unit deviation (caused by terrain or isolated resistance) into account. Frederick's genius could not disguise the fact that, once his army was observed in action, an astute enemy (he fortunately faced few of these) could quickly predict at least the general objective and possibly even the sequence of events that would accompany the Prussian attempt to obtain that objective.[57]

Worse, the Frederician system soon revealed considerable limitations: First, the linear formation was noticeably less effective when operating in wooded or hilly country, thus limiting its full utilization to open, level terrain.[58] Secondly, the close-packed composition of the formation combined with the rigid discipline to inhibit general pursuit of a beaten foe: "Tactical pursuit of the enemy was rare and lacked conviction; strategic pursuit did not exist."[59]

The reason for this second defect reposed in the fear that relaxation of total control over the troops by higher authority would result in a massive desertion of the field by the victorious soldiery. This fear was ever-pre-

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[57] Ibid.

[58] ". . . open country suits it best," Frederick maintained. See Oeuvres, XXX, pp. 238-240.

[59] Paret, p. 20.

sent in Frederick's mind, most especially following the traumatic experience at Kunersdorf, when the bulk of his beaten army simply broke up and fled.[60] As a consequence, beaten armies almost always escaped the field, intact and able to continue resistance another day.[61]

A concomitant result of these limitations was an increasing dependence upon fixed centers of supply. With fear of straggling and desertion tying the infantry to the roads in tight, easily-supervised clusters, foraging was severely restricted. In consequence, a series of magazines were constructed to feed and to supply the army, and these, in turn, tied down the army's movements. For by requiring considerable detachments of troops to guard them, these magazines drained fighting strength from the field armies.

And in the field the armies lost even more mobility because of their increased dependence upon thousands of ac-

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[60] Templehoff, II, p. 26. The only example indeed of the total rout of a Prussian force during the Seven Years War. At this battle Loudon's Austrian cavalry so panicked Frederick's troops that for awhile after the fight, the King was in effective control of only about 4,000 of the 50,000 he had led at its outset. However, the victorious Austrians and Russians were almost as disorganized and had suffered some 16,000 casualties to Frederick's 19,000. They were unable to pursue the defeated Prussians and Frederick was able to regain his control of his shaken troops very quickly. For an excellent brief description of the Battle of Kunersdorf see Christopher Duffy, The Army of Frederick the Great (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1974), pp. 187-189.

[61] Ibid., p. 38.

companying supply vehicles. The days when forces could march like the wind and strike like triphammers, when individual foraging and on-the-spot levying were commonplaces, ended so far as Central Europe was concerned with the end of the Thirty Years War.[62]

Nevertheless, even Frederick was not able to completely stay the march of innovation. If in general military institutions in Prussia began to harden and rigidify from 1740 on, the King could not totally fail to respond to certain foreign stimuli. For drill, discipline, officer elitism, were just not enough to ensure total success, and Frederick, in all of his wars, was made aware that not all challenges could be ignored.

From Frederick's first conflict, the War of the Austrian Succession, experiences upon the field forced him to take measures not especially congenial to his nature and it will be necessary to take a step back and view this conflict in some detail.

In this war one of the salient features was the operations of light Austrian units, of both a regular and irregular composition. These units covered the front and flanks of every Austrian field army. Some of them, especially the Pandours (Hungarian irregular cavalry) were bar-

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[62]Templehoff, II, p. 29.

barians, who raided and burned towns and killed wounded foes when they caught them. Others were more disciplined but equally unnerving to fight. All of them made communications and reconaissance difficult for any of Austria's opponents.[63] So effective were these forces that they became models for complementary units formed by other European nations, who even copied their uniforms and nomenclature.[64] Strange and exotic though they were, these units, and their methods of making war, forced regular soldiers, Frederick more than any, to develop responses to them, responses that did not cease after 1763.

In 1740 Frederick found he had inherited from his father, in addition to the regular Prussian Army, two rather small units of Hussars. These were light cavalry armed with pistols, sabres, and carbines, and were employed for scouting, foraging and harassment of the enemy. Frederick formed another regiment of these and began a vigorous recruiting drive to obtain experienced horsemen.[65]

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[63]For a thorough description and appreciation of these light raiders see J. F. C. Fuller, British Light Infantry in the 18th Century (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1930), pp. 70-75.

[64]Duc de Grandmaison, La petit Guerre (Paris: n.p., 1756), pp. 7-11. In this work the author credits the operations of this Austrian light cavalry with being the major reason for the formation of the famous French light cavalry regiments of de Grassin, de la Molière, des Cantabres and the Breton Volunteers.

[65]Jany, III, p. 134. Frederick himself was reluc-

He redoubled his efforts in this area after the poor showing made by the Prussian horse at Mollwitz and these efforts bore fruit within a short time. The Prussian hussars became an elite force, one of the most reliable and efficient elements in the army. During Frederick's reign the number of hussars increased from 1,000 to more than 15,000 between 1740 and 1786, constituting nearly a tenth of the strength of the standing army.[66]

In addition to raiding and scouting, Frederick employed his hussars in the less amenable, but equally necessary, duties of policing the army, i.e., intercepting and arresting deserters and ordering the line of march.[67] Un-

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tant to admit the formidable nature and challenge of the Pandours and related units. He dismissed them as "formidable to those only who are unacquainted with them. They are never courageous. . . . Our troops have nothing to fear from them;" he then goes on to give a long and detailed instruction in how to deal with these supposedly inconsequential foemen. See "Short Instructions for the Use of Light Troops," Oeuvres, XXX, pp. 91-94. In later correspondence the King modified his earlier contemptuous appraisals of the enemy light units. See his "Histoire du mon Temps" where he writes "Chaque botte de paille coûtait du sang. Moratz, Trenk, Nadasti, et Frankini étaient infatigables, et l'on peut dire qu'ils donnaient les premières laçons dans l'art de la petit guerre."

[66]Jany, III, p. 134. So efficient did the Prussian cavalry become that Austrian Marshal Daun, Frederick's most able foe, feared to undertake offensive operations against the Prussians in open country, so marked was Prussian superiority in mobility. See also Dorn, Competition for Empire . . . , p. 328 and also Jany, II, p. 252 for an appreciation of Daun.

[67]Ibid.

like the Austrian light cavalry, the Prussian hussars generally went into battle in closely ordered formations. Frederick took an exceedingly dim view of skirmishing, and had little qualms about committing his light horse to battle with heavier formations.[68] By the middle of the Seven Years War the hussars had largely abandoned patrolling and harassment and were increasingly committed to covering the flanks and rear of the Prussian Army. In 1770 Frederick declared that the hussars: "perform the same service as the cuirassiers and dragoons,"[69] and were using the same tactics as the heavy cavalry: charging in close order directly into the ranks of the main enemy formations--shock forces in other words. But the light cavalry still remained on the tables of organization as primarily a force which could supplement and vitalize military operations.[70]

One factor continued to separate the hussars from the mass of the regular Prussian Army: the fact that this branch of the cavalry remained open to non-noble officers, who were denied commissions in heavy cavalry units. (This might indicate that Frederick the Great regarded the light

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[68]Frederick declared that "all hussar skirmishing and firing never leads to anything." Oeuvres, XXX, pp. 61-62.

[69]Ibid., p. 65.

[70]Jany, III, pp. 92-95.

cavalry as more akin to the technical services than he did to the army's mainstream.) Following the purges after 1763 many able commoners continued to find a home in the hussars, a situation that was never altered.[71]

In the infantry too the Austrians challenged Frederick. Perhaps even more formidable than their light horse were the units of Austrian light infantry. Recruited mainly from the Croation population of the Militärgrenze (Military Border), which fronted on the Turkish-occupied areas stretching from the Adriatic to the Carpathians, these light infantrymen were skilled in the arts of skirmishing and marksmanship.

Raised as military settlers along the always-tense frontier with the Ottomans, these men were in a sense a resurrection of the old limitanei and riparienses units with which the Roman Empire had attempted to block the frontier incursions of the barbarians. Like their Roman predecessors, these men were hardy, ruthless and able supporters of the state. They provided Austria with a considerable number of trained and devoted troops skilled in all aspects of irregular warfare.[72]

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[71]For example, in 1806 the 25 heavy cavalry regiments had only one non-noble officer while the 10 light cavalry regiments had 73. See the Rangliste der Königlich Preussischen Armee (Berlin, 1806).

[72]G. E. Rothenberg, The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522-1747 (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1960), p. 147.

In 1756 they comprised about one quarter of the strength of the Austrian standing army[73] and gave to the Austrian command a flexible skirmish line and reliable "eyes" to spy out movements of Austria's foes. In addition, they provided an often-impenetrable defensive screen shielding the main-force positions of the rest of the Austrian Army.[74] They were instrumental in inflicting upon Frederick his first, and most ominous, defeat at Kolin.

In that battle the disciplined and galling fire of these "irregulars" had drawn Hülsen's Prussian infantrymen out of their line of oblique advance and had consequently diverted following units into a new eccentric approach. This in turn laid the entire Prussian position open to a murderously effective counter-attack which broke up the isolated Prussian forward units and drove their remnants from the field. In this disastrous fight Prussia lost almost 13,000 men, and her sovereign gained an illuminating demonstration of the effectiveness of well-armed and disciplined light infantry.[75]

But the King did not immediately turn his energies to the formation of a distinct light infantry. While Moll-

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[73]Paret, p. 24.

[74]Delbrück, IV, pp. 322-323.

[75]Luvaas, pp. 214-223 has an excellent description of this battle.

witz had seen a rapid conversion of Frederick to the cause of creating a light cavalry force, he was much more hesitant in altering the formal system of restrictive discipline which controlled his foot-soldiers. At first only a few light infantry units were formed, the Jäger Corps.[76]

These men were equipped with rifles, weapons far more accurate than the wretched muskets of the regular units, but harder to load and less able to take the wear and tear of field service. The men were usually drawn from the specialized professions of foresters and hunters, volunteers whose inclination to desert was much reduced, and thus who needed much less exacting discipline.[77]

Like the hussars, the Jägers were initially formed as scouts, foragers, and to harrass the enemy. Also like the light cavalry they often found themselves doing police tasks, especially tracking down deserters and patrolling rear areas. Their small numbers generally prevented them being committed to pitched battles[78] and this numerical

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[76]Early in his reign Frederick had created an experimental unit of some 50 foresters and hunters to serve as scouts and guides. This unit was soon disbanded and regular units such as this were not formed until 1744. R. de l'Homme de Courbière, Geschichte der Brandenburgisch-Preussischen Heeres-Verfassung (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1852), pp. 100-102.

[77]Ibid.

[78]They skillfully covered the Prussian withdrawal after the partial defeat at Hochkirch.

weakness militated against their ability to function as a totally-adequate answer to the tough Croats of the Austrian military border.[79]

As he was reluctant to convert his regular line regiments into light units, Frederick fell back upon the expedient of raising light units solely for the duration of the conflicts with Austria. Often these formations were commanded by foreign officers holding temporary commissions.[80] The units, known as Freibattaillons or Freikorps, were raised by hire-purchase by men who negotiated contracts with the Prussian Government.[81] The first of these units was formed in 1757, by 1763 there were about twenty of them.[82]

Generally somewhat larger in personnel establishment than comparable units,[83] and more colorfully garbed,[84]

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[79]Jany lists their total strength in 1806 as a mere 2,000! Jany, III, p. 391.

[80]G. Gieraths, Die Kampfhandlungen der Brandenburgisch-Preussischen Armee, 1626-1807, (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1964), pp. 131-138.

[81]Paret, p. 32.

[82]Gieraths, p. 138.

[83]They had an authorized strength of 21 officers and 790 men as opposed to the 21 officers and 680 men of a line unit of regulars.

[84]E. Schnackenburg, "Die Freikorps Friedrich des

these formations lacked the iron discipline of the regulars. Denied the winter allowance given to the latter, Freikorps troops became quite adept at living off loot and plunder taken from enemy territory, a practice forbidden the line soldiers.[85] The Freikorpsmänner were more self-reliant and aggressive than most Prussian soldiers but were often viewed by the populace as scoundrelly looters and thieves.

After 1763 even the most skilled and efficient of the Freikorps were either disbanded or retrained as heavy infantry.[86] At one stroke Frederick almost totally eliminated the force of light troops so necessary for smooth and secure functioning of Frederician tactics.[87] To his credit, Frederick was quick to admit his error and to make belated attempts to rectify it.

The tactics of the Freikorps were largely responses to the fact that they had not been subjected to years of drillfield bullying. Not conditioned to fighting in close-

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Grossen," Militär-Wochenblatt (1883), No. 6, p. 326. One unit wore a hussar cap, green jacket and pants, red sash and black boots. Another had fur busbies in red and yellow, blue jackets lined in red, blue waistcoats with white loops and light blue pants.

[85] Politische Korrespondenz Friedrichs des Grossen (Berlin, 1879-1939), XVII, p. 142.

[86] Schnackenburg, p. 329.

[87] Ibid.

packed units, they tended to dispose themselves in more open formations, making them better-fitted than the grenadiers for combat in hilly or broken country. Although not trained in individual movements under fire like the Croats, they soon adapted to the congenial tasks of raiding and protecting the flanks of their army.[88]

After 1763, however, Frederick gravitated toward the development of swifter and more complex line movements. He was primarily concerned with perfecting new methods of deployment from the approach march into battle-line formations on the oblique.[89] Geometry and mathematics were increasingly factors in ordering tactics, and precision and exactness in execution became the overriding concerns for all commanders.[90]

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[88] Ibid., p. 344.

[89] Paret, p. 44.

[90] Scharnhorst observed that:

> Those maneuvers made us forget war, everyone . . . regarded them as the basis of operations. Several able men . . . continued to respect these tactics-turned-into-formalities when they commanded in the field. That the mechanics of evolutions alone decided victory was generally believed. Since people occupied themselves very largely with the mathematical principles of fundamental tactics, these in turn became the basis of operations.

G. Scharnhorst, On Infantry Tactics, Paragraph 9, reprinted in Paret, pp. 255-259.

Thus prejudice combined with organization, discipline, and tactical orthodoxy to encourage Frederick to ignore and diminish his light infantry. Disliking the freer discipline which existed in these units, disliking even more the presence of non-noble officers commanding them, the King was easily persuaded to dispense with them.[91]

Alas, in 1778 Frederick was to see just how far his rigidity and elitism had contributed to the decline of the effectiveness of his beloved army. This decline was demonstrated during the semi-farcical War of the Bavarian Succession (1778-1779), a conflict which brought none of the participants any glory and which enhanced no reputations.

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[91]Schnackenburg, p. 345.

Chapter III

The Fossilization of the Army, 1778-86

The War of the Bavarian Succession was caused in the main by a rather clumsy attempt by Austria to balance her loss of Silesia to Prussia through seizing Lower Bavaria.[1] The end result of Austrian maneuvering was that Frederick, in the name of the "balance of power," intervened to prevent this Habsburg power-play.

At first the Prussian monarch attempted to dissuade Austria through direct negotiations and only when

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[1] A satisfactory and refreshingly brief, account of the origins and overall nature of this war can be found in Leo Gershoy, From Despotism to Revolution, 1763-1789 (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), pp. 181-184. A more modern discussion of the campaigns of this war will be found in Christopher Duffy, The Army of Frederick The Great (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1974), pp. 204-5.

these proved fruitless did he concentrate Prussian forces in Silesia. In reply the Austrians massed forces in Bohemia thus provoking a field confrontation. True to his habit of personally leading his field forces, Frederick then joined his men in Silesia.[2]

In July, 1778, the Prussians, joined by Saxon units, (due to Saxony's adhesion to the cause of blocking Habsburg designs of further expansion into Germany), crossed into Bohemia. The main Austrian forces offered only token resistance before retiring to strong positions along the upper Elbe River. Frederick went into equally strong positions facing them and awaited attack. However, the Austrians, led by the young son of Maria Theresa, the co-Emperor Joseph II, were also defense-minded.[3]

Neither side was really eager for active operations. The Austrians were inhibited by a not-unjustified

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[2]Frederick personally commanded the force of 87,000 stationed in Silesia which was to strike directly for the Danube by way of Moravia. A second force of 85,000 under Prince Henry was concentrated to the west and was to advance up the Elbe into Bohemia. Duffy, p. 204.

[3]The core of the Austrian position was the rebuilt fortress of Königgrätz on the right and the line of the Elbe River, where every crossing was protected by a triple redoubt. Abatis on the ridges and swarms of Croats throughout the countryside also contributed to the position's impregnability.

fear of a Russo-Turkish attack in their rear,[4] and by a growing estrangement from their nominal allies, the French.[5] (Another factor was the reluctance of the aged Maria Theresa to engage in yet another full-fledged confrontation with Frederick.)[6]

In turn Frederick was equally unenthusiastic and was content to take up a position of watchful waiting while all the time conducting secret negotiations. Action was thus placed at a discount and any unit activity was largely the result of local initiative. Only Frederick's brother, Prince Henry, distinguished himself by an offensive posture.[7]

It was probably fortunate that the Prussian forces were not fully committed to serious military operations for it was early on made glaringly clear that the whole machine possessed grave defects and inefficiences.

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[4]Catherine the Great had openly deployed a considerable Russian army along her frontier with Austria. Gershoy, p. 183.

[5]Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister, openly viewed Austria's Bavarian policy as an attempt to renew the old Habsburg ring around France and regarded Frederick and Prussia as a brake on Austrian ambitions. G. Grosjean, La politique rhenane de Vergennes (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1927), p. 148.

[6]After all, she had lost the preceding two.

[7]The Prince succeeded in forcing the Lusatian Passes with little loss and attempted to quickly turn the Elbe Line. In this effort he was frustrated by the fact that he soon ran out of supplies and no more were promptly forthcoming. Duffy, p. 204.

These deficiencies might have proven fatal had Prussia faced a truly determined and well-led enemy rather than the ramshackle forces of Austria.

In the first place, despite the fact that Austria was largely unsupported and Saxony's adhesion secured Prussian rear areas and lines of supply, the quartermaster corps proved utterly unable to perform its task. By early autumn the food situation in both the Saxon and the Prussian armies was alarming and that of the Austrian forces was no better. Dreams of military glory had "materialized into the tragic comedy of the derided Kartoffelnkrieg. . . ."[8] (This latter term, meaning "Potato War," derived from the scene in late autumn of 1778 when the two hungry forces "made a major contribution to military annals by digging up . . . potatoes to stay alive.")[9]

In the second place the main force units of the Prussian infantry were given little opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness in armed confrontation. The bulk of their time was spent in either marching or in idleness, on increasingly short rations, their strength grad-

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[8]Gershoy, p. 183.

[9]Ibid.

ually eroding through constant non-battle casualties.[10] Never, in the dispatches or the countless reports concerning these units and their conduct, is there mention of a confrontation in the open against a comparable foe. The role of Frederick's beloved line-troops was that of a group of useless and expensive extras waiting to enact scenes already written out of the military drama in which they had been called to perform.[11]

A third factor was the generally unimpressive performance of the Prussian light units, especially the cavalry. Frederick had determined that the hussars would be positioned with the main line as "battle cavalry," and raiding, reconaissance and patrolling would be done only when "nothing more important in the way of military tasks is required."[12]

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[10] Bayerische Erbfolgekrieg 1778-1781, Repositum 63 85a, Folio IV, Document 84 Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. This document is a report to the General Staff on the condition of one regiment of the line. The author, Colonel von Borck, cites the condition of this unit, the Wegeneroffen Regiment, as "all too typical of the state of affairs here." The regiment was at full establishment of 1800 men on 1 June 1778. By 1 September 1778, although in combat for less than three months (and then barely in any field actions at all), the strength of the Wegeneroffen stood at 66 officers and NCOs, 18 drummers, and 628 men. Of the 1088 men lost only 27 had fallen in combat! (Herein cited as B.E.)

[11] Ibid.

[12] Frederick II, "Instruction für die Inspecteurs der Cavallerie," Oeuvres, XXX. See also B.E. 63 85a, Folio II, Doc. 16.

As the conflict wore on (an apt term!), Frederick publicly complained about the "sluggishness" of the hussars and seems to have blamed their lack of initiative for the small reverse suffered by the Prussians in this lacklustre war: the raiding battle at Halberschwerdt.

In this fight Croatian light infantry units, supported by Austrian and Hungarian hussars and some mobile artillery, surprised part of a Prussian line regiment and dispersed it. In the fighting the raiders captured some two hundred prisoners and escaped with very little loss. Prussian pursuit was late and ineffective.[13]

This piddling skirmish would have been dismissed as a trifling affair in a more active and dramatic conflict. However, coming as it did during a war primarily distin-

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[13] B.E., Rep. 63 85a, Folio IV, Doc. 67. This report by General Möllendorf laments this action as not untypical of the sluggishness of all Prussian mounted units. Nor was this all: In another report (B.E., 63 85a, Folio IV, Doc. 21) Möllendorf acknowledged a report from von Borck concerning the routing of a detachment of the Seventh Cuirassier Regiment by the enemy. This unit, led by Lieutenant von Hagen, was surprised by Croatian snipers and Hungarian light cavalry while apparently foraging dismounted in a potato field:

> "Upon coming under fire and confronted by charging Hungarian hussars, the detachment fled, several men abandoning their mounts and hiding in the underbrush!!"

Casualties to personnel are not listed, but von Borck stated that six horses were lost. Möllendorf appended the word "Shocking" (Unerhört) to the report.

guished for its sluggish inactivity, it created a stir out of all proportion to its military importance. Frederick was disposed to be annoyed with the incident and to make his annoyance known throughout the command structure.[14]

The end result of all of this was that the hussars and other mounted units showed a slight increase in initiative and aggressiveness: On February 19, 1779, a detachment of horsemen from the Ferdinand von Inn Regiment (which had been largely destroyed at Kunersdorf but was reactivated in time for the "Potato War"),[15] was in action against "mounted marauders" (berittene Plünderer) near the village of Chostitz. In this brush the men of the Inn Regiment lost two killed and three wounded but killed seventeen of the enemy and captured four plus a number of good mounts ("Pferde in guter Verfassung") and occupied the village.[16]

Scouting became more aggressive . . . and productive: On 15 February, 1789, a detachment of twenty-three hussars under Captain von Bonin surprised and captured an Austrian redoubt full of forage and fodder. Thirty Austrian infantry and a dozen Croat riflemen were killed or taken for a Prussian loss of two hussars wounded.[17] The

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[14] B.E., 63 85a, Folio IV, Doc. 69.

[15] Militaria Varia 1750-1790, Repositum 63 84, Folio II. (Herein cited as M.V.) Zentrales Staatsarchiv.

[16] B.E., 63 85a, Folio IV, Doc. 108. [17] Ibid.

report of this action concluded by observing that the forage and fodder were welcomed as additional rations for nearby cavalry units, which were desperately short of even basic rations for their mounts.[18] Möllendorf annotated the dispatch by stating that the supply situation was breaking down, especially in the more rugged areas, where the heavy vehicles and wretched roads had also the added danger of marauders ("from both sides," a revealing commentary on the disciplinary situation perhaps?).[19]

The lack of a viable force of light infantry also soon made itself felt. Frederick tacitly admitted this when he made haste to raise a dozen detachments, particularly from the Saxon militia units arriving as reinforcements late in 1778.[20] This turning to ad hoc units was most unsatisfactory: the majority of them were neither properly organized or equipped even by the end of the war. However, the few fully-trained-and-equipped units that did get into action, under the command of Prince Henry, were quite effective and held their own in skirmishes and fire-fights

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Landmilitz Sachsen, 1757-1783, Repositum 63 85, Folio IV, Doc. 88, Zentrales Staatsarchiv. Admittedly, on paper the Saxon militia force was impressive, mustering some 79,506 officers and men, mostly infantry, (Herein cited as L.S.)

with the Croats and Hungarians of the Austrian forces.[21]

However, apart from a few exceptional units, the general state of Prussia's forces was deplorable. Shortage of supply and discouragement of initiatives on the part of senior commanders had a deleterious effect upon the morale of their juniors and of the rank and file. A general order of Frederick's, dated 23 January, 1779, deplored the general slackness of the "march discipline" on the part of the vast majority of units, even down to company and platoon level.[22] But beyond deploring this state of affairs, there was little the King could do except to express the hope that improvements would soon be undertaken.[23]

The militia regiments were in even worse shape than were the regular units. They suffered greatly from disease, cold, and desertion and almost none of them were at full strength even from the first.[24] In his letters to his generals, Frederick expressed grave reservations about

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[21] Ibid., Doc. 91.

[22] L.S., 63 85a, Folio IV, Doc. 69.

[23] Ibid.

[24] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 71. This document also lays down the "ideal strength" of a militia unit as follows: One Colonel or Major, 10 Captains, 20 Subaltern Officers, 135 NCOs (including 12-15 Sergeants), 1500 other ranks, 30 drummers and three staff officers.

the performance of these units if they were ever committed to serious action.[25]

In addition to the difficulties of physically getting supplies to the army there was an economic factor: it cost more to supply Prussia's forces than before. A note to General Schmettau from the Transport Department observed that it cost 607.83 Marks for transportation to a regiment in 1779 as against 506.56 M in the war of 1756-63.[26]

Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of the Prussian establishment in Bohemia was made up of militia units, although not as large as in the crisis year of 1758. The latter year had seen Prussia confronting circumstances considerably more demanding then those of 1778. At any rate, the number of militia serving with the active forces during the Erbfolgekrieg numbered 50,872, and included considerable numbers of Saxon militiamen as well as Prussian.[27]

Thus the very numbers of militiamen meant that the condition in which they reported for service was of some im-

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[25] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 71. Frederick wished these units to be under the personal control of a selected representative of his and considered that the most effective and reliable role for militia units would be in guarding supply depôts in cooperation with light units.

[26] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 73.

[27] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 88.

portance to the army. Wedell, in a scathing report written in 1779 (but not apparently passed on to higher authority until 1782) describes a regiment of "Land Militz," which had arrived at Magdeburg, as being in a state bordering on chaos, without proper arms or accoutrements, "keine uniformen, wenigste beschlagen."[28] Not only was the unit in parlous condition materially but an ad hoc force of officers had to be hurriedly raised to command the troops, as the regiment had come in with only two captains and five sergeants on the muster rolls to command 1250 men![29] Not only had Frederick's commissariat fallen on hard days, but the cadre of available officers and non-commissioned officers was evidently highly inadequate, at least so far as militia units were concerned.

The supply situation continued to deteriorate and forced the King to devote more time to this area, which he described as "in desperate shape."[30] A reflection of this "desperate shape" can be seen in an order from Gronow dated 28 February, 1779, ordering the Militia Department to detach a force of fifteen militia companies, comprising a to-

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[28] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 91. Wedell himself personally went to Magdeburg to question some of the personnel of this unit.

[29] Ibid.

[30] M.V., 63 84, Folio II, Doc. 18.

tal of 18 senior officers, 45 non-commissioned officers, 120 corporals and 1575 men, for supply and transport work. These units were to be attached to extant columns "für Arbeit und Schützen," the latter obviously a reflection of continued danger from irregulars and bandits.[31]

The documents and incidents together sum up a general situation of chaotic confusion in Prussian military administration. Obviously, as Frederick aged, he was no longer able to keep as tight a personal control over his military machine as he had in the earlier campaigns of his career. And the young paladins who had served him so well in the Seven Years War also proved their mortality by aging as fast as he. And the system also began to reflect this by fossilizing and, in the rear areas at least, going out of synchronization. Frederick belatedly recognized this fact.

Following the Treaty of Teschen (13 May, 1779), which ended the War of the Bavarian Succession to nearly everyone's satisfaction, the King turned his energies to army reform. Even his great stubbornness was forced to concede that certain of his policies and practices had contributed to the inefficiency of Prussia's performance during the war. Changes simply had to be made.

The most glaring deficiency lay in the area of the

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[31] L.S., Folio IV, Doc. 139.

light troops. The obvious need for effective light units, both foot and horse, added to the prodigious costs incurred during the attempts to raise and equip ad hoc units overnight, convinced the old monarch that his disbanding of the Freikorps in 1763 had been a great mistake.[32]

In early 1783 Frederick issued a series of command instructions for the handling of light troops and in 1786, the last year of his life, provided funds for organizing three light infantry regiments. At the time of his death, in August, 1786, cadres of these proposed units had been formed.[33] By this time also the strength of the Jägers had been increased to about 1250 men.[34]

Unfortunately, in the area of fundamental tactical and strategic ideas as to the use of these units, Frederick remained outside the changing concepts of his day. He still viewed the light infantry as a sort of open-order assault wave, which could substitute as a cheaper cannon-fodder for his beloved, and much more expensive, line regiments.[35] Contemptuous of the new tactical lessons developed by the

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[32]See Paret, p. 34.

[33]Ibid.

[34]D. Rentzell, Geschichte des Garde-Jäger-Bataillons, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1894), p. 15.

[35]Frederick II, Oeuvres, VI, pp. 96-97.

Americans and English in the War of the American Revolution, a struggle contemporary with the "Potato War," the King of Prussia persisted in regarding his light foot as a combination flank guard and cheap assault unit.[36]

The Prussian ruler's very human desire to have the best of both worlds also affected the development of the hussars. His desire that the light cavalry perform the dual roles of a raid-and-reconaissance force while also serving as a reserve battle-shock cavalry inhibited efficient performance of either duty. The main reason for this was that Frederick's ambivalent concept communicated itself to the leadership of these units and clouded their views as to their proper purpose and tactics. In consequence, the effectiveness of the hussars depended upon their being given clear and unambiguous tasks at the outset, a condition not often obtained in skirmishing or raiding. When left alone to carry out raids on the dispersion-principle, or pursue an aggressive reconaissance, they were quite effective. However, when they were concentrated with the main-line forces to augment the latter's weight and firepower, their usefulness was enormously diminished. Thus the Prussian light cavalry might be truly regarded as an establishment

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[36]Paret, p. 43.

afflicted with military schizophrenia![37]

There was little or no change in the fundamental usage of the more orthodox units: the heavy cavalry or main-line infantry. After all, Frederick believed, the system they represented had shown its effectiveness by emerging triumphant over the massed Powers of Europe in 1763.

To reinforce this assurance Frederick had only to look about him: Everywhere in Europe the heavy cavalry and line infantry of the Great (and the lesser) Powers was modelled upon the lines of the Prussian Army. His drill manual constituted the Bible for the drillmasters of the Continent. The development of modern light troops had barely begun, was still peripheral. The cloud such troops made on the military horizon seemed no bigger than a man's hand. The horizon, indeed the whole military firmament, was ablaze with the sunlit reputation of the Great Frederick, the Alexander of his age.

Like the Greek-Macedonian phalanx of the Hellenistic Age, the Frederician linear regiment, with its exquisitely complex drills, its iron-rigid discipline, its resolute, unflinching bravery and ordered, devastating firepower, seemed the <u>non plus ultra</u> of the military art. Leuthen was

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[37]At Jena in 1806 they were lumped together with the main forces of the army and thus rendered practically useless.

the Marathon of the Frederician Army, Rossbach its Gaugamela.

But, alas for all human hopes for permanence, everything changes. After summer comes autumn, after autumn winter. For Marathon and Gaugamela were followed by Pydna and Beneventum. The Alexandrian phalanx became fossilized, top-heavy, a hopeless anachronism, helpless before the new-style legionary tactics of the Roman legions.

The challenges of continuing military, social and economic development were not met by Frederick, for he died at the summit of his glory and reputation. The problem of developing a flexible and viable socio-economic-military entity capable of surviving new and revolutionary changes was the chief legacy the great king left to his successors to deal with, or not to deal with, as they would. Much of the future well-being, indeed the survival, of the Prussian state now fell into the hands of Frederick William II and his court.

Chapter IV

The Prussian Army Under Frederick William II

Frederick II was succeeded by his forty-one-year-old nephew, now styled Frederick William II. He was the son of Frederick's brother, Prince Augustus William (1722-1758). Augustus William had been considered "Heir Apparent" when it became clear that Frederick the Great would produce no issue. However he died at the early age of thirty-six, a short time after his brother had dismissed him from the army for ineptitude in battle.[1] Frederick William then assumed the position of heir, but it is not unrea-

[1]Frederick II may have used his unfortunate sibling as a scapegoat but the latter's incompetence may have had a pathological basis: a post-mortem performed on the Prince revealed a brain tumor "the size of a walnut." Mitford, Frederick the Great, pp. 167-9, 219.

sonable to suppose that he could hardly have felt much affection for his uncle.

In nearly every way the new monarch was the antithesis of his austere and ruthless predecessor: Frederick II had been noted, and feared, quite as much for his thrusting wit as for his invincible battalions. Frederick William II, on the other hand, was courteous and genial and possessed a friendly and gregarious personality. An accomplished musician, he was also very interested in the theatre.[2] The arts flourished under his rule--even if other Prussian institutions were neglected.

Even in his appearance Frederick William was the opposite of his uncle. Taller by far than his predecessor, of imposing girth, he was to become quite fat by the end of his reign. As a young man he was notably handsome and was referred to as a "Blond Giant."[3]

The new monarch also possessed an unusually active sexual appetite, which he indulged from an early age. By the time he was twenty, Frederick William had acquired a retinue of mistresses, and he continued, even after his coronation, to devote a great part of his energies to sexual

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[2]The new ruler was especially skilled at playing the violin-cello.

[3]Dr. Karl E. Vehse, Memoirs of the Court of Prussia, trans. Franz C. F. Demmler (London: John Lane Co., 1854), p. 315.

escapades; energies far better devoted to ruling his nation.[4]

Frederick II had not been blind to his nephew's attraction to women, although unable to share it himself, and arranged for the young man to marry. The mate chosen for Frederick William was his cousin, Elizabeth of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Frederick apparently hoped that marriage would moderate ardor, a hope that was, as is usually the case, not realized.

Elizabeth was a young woman of great beauty. Unfortunately for the old King's purpose she was also headstrong and obstinate. From the beginning she absolutely refused to countenance her husband's liaisons and, following the birth of a daughter (who was later to become Duchess of York), embarked upon a series of infidelities herself.[5] After four tumultuous years of martial strife and mutual adultery a divorce was arranged.[6]

Frederick William then married Frederica of Hesse-Darmstadt and by her sired seven children, including the

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[4] Ibid.

[5] After her divorce Elizabeth was granted a pension but was, in effect, exiled to a large house near Küstrin where she was ordered to spend the rest of her life. Later she must have been allowed to leave (or escaped), for she died in Stettin in 1840 at the ripe old age of ninety-four. Nelson, The Soldier Kings (New York: n.p., n.d.), p. 217f.

[6] Ibid.

future Frederick William III. This marriage remained intact, although the husband continued his extra-marital pursuits, some of which were to have consequences for Prussia's future.[7]

As can be observed, Frederick William II's lifestyle was determined prior to his mounting the Prussian throne. In a sense he was truly a "family man," indeed, he was one with a vengeance. His siring of numerous bastard offspring, in addition to the seven legitimate ones born to Frederica truly earned him that accolade. It has been observed of the young monarch that "he really had time for nothing but filling the cradles and rocking them."[8]

But none of these things were necessarily unwelcome to the Prussians. After the austerities and unending parsimony of Frederick II, increasingly a remote figure to his subjects, the accession of a young, handsome, undeniably vigorous ruler caused a burst of optimism. To those Prussians too young to remember the days of strife and victory Frederick William seemed to promise relief from the strictures of the old regime.[9]

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[7]The second wife undoubtedly viewed her spouse's infidelities as occasions of welcome relief for herself.

[8]Mitford, p. 261.

[9]Otto Hintze, Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk (Berlin: Staats Verlag, 1915), p. 409.

Prussian liberals, military and civilian, expected the new monarch to quickly bring to bear the more humanitarian notions of the Enlightenment upon Prussian institutions. The younger officers especially looked forward to sweeping changes within the military structure.[10]

And the young King did at first achieve considerable popularity with his people. He abandoned the more rigorous austerities of his uncle. Specifically, he abolished Frederick's hated régie[11] and the state monopolies on coffee and tobacco.[12] A simple and unaffected man, Frederick William gradually abandoned his predecessor's tactless habit of addressing his subordinates in the third person, as "he," a practice which had caused bitter resentment among the more sensitive Prussian officials.[13]

True to Prussian custom[14] the King began his reign

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[10] Ibid.

[11] The régie was the collection of indirect taxes by independent revenue contractors, often French, who were also awarded bonuses for any tax increases they might initiate. Needless to say, the institution and its practitioners were unpopular with the Prussian commoners. See Preussens Staatsarchiv, Vols. 29 and 30 and also Dorn, "Prussian Bureaucracy in . . .", pp. 400-411.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Nelson, p. 215.

[14] Max Jähns, Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaft vornehmlich in Deutschland (Munich: Auflage 3, 1891), Vol. III, p. 2245. See also Reinhard Höhn, Verfassungskampf und Heereseid (Munich: n.p., 1891), pp. 3-8.

with an investigation of the Prussian Army. This was done more in accord with what the King was expected to do rather than what he wanted to do. For the new monarch's interest in things military was at best casual.[15] Lazy, sensual, uninterested in details, Frederick William also lacked the forcefulness, the ". . . sheer nastiness"[16] to carry out a thoroughgoing transformation of the defense establishment of the kingdom.

But some changes were initiated as a result of this investigation.

Frederick William II, as a true child of the Enlightenment, had never relished the more outrageous types of discipline that flourished in the Prussian Army under Frederick. He also felt that the rank-and-file should be perhaps better educated and had urged improvements in this area upon his uncle, only to be rebuffed.[17]

Now, under the new regime, an official policy aimed at the suppression of cruelty was adopted. At the same time recruiting frauds were also discouraged.[18] Increased

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Paret, Yorck and the Era. . . , p. 55.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Horst Behrend, Der Vielgeliebte: Friedrich Wilhelm II (Berlin: n.p., 1937), p. 111.

interest in improving the education of the rank-and-file and their families was backed up by additional expenditures provided for in the budgeting of the army.[19]

Frederick William also encouraged improved care of former soldiers and founded a series of invalid companies and asylums. In addition, pension funds were established in a genuine effort to provide the troops with some measure of security.[20] A more humane and understanding policy was thus encouraged for the purpose of improving morale. This it probably did, although in itself did not necessarily improve the expertise of the Army. Certainly the policy had the effect of encouraging some changes that truly marked a departure, to some extent at least, from the strict military regimentation of the Frederician days.[21]

In the first year of Frederick William II's reign two innovative steps were undertaken that were designed to improve the tactics of the Prussian infantry:

In the spring of 1787 ten sharpshooters (Schützen)

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[19]Shanahan, Prussian Military Reforms. . . , p. 70.

[20]See orders and regulations printed in E. Frauenholtz, Das Heerwesen in der Zeit des Absolutismus, Vol. IV of the Entwicklungsgeschichte des Deutschen Heerwesens (Munich, 1940), pp. 298-308.

[21]Jany, Preussische Armee, Vol. III, p. 160.

were added to each line company. Their tasks were to fight forward of the main company position, either to spearhead an advance or cover a retreat.[22] Frederick II had considered adopting this idea for several years before his death but had not put it into effect.[23]

In the new arrangement Schützen were to be accorded considerable status within their units. As special, picked men, they were given special designation, distinctive uniform markings and were treated with more consideration by the Non-Commissioned officers than were the ordinary soldiers.[24] Their weaponry even more underlined their uniqueness. They were equipped with the Schützengewehr M. 1787. This weapon was a sort of compromise piece, reluctantly approved by the Prussian High Command. It was more accurate than the standard Prussian infantry musket but less so than a real rifle.[25]

In addition to these special distinctions, the

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[22] Ibid., p. 163.

[23] Frederick II, Oeuvres Militaires de Federic II, Roi de Prusse, Vols. XXIX-XXX (Berlin, 1857), for the King's thoughts on the subject.

[24] C. Kling, Geschichte der Bekleidung, Bewaffnung, und Ausrüstung der Königlich Preussischen Heeres, Vol. I (Weimar, 1902-13), p. 157.

[25] Eckardt and Marawietz, Die Handwaffen des . . . , p. 82.

Schützen were the subject of special regulations issued in February, 1789, which took great pains to instruct infantry officers in their use.[26] Particular emphasis was placed upon close relations between men and officers in order to encourage efficiency, flexibility and an improved morale.[27]

Generally speaking the Schützen were useful and effective addition to the Prussian infantry. There were highly motivated troops, realistically and skillfully trained in marksmanship and open-order fighting, in skirmishing and patrolling. They enjoyed a closer and more easy relationship with their superiors that augmented their flexibility and initiative and correctly came to regard themselves as an elite.[28]

Unfortunately for long-term developments in the Prussian military, the Schützen were a far cry from a total answer to the need for a viable and effective light infantry force capable of dealing with major challenges from other military establishments. The very paucity of their numbers mitigated against their total effectiveness--in Prussian infantry battalions averaging 700 men thirty or

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[26] Instruction für sämtliche Infanterie-Regimenter und Fusilier-Bataillone. Exercieren der Schutzen Betreffend. (Berlin, 1789).

[27] Ibid.

[28] See above page 93.

forty Schützen,[29] no matter how well-trained or filled with élan, were a mere drop in the bucket. In the sustained confrontations between massed infantry formations relying upon the sheer weight of firepower, a few score aimed rounds on any given front could do little more than add a few more casualties to the enemy mass.[30] That is, they would serve the role of inflicting gnat-bites on a bear--painful, to be sure, but seldom fatal in themselves.

Again, the very lack of numbers of Schützen made it next to impossible for them to maintain a contest of attrition for very long, as inevitable combat losses simply could not be made up as they could among the rankers in the line. Their very skill and high degree of training made the Schützen both rare and almost irreplacable in combat.[31]

In other words, the Schützen were useful in enhancing the initial punch of a Prussian infantry unit but had little effect, in increasing its capacity to endure. Ironically, their very eliteness inhibited their effectiveness!

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[29]This is admittedly a rough estimate, based on an average of four line companies to a battalion, ten Schützen per company.

[30]Though they were encouraged to pick off enemy officers and thus could do proportionately higher damage to opposing formations than merely picking off a few troops.

[31]Jany, III, p. 178.

This fact seems to have been realized, unconsciously at least, very quickly. Early on in their formation the sharpshooter units were relegated to the function of training and replacement pools for promising non-commissioned officers. The regulations for Schützen emphasized that they must have above-average intelligence and good potential for promotion to the non-commissioned officer corps.[32] As if to underline this was an additional specification that no one could be promoted to non-commissioned officer ". . . who has not served already some time as Schütze."[33]

Schützen were routinely assigned tasks of assisting the senior NCOs in more regular company duties when their outfits were in garrison or on guard duty.[34] Increasingly, the Schützen were called Vize-Unteroffizieren and regarded as "coming men" so far as career advancement was concerned. To be assigned to the Schützen became a goal sought by ambitious, though not necessarily skillful, men.[35]

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[32] Reglement für die Königliche Preussische leichte Infanterie (Berlin, 1788), p. 126.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., pp. 6-7, 130-131.

[35] Jany criticizes this state of affairs as did others. Notably, General August Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, Denkwurdigkeiten (Berlin: n.p., 1912), pp. 15-16.

Now if the sharpshooter corps was merely to serve as yet another training-ground for fledgling sergeants and corporals, this development was admirable. But if the purpose of the Schützen was to provide the cadres of special light infantry units, then this new trend contained within it the seeds of disaster. For the change of direction toward individual career improvement led to frequent turnovers in the ranks of the sharpshooters and specialized training was increasingly neglected in favor of more orthodox leadership and command instruction.[36] So far did this development proceed that, by 1790, the original purpose of the corps had been obviated.

More important was the creation, in early 1787, of some twenty Fusilier battalions. These owed their origin to the belated recognition of Frederick II of the need for a permanent light infantry force to enhance the effectiveness and security of the Prussian Army.

The less-than-glorious performance of the majority of the light units during the "Potato War" forced the old King to draft instructions in 1783 for their proper usage.[37] But Frederick's reluctance to grasp this problem can perhaps be indicated by the fact that it was not for another three years, indeed on the eve of his death, that money was allotted for the formation of three regiments of light infantry to be

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[36] Ibid. [37] See Chapter II, pp. 22-24.

maintained on permanent establishment.[38]

These new units, called Freiregimenter in memory of their predecessors,[39] were scarcely more than cadres when Frederick William II ascended the throne. Within a few months, acting upon the advice of some of his younger officers, the new King ordered the units broken up, augmented by soldiers from the line units, and reorganized upon battalion models.[40]

Personnel for these new units were drawn from older units as much as possible, but there were just simply not enough of these available from regular units to compose twenty or more viable battalions without affecting the efficiency of the line companies and regiments. Militia units were combed for such suitable material as they might provide and foreigners were integrated into these formations, particularly men who had had previous experience in light or irregular regiments abroad.[41]

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[38]Jany, III, pp. 112, 127-128. Frederick the Great composed some tentative instructions for the use of these troops. See "Instruction für die Frei-Regimenter," 5 December, 1793, Oeuvres, XXX, pp. 399-401.

[39]See Chapter II, pp. 66-71.

[40]They were designated "Fusilier Units" and the term "fusilier" came to apply to all light infantry in the Prussian Army.

[41]Reglement für die Königliche. . . . , pp. 457-458.

To command the Freiregimenter officers were detached from the line, especially those who had seen service in foreign climes and younger men whose patents of nobility were less well established or non-existent.[42] (It seems hardly necessary to say that an officer's social position with his peers was scarcely enhanced by being posted to a Fusilier unit.)[43]

The elsewhere-rigidly-enforced rule of noble status as a prerequisite for commissioning was not strictly observed for Fusilier officers. Frederick William went so far as to specify the procedures by which a bourgeois officer was to be accepted into these units.[44] Even more, the King's Regulations (Reglement) of 1788 approved the proposing of "outstanding" sergeants for commissions in the light in-

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[42] Ibid.

[43] For instance, in 1796, of 61 officers in one Fusilier brigade, one quarter were untitled, while among the 233 officers of associated line battalions not one was untitled.

[44] Frederick William's cabinet instructions, printed in Jany, III, p. 419, are worth reproducing here:

> The posting of officer-cadets other than those of undoubted noble birth to line-regiments as well as to Fusilier battalions is forbidden, and if an exception should be made in the case of the latter--that is, the Fusilier battalions--and an officer-cadet of bourgeois descent is accepted, this should not occur until the explicit permission of His Majesty has been granted in each particular instance.

fantry.[45]

The result was a steady influx of officers (of bourgeois origin) into the Fusiliers. By the end of Frederick William II's reign, the Second Magdeburg Fusilier Brigade, for instance, had 16 untitled (bourgeois) officers out of a total of 61.[46] This ratio of 1 to 4 was reflected in other light infantry units as is indicated in the Army Lists through 1806.[47] In contrast, line units of the same strength and located in the same districts had not a single untitled officer.[48]

One perhaps beneficial result of the lower prestige of the Fusilier battalions was that they possessed simpler tables of organization and equipment (TO&E). This may have been due to less meddling from above due to less interest from above. In any case their equipment and establishment was simpler and more efficient than that of the ponderous line battalions.[49] And their physical appearance was also striking:

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[45] Reglement für die Königliche. . . . , p. 459.

[46] Rangliste der Königlich Preussischen Armee für das Jahr 1796 (Berlin, 1796)(Xerox Copy).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Reglement für die Königliche. . . . , p. 184.

> They were clothed in green, resembling the dress of the Jäger, from whom they also took over the hunting horn for signaling. The men were armed with the Fusiliergewehr, a lighter and more carefully manufactured version of the standard infantry musket; as in the line infantry, ten men of each company carried rifles.[50]

If the Fusiliers were to operate effectively against that old nemesis of Frederician armies, the light-armed, semi-irregular formation operating in forested and/or hilly terrain, training and discipline had to be quite different in many respects from that of orthodox units. Emphasis was placed on flexibility, individual marksmanship, self-reliance and ability to live off the country to an extent not encouraged among the line troops.[51] Discipline was much less heavy-handed and corporal punishment was used only as a last resort.[52] Standard army discipline could hardly be imposed upon units that were specifically created to deal with situations not covered in the standard army training.[53]

Latitude was to be given the Fusiliers so that they could fulfill their main role--adding flexibility to the rigid Prussian line. The instructions issued to these troops differed to a considerable extent in two areas from those given the line formations: 1. Specific provision was made for open-order warfare and; 2. battalion formations were in two not three ranks.[54]

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[50] Ibid., p. 3. [51] Ibid., p. 186.
[52] Ibid. [53] Ibid. [54] Ibid.

Two-rank formations were something of an innovation in that period of warfare, when the number of ranks determined to a considerable degree the manner of infantry tactics:

> The volleys of three ranks were not so effective as those of two, because of the difficulties in firing experienced by the third rank. Three ranks, however, possessed greater impetus in the advance; and, in general, the third rank added solidity to the formation. Two ranks, on the other hand, were easier to keep aligned in difficult terrain, offered a less vulnerable target, and could deploy into extended order more rapidly.[55]

The field regulations concerning fighting in open order were also quite a deviation from standard texts and practice. For the first time fighting in skirmish-line formation is dealt with in a specific manner by Prussian Army authorities:

> If in the advance the battalion is to make a skirmish attack, the battalion bugler gives the proper signal, which is immediately repeated by the buglers of the first and eighth sections.
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> As soon as this has been given, the first and the eighth sections--unless ordered otherwise--run forward fifty paces and spread out. In this connection it must be noted that though the skirmishers are not expected to keep such alignment as men marching in the ranks, they should nevertheless maintain an approximate direction; therefore the skirmishers must never separate too far from each other, and no one more than at most four or five paces from his neighbor. This should be particularly observed in attacking a forest, when everyone must at all times see his neighbors and remain aligned with them.
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> As soon as the attacking screens (sections) have

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[55]Paret, pp. 57-8.

> moved out, they continued their advance at a good pace, and the supporting sections follow in close order.
>
> If firing is to begin, the signal is given and the skirmishers open fire at will, all the time continuing their advance, never losing sight of their neighbors, and always retaining their alignment. Individual firing goes on in this manner until the signal is given to stop, after which no one--on punishment of whipping--may fire another shot.[56]

These instructions were departures from the standard Prussian Army tactics in some considerable measure. But they were far from revolutionary breaks with tradition. The old Teutonic, or at least Prussian, obsession with order, in this case a sort of "formalized informality," militated from the beginning against the Fusilier units becoming true light infantry on the order of the Croats of the Habsburg armies or the Tirailleurs of Revolutionary France.[57] The temptation to control all military elements to the greatest possible extent proved too much for the Prussian leadership.

Nowhere is the indication that this temptation was too strong to be resisted seen more clearly than in the instructions to the Fusiliers in how to conduct a proper withdrawal in the face of an advancing enemy. In conducting this operation, always among the most risky and difficult of all military operations, and one calling for utmost initiative, flexibility, and on-the-spot intelligence, an at-

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[56] Reglement für die Königlich. . . . , pp. 44-7.

[57] See Chapter Five.

tempt is made to provide a formal guideline.

A skirmish line was called for to cover the withdrawal. It was to consist of one quarter of the total force. Skirmishers were to maintain fire, upon order, and no individual skirmisher was to fire more rapidly or slowly than his neighbors. Only in extreme cases, and upon direct order from his superiors, was the Fusilier to indulge in individual marksmanship.[58] That such a radical departure from tradition as individual firing should even be mentioned is sufficient novelty!

These field instructions of Frederick William have been dismissed as "wretched and pedantic"[59] and described by some authorities as mere examples of the further extension of the old Frederician formalism.[60] There is truth in these criticisms, a considerable amount of truth. However, to be fair to the men and their times, it was not easy to abandon the tried and true methods of the Great Frederick. The old system still bound the leaders of the Army, by example, by habit and, not least, by affection. The instructions reflect a divided loyality, both to the past and to an in-

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[58] Parkinson, p. 35.

[59] M. Jähns, Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften vornehmlich in Deutschland (Munich: Auflage 3, 1891), Vol. III, pp. 2541-2.

[60] E. von Höpfner, Der Krieg von 1806 und 1807 (Berlin: n.p., 1855), Vol. I, pp. 53-6.

creasingly uncertain future.

Nowhere is this division of loyalty more evident than in the tortured wording of the new regulations "which alternates between baroque convolutions and an exactness of expression almost approaching classic lucidity."[61] Nowhere is the dilemma of the conservative military mind more clearly revealed than in these field manuals, written on the eve of a conflagration that was to largely consume the edifice of Frederician militarism and destroy the rickety foundations of eighteenth century warfare.

Having now made provision for light troops, having issued orders for their employment and instructions for their use, the King and his generals now proceeded to back away from their creation with as much dispatch as they approached it. This retreat contributed greatly to the undoing of the new force at a time when it was imperative that it be fully developed.

The timid, hesitant, tone of the new orders, combined with their being positioned in obscure sections of the manuals, conspired to promote a general ignorance of them by the mass of the army leaders. Many who knew of them ignored them as there seems to have been a general tendency to ignore entire portions of all the new instructional manu-

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[61]Paret, p. 59.

als.[62]

But some younger officers attempted to implement at least part of the new instructions. Future military leaders, such as Gneisenau, were able on their own to instruct company-sized units in forming and fighting skirmish lines, perfecting marksmanship, and improving patrolling techniques.[63] But, as is usual in more conservative establishments, of any kind, divergence from accepted practice came about only in the hands of a few able and courageous men, willing to receive at least implied censure from their superiors in order to improve their craft.[64]

The approaching political upheavals, like most important events, cast their shadow before them: Political unrest in Holland, directed against the ineffectual Stadholder, William V, crystallized into an actual revolt. Fearful for his authority, William, in 1787, begged Frederick William to supply him with a small Prussian force to sup-

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[62]Höpfner, p. 56, declares flatly that "riflemen lacked any training in extended order." C. F. Gumtau, Die Jäger und Schützen des Preussischen Heeres (Berlin: n.p., 1834), Vol. I, p. 59, states that each Jäger only got enough powder for nine shots at a target. Gumtau served with the light infantry for more than thirty years before he wrote his monumental work.

[63]E. F. von Fransecky, "Gneisenau," Militär-Wochenblatt, XLI, (1856), pp. 41-2.

[64]Ibid.

press his subjects.[65]

Because it was deemed necessary that quick action be taken before the unrest spread throughout the Low Countries, several light infantry units were dispatched as the vanguard for the expeditionary force.[66] Among these units was the 1st Fusilier Battalion, the oldest of the light infantry units, and the strongest and most experienced.[67]

This force made an impressively speedy march into Holland, although it had to advance through Westphalia and Lower Saxony over bad roads and inclement weather.[68] Despite the hardships of the march, the Prussian soldiers rapidly and successfully completed their mission, advancing upon and occupying Amsterdam against only the slightest resistance and suffering minimal loss.[69] William retained his position and rebellion was suppressed.

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[65] See Chapter Five.

[66] Marsch und Ruckmarsch eines Korps Königlich Preussischer Truppen durch Niedersachsen und Westfalen nach Holland, 1787-88, Repositum 63 86, Folio I, Document 13, Zentrales Staatsarchiv (Merseburg, East Germany.) (Hereinafter cited as M.u.R.)

[67] Ibid., Folio II, Document 3.

[68] Ibid., Folio III, Document 1. See also Günther Gieraths, Die Kampfhandlungen der Brandenburgisch-Preussischen Armee (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1964), pp. 174-5.

[69] M.u.R., Folio III, Document 6. Most losses were the result of the hardships of the rapid march, not of Dutch resistance.

Prussian forces were mobilized in 1788 against Denmark and against Russia a little later. However, the difficulties with these nations were settled and the troops saw no fighting.[70] In Poland some Prussian units operated briefly against local bands of Polish dissidents but with little bloodshed on either side.[71]

In 1790 Josef II of Austria attempted to acquire control of Bavaria by offering its ruler, Karl Theodore, Belgium. There was great opposition to this and tensions led to the mobilization of the main Prussian Army along the Saxon and Bohemian frontiers. But this crisis, which upset all of the other German states as well as Prussia,[72] was resolved when Josef died suddenly. His brother Leopold, was averse to war and the crisis yielded to mediation.[73]

These recurring crises during the period 1787-1791 were in the main resolved without resorting to fighting. But

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[70]But did a great deal of deserting. So much so that Frederick William was forced to issue an edict against this problem and to describe in detail the punishments that would result and the rewards that would accrue to those who apprehended deserters. A copy of the edict can be found in Mobilmachnung, Repositum 63 84 zi, Folio XVI, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, (Merseberg, East Germany.) (Hereinafter cited as Mobil.)

[71]Ibid., Folio V, Documents 17-21. These sources cite Prussian losses, apparently killed and wounded, at less than 100.

[72]Crane Brinton, A Decade of Revolution 1789-99 (New York: Harper & Row, 1934), p. 78.

[73]Ibid.

they did provide some opportunities for the Fusilier corps to experience operations in the field. By 1792, it was called upon to actively serve along the Rhine against the French, the Prussian light infantry was able to campaign with some effectiveness and success.[74]

Following the campaigns in West Germany, the light units also participated in operations against the Poles and consequently were, by 1806, hardened and battle-wise. The light infantry of Prussia was rated as among the best-trained.[75] Possessed of a high morale, satisfactory equipment, and a degree of camaraderie with their officers that bred trust and mutual respect, they were much more prepared for the exigencies of revolutionary war than were the heavy infantry of the line.[76]

Tragically, the Prussian light infantry, though qualitatively admirable, was quantitatively insufficient. There were just not enough of these troops to go around--to meet all requirements, all the needs, of the Prussian Army when it was forced to confront the armies of revolutionary and Napoleonic France. And even these excellent units

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[74]See Chapter Six.

[75]Colmar von der Goltz, Von Rossbach bis Jena (Berlin: Auflage 4, 1906), pp. 192-4.

[76]Gumtau, I, p. 96.

possessed the same inherent weakness in common with the more orthodox Prussian soldiery, they: ". . . had perfected individual training at the expense of cooperation."[77]

Frederick William also made some less important changes and adoptions: He endowed each regiment with a depôt battalion, thus ensuring a more reliable source of reinforcements, both men and material--provided that the depôt units were properly organized and equipped--which was not always the case.[78]

The King took steps to regularize and increase the base pay of his officers, he reformed the staff by pensioning off a number of the oldest incumbents and replacing them with younger men,[79] he created a Chief Engineer to give that corps a proper commander,[80] and he authorized a thoroughgoing reorganization of the medical services.[81] These innovations and reforms were admirable, were justly praised,[82]

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[77]Parkinson, p. 37.

[78]For a view of depôt battalion problems see Mixta in Militaribus, Repositum 63 86A, Folio II, Document 112 concerning the nonfunctioning of the depôt units during the initial campaigns of 1792. (Hereinafter cited as Mixta.)

[79]Christopher Duffy, The Army of Frederick the Great (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1974), p. 208.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., p. 209.

[82]By Scharnhorst and Yorck among others.

but were hardly sufficient in themselves to transform the Prussian Army.

For the remainder of the army was scarcely touched. The old Frederician style remained--even the rigorous discipline, the absurd "Saldern waddle" (the march step designed by General Saldern specifying a precise marching tempo of seventy-five paces a minute "no more, no less"),[83] the obsession with exact movements and appearances. "It is almost unbelievable that a state which owed almost its entire fortune to the excellence of its army could watch with complacence the transformation of the French republican armies into a formidable military machine."[84] But it would seem that such was the case.

There was assuredly very little social change within the main bastions of the Prussian military. Bourgeois officers might find their way into the Fusilier units, the engineers, the medical corps, but there were none to be found among the ranks of the leaders of the high-prestige formations. This situation was most especially pronounced in the Kürassier (Cuirassier) regiments, socially among the most elite of any 18th century army.[85]

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[83]Goltz, p. 336. [84]Shanahan, p. 69.

[85]See Alfred Vagts, Militarism (New York: Meridan Books, Inc., 1959), for a discussion of the privileged social position of the cavalry in traditional military organizations.

Cuirassiers were the cream of the cream--heavy cavalry--big men in steel helmets and cuirasses, armed with sword, pistols, and carbines.[86] As the lineal descendents of the Byzantine Cataphractoi, the medieval knights, the dreaded Spanish heavy cavalry of the 16th century, the main role of the Cuirassiers was to drive the foe from the field through massed charges.[87]

In a sense then, the Cuirassiers were the cutting edge of the military sword, fated in many cases to play the most vital and dramatic part of any of the assembled units. At the same time they were usually removed from such unpleasant, though vital, tasks as storming outposts, clearing snipers from entrenched positions, securing advance routes and covering retreats. They were to await developments and, when the favorable moment had arrived, to spur triumphantly against a demoralized or disordered enemy and cap a glorious victory. If events were less favorable they might be called upon for an equally romantic charge to restore their own faltering fellows and secure victory in this manner.[88]

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[86] B. Foerster, Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen Kürassier Regiments (Breslau: m.p., 1841).

[87] Ibid.

[88] Such as the famous charge of the Heavy Brigade of the British horse to retrieve the situation at Balaclava during the Crimean War.

Prussian Cuirassier regiments were divided into five squadrons of six officers and 162 men each. Each squadron had a dozen carabineers, corresponding to the Schützen attached to the infantry,[89] and each regiment had a reserve squadron, which was unmounted, or six officers and 182 men.[90] The lists of the personnel of these formations, including the names and the titles of all unit officers, have survived and in every list all the officers of all the Cuirassier regiments have the aristocratic von, along with the date of their patents of nobility.[91]

In the line infantry units untitled officers were equally as rare. In 1796, the year prior to Frederick William II's death, line infantry units had 406 titled officers and not a single untitled one.[92] A decade later, on the eve of the Jena debâcle, only three untitled officers were to be found in the line regiments.[93] Middle-class men of military talent and ambition were either relegated to the less presti-

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[89]Ottomar Freiherr von der Osten-Sacken und von Rhein, Preussens Heer von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (Berlin: n.p., 1911-14), Vol. I, pp. 341-6.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Foerster, pp. 343-78.

[92]Rangliste der Königlich Preussischen Armee für das Jahr 1796 (Berlin, 1796).

[93]Rangliste. . . 1806.

gious units, or had gone elsewhere for military employment.[94]

In none of the above is it this writer's intention to imply that a noble patent precluded either military intelligence or technological expertise. But such a multitude of titles does indicate a military establishment based on deeply-entrenched privilege and tradition. Such establishments, then and now, tend to be hidebound, conservative, suspicious of innovations and innovators, in other words, short-sighted. Failure to utilize bourgeois technicians of proven competence was a reflection of this short-sightedness, and the monarch's failure to intervene to alter this situation is indicative of his reluctance to truly involve himself in long-range military tranformations.[95]

After the first year or so of his reign, Frederick William turned away from the uncongenial and demanding role of military reformer. Satisfied with the changes he had initiated, the King applied himself increasingly to the pleasures of boudoir and bordello. To gratify his personal desires (which are described more fully elsewhere),[96] the Prussian ruler allowed much state business to lie neglected and more to pass into the hands of a crowd of unworthy sub-

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[94]Goltz, p. 337.

[95]See Footnote 44.

[96]See pp. 2-4 this chapter.

ordinates who surrounded him.

These subordinates in their turn followed policies that directed Prussia into unreal and counterproductive paths that reflected the indulgent unreality that increasingly became the norm for Frederick William's court. Prussian government was by this time a ramshackle affair, operating in fits and starts, never following a coherent policy and never establishing any real goals.

In the next chapters we shall describe the foreign policy of Frederick William's government, its authors and the consequences of this policy for the military establishment. With this examination will come an appraisal of the military development of Revolutionary France, with whom the policies of the new Prussian regime would force a confrontation.

Ironically, as the presence of Frederick the Great receded from the court of his successor, as his strictures, frugalities, his dispassionate austerity, became memories, his military image grew and grew. His victories shone with the luster of imperfect recollection--his defeats ignored or excused. He became the always-triumphant, always-infallible King of Victory.

Frederick II became a myth--the invincible warrior who had forged a mighty weapon, free from imperfection, and bequeathed it to his people. Change would not be necessary, or desirable, save for some minor adjustments here and there.

Better to leave it alone and all would be well.

This suited Frederick William well, this view of a timeless army inherently perfect: It would be enough that the heavy infantry was still drilled and disciplined to a machine-like perfection. It would be enough that Kürassier and Husaren charged on maneuver with ordered dash and vigor. The officers were still noble, with obtrusive technicians relegated to the less prestigious services. All was as it should be and naught would change it.

Chapter V

The Transformation of the French Army, 1789-92

But events and developments did not everywhere pursue the same languid course as in Frederick Wilhelm's Prussia. To the west beyond the Rhine a great social upheaval was occurring that would affect the military sphere among others and ultimately shake Germany to her very roots. For in France more than a political revolution was under way.

There, under the iron rod of desperate necessity, combined with a pervasive fear of reactionary conspiracy, the new rulers of Revolutionary France directed their energies towards the creation of a unique arm of defense. Like the Soviet Red Army 130 years later, the new French Army was regarded as possessing a dual rôle: defender of the new order on the one hand, and as a major instrument for spreading

that new order outside France. As with its Soviet successor, this new force was to undergo a turbulent and checkered initial career, ultimately emerging as a powerful threat to European stability.

As with the tactical and strategic innovations evolved by the post-1918 Wehrmacht and later Soviet military methodology,[1] the fundamental bases of French Revolutionary warfare were created prior to the initiation of the new regime. Many of these innovations had already undergone at least limited testing and had in consequence demonstrated their effectiveness, at any rate in the hands and under the guidance of experienced military technicians.

The success enjoyed by semi-irregular light units in the Seven Years War and the "Potato War" had encouraged various armies to expand in this area. No military establishment did more in this direction than the British Army.

Allied with Prussia during the Seven Years War, Britain had borne the brunt of the overseas fighting against the French. In America the British military establishment faced a unique and very nearly successful challenge from the

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[1]For a clearer perception of this topic see Hans W. Gatzke, Stresemann and the Rearmament of Germany (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1954), E. H. Carr, German-Soviet Relations Between the Two World Wars (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), G. H. Liddell-Hart, The Red Army (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1956) and Robert M. Kennedy, The German Campaign in Poland (Washington: Department of Army, 1956), pp. 8-39.

French and their ferocious Indian allies. These latter, their cohesion and reliability bolstered by a relatively few French regulars and French Canadian militia, had harassed and on occasion routed British regular forces while on march.[2]

British line units, forced more and more to establish march security, which consequently tied down a disproportionate amount of England's over-all strength, had to devise unorthodox means to counter the Indian threat. It became obvious that the most practical and effective response was to form a counter-force that could sally forth and scatter or defeat the Indian skirmishers through a combination of flexible tactics and superior discipline.[3]

On the spot, the regular regiments formed companies of light infantry from within their own ranks. These units, made up of the most fit and aggressive men of the regiment, soon came to be regarded as elite formations and, after 1770, generally secured a permanent place in their respective formations.[4]

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[2]Fuller, pp. 90-100, discusses the creation and employment of the British light forces in the French and Indian War. He places Braddock's defeat squarely on the fact that Braddock insisted upon trying to fight the Indians with the Frederician formations of rigid line and firepower.

[3]Paret, p. 38.

[4]Ibid.

Significantly, the British light troopers were encouraged to perfect their marksmanship, a skill of vital importance in forest fighting.[5] This was the genesis of the immortal "Ranger" units of British-American Colonial history, armed with the light musket and deservedly famed for their daring exploits in the North American wilderness.[6]

But the French also pursued the development of light soldiery. And it was in France that more studies in their employment were made than anywhere else.[7] This can be attributed to the example and direction of the great and revered Marshal Maurice de Saxe, whose Reveries inspired endless theorizing and implementation by the best minds of the French military machine.[8] (Ironically, Saxe was a German!)

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Yet the example of the Jäger and other Prussian light units was already well-established and these formations had indeed done much in the past. The British seem to have given their lighter units more credit than did the Prussians, however. See S. G. P. Ward, Faithful: The Story of the Durham Light Infantry (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964) and Jac Weller, Wellington in the Peninsula, 1808-14 (London: Nicholas Vane, 1963), for discussions of the development and employment of light, accurate-shooting infantry.

[7] See J. Colin, L'Infanterie au XVIII^e siécle (Paris: Levrault, 1907) and Robert S. Quimby, The Background of Napoleonic Warfare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), for exhaustive discussions of French military thought and development in the period prior to 1800.

[8] Maurice de Saxe (Moritz von Sachsen), Reveries on the Art of War (Harrisonburg: The Stackpole Company, 1953).

The Marshal proposed the implementation of combined units or, as he termed them, lègions. These would consist of light troops dispersed in extended order along the front of the line of the regiment and about 200 yards in advance of it. Their job would be to open accurate and galling fire upon the enemy, all the while advancing upon him. After a time these skirmishers would fall back upon their own advancing regulars but would continue to fire upon the foe to disorder him.[9]

In effect, Saxe was calling for the use of light infantry as skirmishers under discipline, operating as a flexible but still connected part of a military whole. So eloquent and obvious was Saxe's argument that the need for light troops was quickly and widely accepted by the French, especially after their defeat in the Seven Years War.

Partial fruit of Saxe's urgings was the development of the chasseur battalion in the 1790s: A unit that was trained to fight on its own or as an integrated part of a regular regiment. It was so constituted that it could be employed as a skirmish line in toto if the necessity arose.[10]

During the waning years of the Ancien Régime the teachings of Saxe, Guibert and other theorists had the ef-

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[9] Ibid., pp. 34-7.

[10] Paret, p. 41.

fect of amalgamating the different types of foot-soldiers: the regular line infantry, elite light units, and irregulars into a great all-purpose mass. After some years of training and disciplinary vicissitudes the French infantry began to develop into all-round troops who could skirmish, scout, fight in line formation and in column, although the latter requirement was seldom utilized.[11]

Even the French themselves but dimly perceived the long-range consequences of these reforms and innovations: Frederick's tactics and strategy still occupied a hallowed place in the minds and hearts of the nobility who led the armies of Louis XVI. Nevertheless, the foundations of a new and flexible military force had been laid, and when the cataclysm of 1789 erupted, releasing new tides of energy and patriotic fervor, it found a solid military framework upon which to erect the structure of the French Revolutionary armies.[12]

It was during the seemingly militarily indecisive years from Valmy (1792) to the accession of Frederick William II (1797) that the French military arm matured into the

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[11]Colin, p. 275. See also Comte P. G. Duhesme, Essai historique sur l'infanterie légere (Paris: Anselin, 1864), pp. 65-70.

[12]Fuller, pp. 1-25. See also J. Colin, La tactique et la discipline dans les armées de la Revolution (Paris: Levrault, 1902).

flexible and formidable masse de maneouvre that was to carry everything before it for nearly two decades. During this period the events of the political Revolution itself pushed the army into maturity during the years of great peril.

The revolutionary emphasis on flexibility and movement was due in large measure to the departure, nearly en masse, of the bulk of the officer corps that had served the now-fallen kings of France. Horrified by Jacobin excesses, fearing for their own lives, Louis XVI's commanders fled abroad. Behind them they left a military establishment rapidly filling up its ranks with hordes of untrained volunteers and conscripts summoned to the colors by Carnot's levée en masse. Just when the officers were most necessary to the emerging regime's defense mechanism they departed.[13]

This disappearance of traditional leadership, combined with the exigencies caused by the great influx of recruits, forced the French leadership to experiment with wholly or partially new methods.[14] The revolutionary commanders turned to the simultaneous adoption of an army of mass but yet pursuing flexible tactics enabling the utilization of

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[13]Colin, La Tactique et la discipline . . . , pp. 64-69.

[14]Pre-Revolutionary commanders of the French Army had had, in some cases, experience leading light units in America.

the French infantry in whatever formation was determined by circumstances prevailing on the scene. That is, the French revolutionary troops were trained to form skirmish-lines, battle-lines, or thick columns as both terrain and the nature of the enemy dictated. Furthermore, they were taught how to change formation, even under enemy fire, something Frederick's Prussians had seldom, if ever, been able to accomplish.[15]

But the column formed the basic attack formation for the French.[16] This essentially rectangular alignment has often been misunderstood.

> The French infantry battalion generally formed an attack column with the front of one company and the depth of four--that is, a mass of about 40 men across and 12 men deep. Columns by sections, or half-companies which halved the front and doubled the depth, also occurred, but were rare. . . . In major engagements fought over relatively open ground the columns might be considerably enlarged. . . . The attack column of the Napoleonic period continued to be more of a linear than a columnar formation.[17]

The flexibility and adaptability of the newly-trained French Army permitted its leaders to move impressive

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[15]Colin, L'Infanterie . . . also contains an appreciation of the French strategic and tactical concepts outlined in the Reglement concernant l'excercise et les manoeuvres de l'infanterie du premier aout 1791--the manual issued to the French infantry.

[16]Paret, pp. 65-7 draws a distinction between the attack column and the marching column.

[17]Ibid., p. 66.

numbers of relatively inexperienced soldiers with considerable speed and control over any selected battle-site protected from an enemy riposte by clouds of skirmishing marksmen. Of totally malleable configuration, easily deployed into desired formations without needing the time necessary to develop the old solid line stance, the Army of Revolutionary France became the most tactically independent of any in Europe.[18]

Besides supplying the French leaders with an army able to close with their foes rapidly and usually in superior numerical force,[19] the columns provided their own skirmish-pool and a limited reserve of manpower. And, as they were able to recover their skirmish-lines, French units had the capability to reform to any front and depth they deemed desirable.[20]

But in initial confrontations with the forces of the older Powers the French soldiery revealed their inexper-

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[18]"One can truthfully say that by the end of 1793 the French armies had only light infantry." Duhesme, p. 71.

[19]In most of their subsequent engagements with Austro-Prussian forces during the period 1792-7 the French enjoyed considerable numerical superiority. For example, in March, 1795, French forces totalled 1,100,000 men on paper, with half of these available for combat. Guillaume Pariset, La Revolution, 1792-7 (part of the series Histoire de France contemporaine), ed. by E. Lavisse (Paris: Plon Nourrit et Cid, 1920), pp. 266-8.

[20]Paret, p. 67.

ience and lack of training. Their officers were still unused to handling these youthful, ardent masses and had almost as little experience in the new techniques as the rank and file. The result of these facts showed the first Revolutionary armies to be ardent mobs thrown willy-nilly at the ordered and disciplined ranks of their Ancien Régime opponents.[21]

Of all the new units, the Tirailleurs were perhaps most in need of further training and experience. In these early fights up to and even beyond Valmy, the Tirailleurs:

> . . . either acted as snipers--at times digging in on the battlefield for that purpose--or formed dense swarms that attacked with dash, but knew little of the refinements of mutual support and fire-control, panicked more easily than the men fighting in line, and proved particularly vulnerable to counterattack.[22]

But there was nothing in all this of a permanent defect, all were of such a nature as to be remedied by experience and an improved training at all command and rank levels. Prussian successes against the Revolutionary forces, such as the Siege of Mainz and at Kaiserslautern,[23] were not

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[21]As, for example, in the confused brawl at Kaiserslautern. See the German General Staff study "Pirmasens und Kaiserslautern" in Volume XVI of Kriegsgeschichte Einzelschriften (Berlin, 1893), pp. 347-370.

[22]Paret, p. 70.

[23]French casualties in both instances were much higher than those of the Prussians and on the basis of these

decisive in any lasting way and only demonstrated that disciplined professionals fighting under ideal conditions were able in one instance to repulse a horde of semidisciplined amateurs and in the other to overwhelm a surrounded garrison. Nearly all Prussian observers looked no further than this, and indeed their training and the system they served required that they look no further.[24]

However, a few prescient Prussian soldiers did note some disturbing elements surfacing in the French armies. Among other things they noted that the Tirailleur especially was much more skilled at improvisation and possessed much more individual initiative than did his Prussian opponents, including those in the fusilier and other light units.[25]

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statistical achievements the Prussians claimed victory. As Vietnam has demonstrated, body counts do not necessarily indicate victories.

[24]Prussian tactical formations were not to be modified during the initial fighting against France. Discussions were held concerning proposed changes but, on the Prussian side at least, alterations were infrequent and temporary. (See Chapter Six.)

[25]Scharnhorst credited the Tirailleur with gaining the majority of French victories in the campaign:

> The physical agility and high intelligence of the common Frenchman enables the French Tirailleurs to profit from all advantages offered by the terrain and the general situation, while the phlegmatic Germans, Bohemians and Dutch form on open ground and do nothing but what their officer orders them to do. . . . The "Commission de l'organisation et du mouvement des armees de terre" took account of these circumstances and based on them the system of always waging war in broken and covered terrain, where everything depends on the defense and attacks

Even such a hidebound conservative as Marshal von Knesebeck acknowledged the fact that Prussian regulations so bound the light troops to movements dictated by the line that it was impossible for them to match the French light foot in either mobility or other functions whose performance alone justified the existence of light troops at all.[26]

Most of this was lost on the complacent Prussian High Command. After all, the ordered drill and mechanical response, the heavy line vomiting forth a wall of fire, had nearly always gained the field. Since they had worked before, they therefore would always work.

To be sure, minor adjustments might sometimes be called for. Some light units, a few more sharpshooters perhaps, should be joined to the line to deal with the annoying, and un-Frederician, wasps called Tirailleurs. And light cavalry was moderately useful for scouting and foraging and chasing off enemy horse. But all of this was incidental to the true heart of the combat: the great confrontation between massed lines of drilled, brilliantly-uniformed sol-

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of positions, of avoiding large battles if possible, and instead wear out the allied armies by skirmishes, outpost affairs, and isolated attacks in woods and in ravines.

See "Entwicklung der allgemeinen Ursachen des Glucks der Franzosen in dem Revolutionskrieg," Militärische Schriften von Scharnhorst, ed. C. von der Goltz (Dresden, 1891), pp. 224-226

[26]R. Höhn, Scharhorsts Vermächtnis (Bonn: n.p., 1951), p. 87.

diery spitting missiles in measured volleys upon one another until one side gave way and left the field to the victor.[27]

Warnings and criticisms might be noted but were little heeded. The well-meaning young monarch was unable to apply his limited energies to the exhaustive task of utterly transforming the Prussian military machine.[28] He periodically was prey to anxiety for the future of his kingdom but even this feeling was without focus or direction and was soon overborne by the King's pursuit of sexual gratification, his one abiding interest.

Nevertheless, Prussia's military remained almost constantly active during the latter years of Frederick William II's reign, both east and west of Berlin. It is to these activities, and an examination of Prussian procedures, that we must now turn.

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[27]Paret, pp. 79-80.

[28]See Chapter Four, pp. 2-4.

Chapter VI

Prussia Versus the Revolution, 1789-92

In spite of the general indifference toward, and the consequent neglect of, all things military on the part of the King and Court, Prussia was not allowed the luxury of totally ignoring events in the outside world. As previously discussed[1] a Prussian army had intervened in Dutch affairs to restore the authority of the Stadholder William V.

The disposition of Polish territory continued to occupy Prussian policy to a great extent. This preoccupation, even fixation, with Poland dated back at least to the early 1770s and had its roots in Austrian fears generated by Russia's victories over the Turks in the period 1768-1772.

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[1] See Chapter Four.

So alarmed did the Austrians become over these Russian gains that they came to the point of making war. Frederick the Great, fearing involvement in this prospective conflict, engineered the partition of moribund Poland by which Russia could make gains unobjectionable to Austria, while the latter and Prussia could share in the spoils. The "First Partition" occurred in 1772 and saw Poland divested of about one-third of its territory and about one-half of its inhabitants. A "Second Partition" occurred in 1793 in which Russia and Prussia took about half of the remaining Polish lands. (Austria was not included in this second dividing-up of Poland's territory.) A "Third Partition" in 1795 would complete the final sharing-out of Poland's remaining lands.

After 1772 Poland, and related Eastern European affairs, continued to claim the bulk of Prussia's attention. During the most dramatic days of the French Revolution, when the Bastille was stormed and a constitution was forced upon a frightened French King, the majority of Prussian army units were deployed against the forces of Austria in now-familiar positions along the Saxon and Bohemian frontiers.[2] Although

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[2]All this was the result of an Austro-Russian conflict, which began in 1787, directed towards the partitioning of Turkish holdings in the Balkans. Although generally successful, this war was extremely unpopular with most Austrian subjects. The Prussian leadership, fearful of Austrian and Russian designs on Poland (which was Turkey's ally), mobilized

open conflict never materialized Prussian forces continued to be distracted by tensions in those areas of Poland occupied since 1772.[3]

In these regions, containing first 420,000 mostly Polish inhabitants, to which another 1,100,000 Poles were added after 23 January 1793, the Prussians found themselves an alien and fiercely-resented occupation force. While little open resistance manifested itself, Frederick William's new Polish subjects were by no means disposed to tamely tolerate an "enemy garrison" in their midst. Tensions festered beneath a surface of grudging acquiesence--tensions that periodically revealed themselves in acts of sabotage performed upon Prussian equipment,[4] in brawls between local

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her main army in Silesia. In July, 1790, an agreement between Prussia and Austria was signed at Reichenbach. Austria promised to make peace with Turkey on the basis of the status quo, and the opposing Austrian-Prussian forces evacuated their respective positions and returned to their cantonments. See Crane Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, 1789-99 (New York: Harper & Row, 1934), pp. 79-81. See also Acta 1790-2, Repositum 63 85 A.5, Folio I, Document 39, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany, for a description of transportation and supply difficulties along the Prussian front and an Entwurf (Rough Draft) for a convention relating to setting up guidelines for a transport and communication Zone Control.

[3]For a concise description of Polish attitudes toward the foreign occupation forces in that divided land's "lost territories" after 1772, see W. F. Reddaway, ed., The Cambridge History of Poland: From August II to Pilsudski (Cambridge: University Press, 1942), Chapter I.

[4]Mobil., Folio XVIII, Document 12.

elements and soldiers, and, rarely, in overt raids or full-fledged assaults against Prussian outposts.[5]

This state of affairs was not sufficiently troublesome to necessitate the employment of any considerable fraction of the main force of Prussia's Army. Generally speaking, at this time the majority of Prussian units engaged in Polish occupation duties consisted of two or three regular regiments in the larger towns (Thorn, Danzig),[6] a handful of hussar formations,[7] and a hodgepodge of militia units of varying strength and efficiency which had been created during the preceding decade or so for just such tasks.[8]

These militia occupation units "modelled upon the 1759 pattern" ("so wie Muster des 1759"), ideally consisted of one major or colonel commanding, 10 or 11 captains, 20 subalterns, 12 to 15 sergeants, 120 lesser non-commissioned officers,[9] 1500 other ranks, 30 drummers, and 3 staff of-

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[5] Ibid., Folio XVII, Document 17 mentions a raid on a hussar detachment's cantonment south of Thorn by "plunderers," in which the latter stole five horses and wounded a groom before being driven off.

[6] Mainly Fusilier units: 53 Infantry (Fusilier) at Braunsberg, 54 Regiment (Fusilier) at Graudenz, and the 55th Infantry (Fusilier) at Mewa. See Duffy, p. 247.

[7] Chiefly the Tenth Hussars, a unit that had never seen action. See Mobil., Folio XVII, Document 24.

[8] See L.S., Folio IV, Document 70.

[9] Ibid., Folio IV, Document 71.

ficers.[10] These units were, at least in theory, provided with sufficient transportation to enable them to move "with rapidity if this be required."[11]

Many of the occupation units were veterans of the farcical "Potato War," in which some, at least, suffered severely, if mostly, from weather and disease.[12] Several of the occupation regiments had seen heavy desertion and had not recovered their full complement even ten years after the end of the Erbfolgekrieg.[13] It is not too much to conclude, perhaps, that the troops occupying Prussia's new eastern annexation did not exactly represent the "cream" of her army.[14]

One dividend was obtained from Prussian Poland: the creation of Polish light cavalry units from among the more "cooperative elements" of the new lands. These formations were usually termed Husaren and one of them, the 13th

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[10] Ibid. These latter apparently were detached from the central military administration to handle clerical and technical tasks beyond the militia officers.

[11] Ibid., Folio IV, Document 91, quote from a memorandum by von Wedell.

[12] Ibid., Folio IV, Document 88 cites casualties of 28,634 among the Saxon units during the Erbfolgekrieg but adds that more than "one third of these are deserters." Battle casualties are cited as "between two and three thousand."

[13] Ibid., Folio IV, Document 92. Here Wedell discusses the "weakness and lack of leadership" of the Saxon units and recommends their being employed in purely passive roles.

[14] Ibid. Wedell tersely sums up the character of the Prussian occupation forces as "Offscourings" (Auswurfen).

("Towarczy") Regiment was attached to the garrison at Thorn, under the over-all command of General (later Marshal) Kalkreuth, one of Frederick the Great's younger officers and later one of the most respected of Prussian commanders.[15] Other ethnic-Polish units were sent west, out of Polish lands, and were mainly employed in coastal patrol in Pomerania and anti-deserter patrols in southern Brandenburg.[16]

Polish cavalry units seemingly were never considered to be completely reliable and their rate of desertion was noticeably higher than other Prussian units. (So much higher, in fact, that Frederick William II ordered prohibitions against desertion, with extremely graphic descriptions of punishments to be meted out, to be printed both in German and Polish.)[17] Desertion seems to have been most severe in the Polish units stationed near Posen.[18]

All things considered, these new units can hardly

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[15] Ibid. But in Mobil., Folio I, Document 32, Kalkreuth, in a dispatch to Berlin dated March, 1786, deplores the use of these "Poles" and states he would trust them only when they would be used to guard "Festungen in Pommern und Sachsen."

[16] M.V., Folio XL, Document 5, this document also is an order to Kalkreuth to increase the garrisons at Bialystock and Thorn by sending the König Heinrichs Cuirassieres to the former and two regiments of Husaren to the latter. The order is signed by Möllendorf.

[17] Ibid., Folio XL, Document 31.

[18] See above document.

have contributed much to the efficiency of the Prussian Army. Special trouble had to be taken to police and officer them and discipline problems always distracted from overall effectiveness. Edict after edict had to be issued, both by the Sovereign and by the High Command, warning Polish units of the "strict and prompt repayment of disorder and evil," that would surely occur.[19] All in all, the task of commanding and administering Polish units was onerous and the results were in the main unremunerative.[20]

The Prussian government was naturally loath to admit that the Polish minority would not eventually shoulder its share of the burden of maintaining the Prussian State. The King himself urged upon his military and civil governors "the utmost pursuit of the goal of reconciling our Polish subjects to their military responsibilities."[21] What methods to be employed to attain this goal were to be left to the discretion of the men on the spot.[22]

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[19] Ibid., Folio XL, Document 31.

[20] So at least does the evidence suggest. The archives at Merseberg are filled with reports of desertions and disorders too numerous to cite in their entirity.

[21] Ibid., Folio XL, Document 11.

[22] Ibid., Folio XXXVIII, Document 990. In this document Kircheisen, Chief of the Kriminal-Deputation (Civil Police Authority) was informed that accomplices of deserters will face charges from the civil authorities under Articles 16, 17 and 24 of the decree on desertion issued by Frederick William II on 18 February, 1788. In fact civil accomplices

In other words, Frederick William II hoped for the pacification of his Polish lands and subjects without having to concern himself directly with this thorny problem. His general reluctance to concern himself with the harsh realities of government and with the intricacies of military occupation left affairs in Prussian Poland prey to drift and circumstance. This policy, or rather, lack of policy, resulted in continued and expanded troubles in late 1793 and 1794. These difficulties in their turn would entail immense expense and humiliation to the King and his army at a moment when Prussian resources could have been far more effectively employed in the west.

For in the west, largely unperceived and unappreciated, a force was growing that would, through revolutionary techniques and tactics--military and political, defeat the soldiers of Frederician Prussia. Against this growing threat Prussia applied only a modicum of her military power and thus in the long run perhaps failed to preserve either her honor or her ancient institutions.

In April 1792 Prussia was drawn into the so-called "War of the First Coalition," and was obliged to commit relatively modest forces to resist the encroachments of

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would be tried for conspiracy after military trials, thus facing a sort of "double jeopardy."

Revolutionary France.[23] This commitment led in turn to an invasion of French territory by a Prussian expeditionary force in July 1792. This force was led by the 57-year-old Duke of Brunswick. Although a dashing and successful officer during the Seven Years War, the Duke was a bit too advanced in years and set in his ways to deal effectively with the revolutionary methods of warfare that he would soon face.[24]

The fortunes of this punitive excursion can be quickly summarized: Joined by an Austrian detachment and a number of generally useless emigrés, Brunswick's army moved slowly into the French hinterland. After some initial successes,[25] the invaders became increasingly demoralized by

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[23]This commitment was initiated by the so-called "Declaration of Pillnitz," a joint statement by Frederick William II and Leopold II of Austria that they would jointly intervene in French affairs to protect the safety of Louis XVI. The French interpreted it as a threat of aggression although Austria and Prussia also said they would only move if they had the unanimous consent of all Powers.

[24]He was 57 and was described by Scharnhorst as "one of those . . . German tacticians who still cannot rid themselves of the evolutions of Frederick the Great's autumn maneuvers." See Scharnhorst's essay on the use of light troops reproduced in Paret, Appendix I, p. 259. Lefevbre summed up Brunswick in the following words: "As a general he was famous: he had courage and intelligence, but lacked the essential quality of a great man of war--he was afraid to gamble! G. Lefevbre, The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 255.

[25]The capture of Longwy on 23 August and the capitulation of the fortress-town of Verdun on 2 September after a five-day siege. Though accusations of treachery were

hunger, disease (especially diarrhea), and an unceasing rain that turned the roads and lanes into quagmires.[26] But still the invaders continued to move west at an iceberg-like pace but, like an iceberg venturing into warm waters, continually melting in volume as it moved ever nearer its destination.[27]

On 20 September 1792 Brunswick's men collided with a much superior French force commanded by Generals Dumouriez and Kellermann (later to become a Marshal under Napoleon). The revolutionary forces were entrenched upon heights near the little town of Valmy, which was to give the battle its

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bruited about by the French the main reasons for Verdun's swift surrender were the very disquieting effects of the Prussian bombardment on both soldiers and civilians alike. The French government executed some of the Verdunnais after the Prussians fell back across the Rhine. Lefevbre, pp. 256-7.

[26]Fuller's account of the Valmy campaign is still one of the most clear and succinct this writer had found and is the chief source for the discussion of Valmy. J. F. C. Fuller, Decisive Battles (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), pp. 450-80.

[27]The Prussian force was hardly impressive in size. Even French historians such as Lefevbre do not credit Brunswick with having more than 42,000 Prussians and a few thousand Austrians and emigrés at the start of the campaign. Disease, battle losses, and the need to detach garrisons for Longwy and Verdun must surely have substantially reduced this number, which was also prevented from receiving significant reinforcement by the wretched state of the roads. Prussian slowness also enabled the French to amass some 60,000 regulars and volunteers to confront a Prussian-allied force that simply cannot have been even half that size. Fuller, pp. 452-82. Lefevbre, p. 257.

name. The battle itself consisted of an exchange of artillery fire and a desultory advance by a few Prussian units upon the French positions. This feeble assault was repulsed easily by the defenders and the Prussian commander then ordered a retirement. This retrograde movement turned into a retreat through Champagne, Luxembourg, and finally back across the Rhine.[28]

Although the French "victory" was largely due to Prussian default, the rapid retirement of Brunswick's little force did not augur well for the state of Prussia's forces in the west. The short-term consequences of this fiasco were a series of rapid French incursions into the Rhineland, resulting in their occupation of the German towns of Speyer, Worms, Mainz, and, briefly, the city of Frankfurt.[29] The revolutionary invaders encountered little or no resistance from either Allied forces or from the civilian population--a perhaps ominous sign.[30]

The repulse at Valmy, and the resulting French surge over the Rhine, shocked Berlin. General Wartensleben was detached from the General Staff in Potsdam and sent to

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[28]Valmy cost the Prussians some 184 killed and wounded and the French suffered 300 casualties. Fuller, p. 367.

[29]Parkinson, p. 23.

[30]G. P. Gooch, Germany and the French Revolution, Vol. III (London: Eyre & Spottswood, 1920), pp. 357-9.

the Rhine front. After an inspection of the Allied positions he dispatched a gloomy report to his superiors.[31]

The General reported that the Prussian-Austrian-emigré forces numbered between 45,000 and 50,000 men, but that they should number 90,000 before beginning any effective operations. He suggested that Prussian forces should merely "maintain position and refrain from advancing."[32] Wartensleben concluded his report with an attached memorandum from General Rüderheim (one of the Duke's subordinate officers) supporting his recommendations and urging a holding of positions all along the Rhine and in the Netherlands. Rüderheim then observed that in Alsace small-scale actions be undertaken to keep the foe "ocupée."[33] Wartensleben and Rüderheim failed to inform Berlin as to the total resources available to their armies.

But Berlin must have been aware that there were troops in the west that had not been caught up in the debâcle at Valmy: In a ration-strength report from Generals von Manstein and Grauert, sent to Berlin and dated 12 February 1793, the Prussian and non-Austrian Allied strength

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[31] Krieg gegen Frankreich, Repositum 63 86A, Folio I, Document w-1, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as K.g.F.)

[32] Ibid., Document w-2.

[33] Ibid., Document w-3.

in the west is put at 215,975.[34] This force was broken down into 66,243 men in the Minden-Pfalz area, 33,441 on the Maas, 99,091 along the Upper Rhine for a total of 198,775 effectives. In addition there was a reserve of 17,200 militia and light troops.[35]

In all fairness to the Prussian leadership, both in Berlin and on the spot, weather conditions probably contributed greatly to the general inactivity of the Allied forces. Indeed, it is impossible to determine how many of the troops in the report cited were recent reinforcements and the general condition of the Prussian equipment, transport and general health of the men. And it seems also to have been true that the French forces, once their initial push into German lands had spent itself, also in the main refrained from further offensive action.[36]

The improving weather conditions in late March 1793 saw a resumption of Prussian-Austrian-Allied operations in the west: The summary execution of Louis XVI, combined with the commencement of the "Reign of Terror" in France to gal-

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[34] K.g.F., Folio II, Document 1.

[35] Ibid. Unfortunately whether this latter figure included "light troops" is conjectural as the words in the dispatch were badly smeared and the term is included only after some hesitation.

[36] Ibid.

vanize many of the other German states to combine with Berlin and Vienna to offer resistance to French encroachments. By the beginning of April Saxon and Hessian detachments had joined Brunswick's armies and offensive operations resumed.[37]

The major thrust of the Allied counter-offensive was aimed at Mainz the most prestigious town held by the French. Here the Revolutionary forces were commanded by General D'Oyré and numbered about 23,000 men.[38] D'Oyré was an able officer and during the period of French occupation had fortified not only the town but also a bridgehead on the other side of the river and several of the Rhine islands, which were strongly held.[39]

Brunswick's forces arrived in the Mainz area during the last few days in March and began investing the town, although the formal siege did not open until 1 April and actual hostilities did not begin until 14 April 1793.[40] During the interval the besiegers threw up siegeworks, cleared the surrounding area of French stragglers and for-

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[37] L.S., Folio V, Document 13, indicates that some of the reinforcing Saxon units were militia.

[38] Parkinson, p. 24. The French disposed of over 200 guns as well.

[39] Ibid. See also K.g.F., Folio III.

[40] Parkinson, p. 25.

agers,[41] and set up their encampments and their headquarters.[42] The bulk of the Prussian forces were tied up at Mainz, although other units conducted operations around Landau in support of the floating batteries stationed there to blockade the river.[43]

The Prussian investment of Mainz was enlivened by a series of raids and counterraids by both sides and French attempts to destroy Prussian outposts near the city. Artillery bombardment was more or less continuous, with considerable damage to the town resulting.[44] On 18 June a really massive shelling was directed upon the French positions--"a magnificent sight" in the words of one youthful observer.[45] Still the French garrison held out despite increasing casualties and shortages of supplies.[46]

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[41] K.g.F., Folio II, Document 1321.

[42] Parkinson, p. 24. Main headquarters were at Gustavsburg, the rat-infested and dilapidated fort built by Gustavus Adolfus of Sweden.

[43] K.g.F., Folio II, Document 1363. The batteries were under the overall command of General Wurmser but Major Schultz was in direct charge. He suggested that these batteries occasionally be allowed to float down the river and bombard French installations below the town.

[44] Parkinson, p. 25.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

The initial French response to the "super-bombardment" of June 18 was to launch a sortie in an attempt to push through the besiegers' lines to the south. After some desperate and bloody fighting on 24 June, during which an outlying position was nearly overrun by the attackers, the French were repulsed and fell back into Mainz.[47] French casualties were heavy but would have been even more severe had the Prussians pursued them further.[48] The King himself had been present during the sortie (although not actually at the site of the fighting) and rewarded a number of young officers for their steadfastness during the battle.[49]

On July 22, with their food and medical supplies well-nigh exhausted, the French garrison at Mainz at last capitulated. The terms of the surrender were quite generous: the defenders to receive a pass and full pardon in recognition of the courage with which they had fought. They did have to agree not to bear arms against the Allies for a year and to give up most of their arms but were

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[47] Ibid. Karl von Clausewitz's older brother Wilhelm distinguished himself in this action.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Young Clausewitz was rewarded by the granting to his two sisters, Johanna and Charlotte, of the expectancy of rents from property at Neuenberg and Marienborn. But they found it very difficult to collect the cash.

otherwise allowed to depart without molestation.[50] The town of Mainz itself had suffered severe damage and needed extensive rebuilding.[51]

Frederick William and his generals were in the main quite satisfied with the Prussian performance during the Mainz operation. The artillery and the infantry had fought cooly and efficiently and had inflicted upon the French many more casualties than the latter had upon the Prussians.[52] The fiasco at Valmy was generally dismissed as an unfortunate but temporary aberration--one that might happen to any army fighting under difficult conditions--not likely to be repeated.[53]

However, the recapture of Mainz was not followed up. Despite the fact that the only serious resistance would come from scattered and isolated French garrisons along the river--their major field force being that already defeated at Mainz--the Allies did not seize the opportunity offered them. Instead of making a swift thrust into Alsace the Austrian and Prussian field commanders wasted precious

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[50]Parkinson, p. 26.

[51]Ibid.

[52]French losses totalled some 5,000 killed, missing and wounded to some 3,000 for the Austro-Prussians.

[53]Indeed, given the circumstances of the fight, this conclusion was a logical one to reach.

time in political squabbling and mutual expressions of no-confidence in one another.[54]

Military operations thereafter were designed to effect the negative aim of clearing German territory of the French and to conduct a series of ultimately pointless forays into the Vosges Mountains--terrain where the Prussian formations were at a particular disadvantage.[55] The only concrete gain after Mainz was the capture of Valenciennes further north which was taken on 27 July.[56]

There was a lack of concrete political objectives which had a deleterious effect on Prussian morale: Frustration was soon coupled with a slovenly disinterest in the outcome of the fighting. The Prussians fell back into a torpor while the French were rapidly reviving.[57] The effects of the Prussian triumph were soon dissipated, and rearmed and reinforced French troops readied themselves to renew their assaults.[58]

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[54] K.g.F., Folio III, Document 8.

[55] Karl von Clausewitz, On War, (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1968), Chapter 15.

[56] K.g.F., Folio II, Document 3, a proclamation signed by Haugwitz 3 August, 1793.

[57] The terrain of the Vosges region probably had a good deal to do with discouraging energetic activity on the part of the Prussian troops.

[58] They were commanded by the able General Hoche.

Renewed French offensive capacity was amply demonstrated in September when they attacked Prussian forces at Pirmasens. This was a considerable action (or series of actions) involving on the Prussian side two regiments of infantry (plus an attached unit from another), one regiment of cuirassiers, one of dragoons, two independent companies of cavalry and attached artillery.[59] In the contest Prussian losses were officially listed as 97 killed, 198 wounded, 15 captured or missing.[60] Most of the action seems to have been a cavalry fight as the cuirassiers and dragoons lost the most men.[61]

The most disturbing aspect of the Pirmasens fight was the performance of the French light troops. The heaviest and most crucial combat occurred when the Prussian dragoons and cuirassiers met a force of some 1200[62] dismounted skirmishers who were covering the main mass of the French force of some 15,000. These skirmish troops

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[59] K.g.F., Folio II, Document 5. In this report Haugwitz lists the Prussian units as: Infantry: Royal Guard Regiment and Regiment von Braunschweig, with the 1st Battalion of the Regiment von Schladen; Cavalry: Cuirassier Regiment Borstel and Dragoon Regiment von Tschirsky, plus two squadrons of horse from the Wolfgradtschen Regiment.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., Document 6.

(Tirailleurs) were backed by a force of Chasseurs à pied who numbered between 250 and 400 men. This combined force stubbornly and effectively resisted the Prussian advance. At one point in the battle the French attempted to flank the cuirassiers and succeeded in breaking their "order in line," thus forcing the Prussians to retire for some distance.[63]

After Pirmasens the Prussians and Austrians undertook no further offensive operations on that front for some time. In fact the French retained the initiative in the Moselle region. In December General Lazare Hoche pushed the Allied forces, who still refused to coordinate their operations, far eastward to the Rhine.[64]

Elsewhere in the west in 1793 Prussian fortunes had been of varying success and actions had been limited. The generally used excuse for Prussian sluggishness was that of paucity of resources.[65] The depredations of light units of

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Parkinson, p. 28.

[65] Many Prussian units were still in Poland on occupation and pacification duty. But even so there would seem to have been considerable Prussian strength available. Möllendorf, who was responsible for one segment of the front, had, by the end of 1793 some 99,325 men in all: 58,892 heavy and 8,084 light infantry, 18,986 cavalry, 130 miners, 9096 artillerymen and 4,137 service troops. K.g.F., Folio III, Document 123.

Franzosische Plünderer tied down many Prussian units, who were forced into security and patrol duties rather than offensive tasks.[66] The French raiders often penetrated deeply into Prussian positions and ambushes of supply trains and even of security patrols were not infrequent.[67]

By no means all of these clashes ended with French success, as the Prussian horsemen and security forces acquitted themselves with considerable élan and skill under fire.

On May 8, 1793, a force of Chasseurs à cheval attacked a force of two squadrons of Husaren near Weissenberg. Although outnumbered and surprised, the hussars charged the French, drove them from the field and captured eight prisoners. Twelve of the raiders were killed for the loss of one dead hussar.[68] But on the same day another French force ambushed a provision train near Bischofswerda and

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[66]Westfalen an der Rhein 1792-3, Repositum R63 86 A6, Folio IV, Document 45, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as W.a.R.) This document is an appeal from the City Council of the little town of Queis for the stationing of 100 dragoons to protect their area from French marauders. "Where am I going to get them from?" is a despairing notation written in the margin of this document. Apparently written by Major von Köchler, the local commander to whom the appeal is addressed.

[67]Ibid., Document 5. This entry lists a series of such incidents that occurred in some portions of Westphalia and involved units from two infantry and two cavalry regiments.

[68]Ibid., Document 73.

were only driven off by the timely arrival of a force of Jägers. In the ambush a dozen Prussian wagons and their goods were burned and two teamsters were killed. Although the French lost three killed in this minor action, they forced General von Borck, the regional commander, to detach three squadrons to pursue them.[69]

On 14 May a large force of 207 dragoons was attacked by French light cavalry near Colberg. The French were driven off after an exchange of fire in which the Prussian commander, Lieutenant von Seriastowitz, was wounded. The Regional Commandent, General von Knobelsdorf, believed this action to be the prelude to a general French offensive in the area and kept his troops on alert for several days. However, no further French activity occurred.[70]

In early June two Prussian Fusilier battalions advanced towards Saarbrücken.[71] On 6 June they occupied the town after encountering only the scantiest of resistance. General von Borck described this action as "showing the flag,"[72] in a report to Marshal Müffling, the overall

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[69] Ibid. A fruitless pursuit, it turned out, as the raiders got away.

[70] Ibid., Document 80.

[71] Ibid., Document 85.

[72] Ibid.

commander. But two weeks later the town was assaulted by a large force of "Französischen chevalieren und partisanen,"[73] and was abandoned. The total loss in this affair to the two Prussian battalions, commanded by Major von Mott and Captain von Renouard respectively, was one Prussian soldier killed and four others wounded.[74]

But even this restricted local activity was not approved by higher authority. Müffling sent a sharp rebuke to Renouard for "taking an unnecessary endangerment of your men!"[75] Müffling went on to declare that from then on the Fusilier units would be "more closely supervised," and that all field operations would need "higher approval."[76] Von Renouard was then detached from his battalion and sent to command a unit of 98 light infantry attached to Kalkreuth's cuirassier force.[77]

Offensive operations by Prussian cavalry were few and far between. And by the end of May the mounted arm was experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining remounts. The Duke of Sachlitz confided to a friend in Potsdam that

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[73] Ibid., Document 90.

[74] Ibid. Von Renouard was of Huguenot descent.

[75] Ibid., Document 91.

[76] Ibid. General von Rohrich in Berlin annotated the memorandum and indicated his concurrence with Müffling's decision.

[77] Ibid., Document 117.

his regiment was 300 horses short and that this figure did not include draft and transport animals.[78] Lack of fodder and grain aggravated the problem.[79]

Because of this shortage of mounts most cavalry actions were in the form of reconnaisance-raids conducted by an officer and twenty or so men. One such operation was a raid by Lieutenant von Schultz of the Schmettau Regiment: Schultz and 18 men crossed into French lines near Quillungen, where they burned "much fodder and forage," and destroyed several French barracks. A French soldier was taken prisoner and three or four others killed. The raiding force escaped without loss.[80] Schultz was commended in a written report by his commanding officer, but his raid was not repeated.[81]

On the other hand French raids increasingly threatened Allied supplies. In response to this danger the Prussians formed a series of depôts for forage and material

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[78] Ibid., Folio III, Document 156.

[79] Ibid., Document 129. This consists of Order #1309 which calls for the setting up of depôts at Gülen and Sagen to accumulate forage. The Gülen depôt was staffed by 4 officers and 242 men, the Sagen one by 6 officers and 261 men.

[80] Ibid., Document 205.

[81] Ibid. Von Schultz was assigned to depôt guarding duties a few weeks after his raid, which took place on 30 May, 1793.

in the immediate rear areas of their formations. But though these depôts ensured that supplies would be more secure from marauders, they in turn tied down large numbers of troops that were needed to guard them. This in turn caused a serious reduction in the fighting strength of Prussian front-line units facing the regular French armies.[82]

One of the units typically affected by the depôt policy was the Schmettau Regiment. This highly-regarded unit formed a depôt at Gülen which was able to quickly supply the unit with fodder, ammunition and fresh bread. But this same installation had to be guarded and maintained by 6 officers and 242 men, of whom 148 had been detached from the line battalions for this duty.[83] The regimental commander complained that this necessary detachment noticeably reduced his striking power.[84] Other units experienced similar difficulties.[85]

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[82] Ibid., Folio IV, Document 29. For example the Katte Dragoon Regiment's junior executive officer Lieutenant von der Borne urged that the "super forage depôt" being erected west of Frankfurt am Main near Landesberg be defended by 150 light infantrymen and 85 Cuirassiers rather than by effectives from his unit which was already "thinly stretched."

[83] See Footnote 79.

[84] W.a.R., Folio III, Document 95. This unit had also been forced to detach two officers and 299 men for "fusilier support training" on 29 June 1793.

[85] Ibid., Document 130. In particular the Von Tschirsky Regiment, which was forced to defend the Sagen depôt and undertake a series of security patrols behind the lines.

With the exception of limited raids, fighting was generally intermittent and desultory throughout the area. The Prussians and Austrians exerted themselves from time to time to undertake some action against their foe but nothing approaching Pirmasens occurred anywhere else. Allied leadership was more concerned to keep Austro-Prussian casualties low and was content that the French generally suffered more losses then they inflicted.[86] This probably was true but French losses never became unbearable and were little or no drain upon the overall French military establishment or the French population.[87]

Anyway, the French considered the price to be modest in return for the gains achieved, especially that most priceless gain of all: time. With the Austro-Prussian forces on the strategic defensive, they were in no position to threaten the Revolution either at home or in other areas

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[86] Generalia in Militaribus, Repositum n86 A.1, Folio II, Document 9, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as Generalia.) This is a circular dated 30 September 1793 signed by Haugwitz claiming that by that date for the month the Prussians had captured from the French 22 cannon and 3000 French prisoners. Haugwitz maintained that these losses were "typical of the general French loss" since the campaign had begun. Haugwitz also claimed that the French had suffered higher loss than the Prussians at Pirmasens.

[87] Ibid., Documents 11-14. This is a series of intelligence evaluations and the conclusions reached, at least as stated by Haugwitz, were that French losses were "minimal" and certainly in no way "crippling" (lahmgeleget).

of Europe--and with this state of affairs the French were for the moment content.[88]

Following the fight at Pirmasens the campaigning weather waned with the advent of winter. By December 1793 the Allied forces were everywhere settling into prepared positions and outposts. Most Prussian cavalry was now under the command of the Duke of Brunswick and his Austrian opposite number, General Dagobert Würmser. The latter, an Alsatian who had served in the French Army from 1745-1747 before entering Austrian service, was not an ideal partner for Brunswick. Tough and courageous, he was nearly seventy years of age in 1793 and subject to periods of inertia. He was particularly fearful over the vulnerability of Allied positions in the Vosges and wanted to abandon them. He was overruled by Alvensleben who cited their "symbolic value."[89]

The most exposed post was that of Tannbrück. This position south of the Lauter River in Alsace was held by an Austrian force, as was the nearby hamlet of Lembach, and both were under the command of Austrian General Lichtenberg. Although this entire area east of Kaiserslautern was swarming with irregulars, Lichtenberg refused to evacuate the place

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[88] Ibid. Or so, at least, the Prussians assumed. Certainly the Allies themselves were aware that they had accomplished little in the way of weakening the Revolution.

[89] Ibid., Folio III, Document 11.

and the Prussians, aware of the extremely touchy relationship with their allies, promised support for the garrison if it was attacked.[90]

On December 14 French regular and irregular units began a series of assaults on Tannbrück which continued until the end of the year. The situation was critical enough for the Austrians on the spot to request Prussian aid and an infantry battalion and some cuirassiers were sent as reinforcements.[91] After only minor gains, the French attacks bogged down and the Allied forces were able to maintain their positions.[92]

But the fighting at Tannbrück now spread east to the area of Wissembourg, where it centered upon possession of a fortified hill called "le Pigeonnier" (Scherhohle) which commanded Wissembourg.[93] Although the Prussians maintained themselves successfully here as well their losses were substantial and a related series of fights for position raged

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[90] Ibid., Document 13.

[91] Ibid., Document 11. The designation of the infantry battalion was not given nor the exact number of cuirassiers--a rather curious lapse for a Prussian report.

[92] Ibid. Document 11 is really a lengthy situation report.

[93] Ibid. Some 77 years later this same position saw bitter fighting in the early weeks of the Franco-Prussian War.

all along the Vosges-Rhine front until by the first of the year (1794) General von Hohenlohe had been forced to commit no less than 16 line infantry battalions, 35 squadrons of heavy cavalry and 8 of hussars.[94] He also moved four batteries of rockets to cover the approaches to Worms and Odernheim.[95]

That Hohenlohe's concern for the cities in his rear was not totally unfounded was amply demonstrated by the fact that a force of Prussian hussars and 1200 Croats encountered a French "marauding force" at Phillipsburg. After some fighting the Allies drove the French off. What is significant about the action, which took place in "late December" is that Phillipsburg lies east of the Rhine some twenty-five miles south of Mannheim![96]

In January the French attacks slackened off and the Allies found that their positions were generally unchanged. But the cost of this Korean-War-style outpost fighting was outrageously high, both in blood and money.

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid. No explanation is vouchsafed in the situation report for this particular move.

[96] Acta Generalia, Repositum 63 86Aa3, Folio IV, Document 273. Major Schweitzingen, the Prussian cavalry commander claims that the force was under the command of Kellermann and cited the action as an example of the "closeness of Allied cooperation." (Hereinafter cited as A.G.)

A new general hospital collecting point was set up at Halle on December 6 and all casualties from the "Rhine-Vosges Front" were ordered sent there in convoys. The Tschirsky Regiment was detached for escort duty and Major von Lucadon was ordered to escort 662 wounded French prisoners to Halle under hussar guard.[97] On December 11 von Alvensleben sent a memo to Hohenlohe complaining about the tie-up of transport vehicles to take the wounded to the east and demanded the setting-up of specific convoy dates and routes for the casualties.[98]

Von Geusau, a high official in the Finance Administration, in a report dated 30 December complained of the enormous rise in expenditures during the month. Citing one single corps, Lt. General von Knobelsdorf's, as typical, Geusau noted that with a combat effective strength of 11,054 (12,754 with attached units of administrative troops),[99] this corps' operations for the period 30 May through 30 December had cost 4,375,799 marks. Geusau went on to point out that this was double the expense of the preceding year and that more than two-thirds of the expense

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[97] Generalia Krieg Gegen Frankreich 1792-5, Repositum 63, 86 A 1-9, Folio I, Document 1. (Hereinafter cited as G.K.G.F.)

[98] Ibid., Document 2.

[99] Generalia, Folio III, Document 115.

had occurred during the last month of the period![100] Finally, the scandalized official noted that the hussars alone had cost 556,961 marks![101]

The highest ranking casualty of this winter warfare was the Duke of Brunswick. On January 17,1794 he was relieved for "raisons de Santé," by the King's authority in an order signed by Haugwitz.[102] Brunswick confessed that he was not displeased at his relief as he was "wearied beyond belief" by the frustrating type of warfare he was called upon to oversee.[103]

Brunswick was scarcely missed. Möllendorf continued to be the architect of Prussian offensive plans--if they can be dignified by that name. His general concept continued to be one of strongly-held defensive positions awaiting French attacks behind a series of forward outposts. At the same time he urged the swiftest possible reinforcement of all Prussian forces in the West and an increased attention to developing methods of speeding up the movement of such

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] G.K.G.F., Folio V, Document 45.

[103] Ibid., Folio VI, Document 12, at least according to Alvensleben, the Duke was relieved to be relieved.

succoring personnel.[104]

Möllendorf's interest in this area led to one of the few examples of military experimentation by the Prussian High Command during this entire barren era:

In May of 1794 the Fusilier Battalion von Borcke, then in the Berlin area, was ordered brought up to full strength. By the end of the month the ration strength of this unit consisted of one Major (von Borcke--a junior member of a distinguished Junker military family), 4 captains, 15 subalterns, 3 surgeons, 48 non-commissioned officers, 13 cadet officers, and 600 men--a total of 683 personnel.[105] This unit was armed with an experimental rifled musket and equipped with a field pack only half the size of the standard pack carried by the line infantry.[106]

On 4 June the Fusiliers were ordered to make a rapid march from Berlin to Mainz. This order was signed by

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[104] Acta 1790-92, Repositum 63 85 a.5, Folio I, Document 39, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as Acta.) Möllendorf had been concerned for some time with improving the speed of movement of reinforcing forces westward. He co-authored an Entwurf ("Rough Draft") for an Etappen Convention ("Transport and Communications Control") of nine parts in late 1790 and 1791. In this draft various areas of passage are outlined, the amount of forage that the local commissariats of the areas shall provide these units and specifies that the Etappen Department would have absolute authority to requisition such forage.

[105] G.K.G.F., Folio VII, Document 1.

[106] Ibid., Document 3.

Möllendorf himself and, in a personal note to von Borcke which was enclosed with the order, he explained that the Major's unit was being called upon to "exertions of great magnitude in the service of the entire army."[107]

On 14 June the battalion left Berlin. They marched steadily every day, twelve to fourteen hours depending upon the weather and the road conditions.[108] They arrived at Mainz on 13 July--a march of almost vertiginous rapidity for any Prussian unit of the day. This was indeed the shortest time on march ever taken by an infantry unit from Berlin to the Rhine.[109] A report on "the remarkable achievements of the Fusiliers was submitted to the King on July 15 by von Alvensleben.[110]

This feat had not been achieved without cost: four officers and cadets, one surgeon and 150 non-commissioned officers and men had fallen out on the way from various causes, mainly fatigue and foot ailments.[111] Möllendorf was not particularly troubled by these losses and noted in a memo to Frederick William II that these casualties were "acceptable" ("annehmbarkeit") in view of the great achievement.[112]

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[107] Ibid., Document 2. [108] Ibid., Document 3.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., Document 4, Memorandum #3189 attached.

[111] Ibid., covering Memorandum #3179. [112] Ibid.

Apparently Möllendorf had second thoughts about the longterm practicality of such route marches: within a few days of the fusiliers' arrival in Mainz the Commander and von Borcke were debating the use of the unit in action. Möllendorf claimed that the soldiers were too fatigued to be of any practical use for a long time. He ordered the battalion into reserve despite a bitter protest from its commander.[113] Von Borcke later complained that his outfit's achievement had gone for nothing but made no formal disagreement.[114] The experiment was not repeated.

Brunswick had seldom employed the fusilier units that he had available. Instead of using them against the French skirmishers he had employed them mainly as depôt guards and communications security patrols. This had an unfortunate effect upon the morale of some fusilier officers, and two at least officially complained about their enforced inactivity.[115]

Möllendorf and Alvensleben did not share Brunswick's disregard for the light infantry. Within a few weeks of the Duke's relief the fusilier battalions von Thadden and

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[113] Ibid., Document 81-5. These outline a series of memoranda between Möllendorf and Borcke.

[114] Ibid., Document 85.

[115] Ibid., Document 86.

von Martini were moved into the area outside Naumburg and from there further west where they ambushed and destroyed a large raiding force of French chasseurs à cheval, capturing a captain, two subalterns and a dozen troopers. Thirty-five other Frenchmen were killed and a "large number" fled the field.[116] Prussian losses were given at five wounded.[117]

This success was heartening and well received by most of the Prussian commanders. However, one argument against the use of Fusiliers on any extended basis was that the very lack of field kit which enabled them to operate with such mobility told against their health in the long run. Lack of supplies sooner or later affected the troops' health and this was reflected in the higher incidence of "wastage: in Fusilier units.[118] This argument seems not to have been without foundation as is reflected in a February 19, 1794 request from von Hannewurf, infantry commander at Frankfurt am Main. He requested the Magdeburg Depôt to immediately forward two officers, eight non-commissioned officers, one surgeon and 250 men to replace the losses among his four battalions of fusiliers.[119]

This request was complied with but the fusilier depôt commander, von Ernst, sent a complaint to Hannewurff (with a

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[116] Ibid., Folio VI, Document 37. [117] Ibid.

[118] See below. [119] Ibid., Document 45.

copy for von Müffling, the area commander) that this was the second such demand for reinforcements in six months and that the first had been a "great drain" upon the personnel reserves and that the second was equally so.[120]

The demands of position warfare, coupled with raiding, had made inroads into the cavalry reserves also. By May 1794 von Hylands,[121] commander of the Cavalry Depôt at Magdeburg, complained that as of the end of April the total number of available horsemen was 19 officers, 17 non-commissioned officers, 9 trumpeters, 4 surgeons, 6 cadet officers, 999 cuirassiers, 11 guides, 1587 other troopers.[122] Those constituted the entire western front's cavalry reserve!

This complaint was a response to an order from General von Bohrich, of the King's Collegium,[123] to dispatch a force of 320 hussars to make an extended raid into the Vosges to "disrupt the provisioning of French units in the area."[124] This raiding force was to be raised from the reserves so as not to "further weaken the mounted units already at the front."[125] Von Bohrich's order was complied with but the raid, launched in the middle of May, did not

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[120] Ibid., Document 46.

[121] Ibid., Document 78. Of Greek extraction perhaps?

[122] Ibid. [123] Ibid., Document 58.

[124] Ibid. [125] Ibid.

succeed in disrupting French provisioning and cost the Prussians nearly forty men killed and wounded and some fifty horses lost.[126]

Between the first of March and the end of May 1794 Prussian garrisons were everywhere strengthened: Heidelberg was given 2000 infantry and Meistenheim and the line of the Lauter each received a regiment of infantry and several squadrons of cavalry.[127] But the Trier garrison, held by Möllendorf to be "dangerously exposed," was not sent any substantial force--even though Prussian scouts reported that the French forces in the area had already been strengthened by three battalions of infantry, 600 cavalry and six batteries of cannon.[128]

As spring turned to summer Möllendorf's fears of not having sufficient strength to meet a renewed French offensive

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[126] Ibid., Document 81, apparently an "after action report."

[127] Möllendorf: Korrespondenz 1794-5, Repositum 63 86 A 24b, Folio I, Document 22, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as M:K.) Hannewurf was not pleased by these cavalry reinforcements. He complained to Möllendorf and the Collegium on 4 April, 1794 that he had a total of "2778 men not reserved as replacements, what am I to do?" See G.K.G.F., Folio VII, Document 120.

[128] M:K., Folio I, Document 18. Rüchel, in an attached memorandum (Document 19) expresses more concern for the position in light of these French increases but Möllendorf noted in the margin of this memo that Kohler, one of the commanders of the garrison expressed "confidence in his position and troops."

in the Rhine-Vosges region began to abate. In a dispatch dated 6 June he expressed himself as feeling confident of putting up a very "respectable showing" with the combat troops under his command. At the time of the dispatch he reported to Berlin that he had 40,000 troops to use "gegen Frankreich"; 20,000 more were at Darmstadt facing Hoche and some 5000 were "in position in French territory" facing French forces of undetermined strength.[129] In all, Prussian effectives totalled 65,000 to 70,000 against French forces which Möllendorf estimated at 90,000.[130]

Prior to this report Möllendorf's defenses had already undergone severe testing. The French launched an offensive in the area around Kaiserslautern and Saarbrücken on 24 May. The threat was immediate, the French forces were in great strength, the Prussians were strained to hold their ground.[131] This assault triggered others:

Hohenloch's forces between Neustadt and Schifferstadt were severely hammered by French artillery fire accompanied by a wave of French infantry attacks. So hard pressed were the Prussians here that the Weymar cavalry regiment, Hohenlohe's immediate reserve, had to be committed in a

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[129] Ibid., Document 34.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., Document 83.

dismounted role.[132] The position was successfully held but only after an advanced battalion at Wolfreimsdorf was forced to evacuate its fortification and fall back on the main body.[133] General von Courbière and his division covered the gap left by the cavalry's shifting to support Hohenlohe.[134]

The fighting around Kaiserslautern gradually died away as May turned into June. The Prussians rode out the crisis very well, losing only the advanced position at Wolfreimsdorf to the enemy. The main positions were all held and the French losses were significantly higher than those of their opponents.[135] The Prussian leadership had borne up well in the defensive position fighting and Möllendorf pronounced himself well-pleased with the performance of all concerned.[136]

The defensive success at Kaiserslautern was followed by a prolonged lull in major military operations in the Rhine-Vosges area. This now enabled Möllendorf and other

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[132] Ibid. Evidently the terrain was unfavorable for cavalry.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid. Artillery fire concentrated upon the gap until von Courbière's men arrived to hold the ground.

[135] Ibid., Document 88. Möllendorf claims French losses as "very nearly double our own."

[136] Ibid.

Prussian strategists to turn their eyes to another sector of the western front which we have hitherto not examined: the Flanders-Netherlands area. Here also Prussian forces had been operating with Allied units since 1792 against the French Revolutionary threat.

Here the situation had always been somewhat different, in a military sense, than further south and east. The relative lack of terrain obstacles, close and cooperative ties with their British and Austrian Allies, and an enemy whose forces were much less fervent in revolutionary zeal than those on the Rhine, gave the Prussians an enhanced opportunity to demonstrate that they were capable of conducting as effective an offensive campaign as elsewhere they had revealed their defensive skills.

Prussia's forces in the Netherlands were in the main the responsibility of General von Tauentzein, an able officer who later came to considerable grief at Jena-Auerstädt.[137] His general headquarters was at Cologne, although the main battle front was further to the west. However, Tauentzein was often up at the front and generally kept himself abreast of events as they developed.[138]

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[137]Although his small force threw back the first French attack at Vierzehnheiligen.

[138]Tauentzein: Korrespondenz 1793-4, Repositum 26 258F, Folio XXVII, Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Merseburg, East Germany. (Hereinafter cited as T:K.)

In late January 1793 Tauentzein reported to Frederick William (with whom he seems to have been on intimate terms as he continued to report directly to him) that the front was mainly very quiet and that he was taking advantage of this situation to add garrisons to the surrounding towns. In particular the garrison at Aachen was increased by some 800 men and Tauentzein began to form the Prussian artillery into three distinct units. Each unit would operate for supplies and personnel out of its own depôt and would not be permitted to draw from any others. Thus the General informed his sovereign it would be easier to measure the daily expenditure of ammunition.[139]

In view of the increased vulnerability of these exposed conglomerations to raids by irregulars and light units, Tauentzein positioned a regiment of cuirassiers to guard the routes to the two northernmost depôts, while a brigade of cavalry was positioned in front of the third.[140] This commitment of mobile units to what was essentially a role of passive defense was justified by the General on the grounds of "increased efficiency of control" of field units.[141]

The main collection point for units arriving for the

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[139] Ibid., Document 3. [140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

Flanders area was Koblenz and Tauentzein reported that he spent a good deal of time there studying the march routes of the units from there to the front. He noted that the infantry units especially looked "very tired" upon arriving and that he proposed to rest them for a few days in Koblenz before sending them further west.[142]

All was not quiet on the western front, however. In the early part of February 1793 Tauentzein reported to the King that the officers of an infantry regiment defending the western outskirts of Mons had lost "considerable baggage" to a French raiding force, and that he had had to reprove them "in the name of your Majesty." He concluded his report with a complaint about the "unsoldierly tactics of the forces of lawlessness and disorder."[143]

Weather conditions inhibited either of the opposing sides from initiating any significant action during the next several months. During this somnolent period the only incident of interest was mainly political, not military. This was the capture by the Prussians of three delegates to the French National Convention, the delegation to that body from Lille.

Tauentzein reported to Frederick William II that he was proceeding to Mons, where the delegates were being kept,

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[142] Ibid., Document 4. [143] Ibid.

to interrogate them. He also added that he was considering using them to open an exchange with Dumouriez, his opposite number on the French side.[144] Tauentzein concluded his dispatch by assuring the King that he would consult with Prince Coburg, in command of the Prussian mounted units in the Mons region, General Knobelsdorff, the over-all regional commander, and the Austrian liaison officer attached to the Mons command, about forthcoming operations and would forward any interesting projects to "Votre Majestie."[145]

In late March 1793 Dumouriez sent an indignant protest to Prince Coburg, a protest forwarded to Tauentzein, who sent a copy to the King along with some comments of his own: Dumouriez angrily expressed outrage at such a "high-handed action" and demanded the return of the delegates. He warned that if that was not done he firmly intended "to increase activities of a military nature."[146] Tauentzein reminded his sovereign that "The men of the King are not fearful of 'anarchie' and will not be provoked by it."[147]

But Dumouriez was not content with his March admonition; he continued his campaign of letters. On April 1 he dispatched a furious note to Tauentzein (which was apparently

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[144] Ibid., Documents 5-6. [145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., Document 7, attached memorandum from Dumouriez.

[147] Ibid.

not received by the latter until 30 April) in which he accused Prince Coburg of conspiring with the captured delegates (and an unnamed fourth personage) to assassinate him. The French commander went on to rail against the "tyrannical Assembly" in Paris and urged that Tauentzein order Coburg to refute the "horrible anarchists" with whom he was dealing.[148]

Further on in his communication Dumouriez observed that Coburg was deceitful, in that he had failed to keep a promise he had made at the beginning of the campaign to be a "peaceful antagonist for the good of the troops." Instead, the Prince had launched "destructive and horrible actions," and had in every way disturbed the tranquility of the front.[149]

At the conclusion of this remarkable dispatch, Dumouriez appealed to Tauentzein to treat him "honorably" in the future in all dealings "military or no." The missive ended with fulsome assurances by the Frenchman of his "most perfect admiration" of the General and of the King of Prussia.[150]

A few days after writing this communiqué to his

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid. Dumouriez's document was in two parts.

[150] Ibid.

Allied foes Dumouriez capped the whole episode by defecting to them. This occurred on 5 April when Dumouriez, after a vain attempt to bring substantial parts of his command with him, fled into Austro-Prussian lines. All of this was an interesting reflection of the disorder inside the Revolutionary French command, and raised some hopes among the Prussians of imminent French internal collapse, but its overall military significance was slight.[151] Tauentzein admitted as much when he observed to Frederick William II on 2 May 1793 that the morale of the French troops "did not seem much altered."[152] Not that this mattered much to the Prussians, he hastened to add, whose troops were in no way affected but were resolved to "hold all positions" in the face of enemy attacks.[153]

The Prussian leader went on to reveal that some Prussian unit commanders had exceeded their standing orders, and that one unit in particular, the Regiment von Kalkstein, had in fact taken some hills near Gross-Schostein from French advanced parties. The General assured his ruler that he had "with regret" ordered the Regiment to give up what it

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[151]Dumouriez defected from his command and published a remarkable defense which is reproduced in an English translation in Appendix One.

[152]Ibid., Document 11.

[153]Ibid.

had taken and to fall back to those positions formerly held.[154]

Tauentzein's May 2 dispatch ended with some sarcastic observations about the insistence of "l'Anglais" (sic) that the Prussians take further offensive action, but disposed of these urgings with the remark that "an old campaigner such as Your Majesty knows when the time is right to stand on the defensive and make the enemy come to you."[155] With an added assurance of the "tranquility" ("tranquillité") of the Prussian troops Tauentzein concluded his note.[156]

But by 17 May, with the advent of good campaigning weather, the "tranquillité" of the front began to change: A raid into French positions near Mons by 500 émigrés attached to the Prussian forces provoked the French to retaliation. On 14 May increasing pressure on the Austrian position west of Mons forced Colonel Mack to abandon his post and fall back on the town.[157] At the same time Prince Hohenlohe, the senior Prussian commander in the Mons area, resigned his command. He was replaced by General von Schroeder, former commander of the Trier garrison but there was an initial hiatus before the latter took up his new posting. Resistance to the French pressure was not everywhere impressive

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[154] Ibid. [155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid. [157] Ibid., Document 13.

and Prince Coburg summarily sacked two emigré officers, De Suiedan and Dampierre, because their military leadership was "très médiocre."[158]

Reports of desertion among the Prussians began to increase and Tauentzein confessed to the King that "disaffection" was rife in some cantonments near the front--although he claimed that news of increased disaffection and desertion among the French forces revealed far more serious problems than those of the Allies.[159] Increased French activity was not anticipated, the General assured Berlin, as the terrain was "not favorable for cavalry," and thus an eastwardly-directed expedition would meet with only indifferent success anywhere between Cologne and Valenciennes. Only "tentative movements" from the French would be undertaken and all of these would be "easily dealt with. The lines, Your Majesty, are secure."[160]

But from then on the security of those lines would be furiously and continuously tested by the now-aroused French: Under new and more politically reliable leaders, the revolutionary forces hurled themselves upon the Prussian

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[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid. Tauentzein also expressed hope that the Royalist disaffection in Normandy would affect French morale on his front.

[160] Ibid.

outposts all around the points of the compass. On 6 June Tauentzein informed Berlin that "the filthy tirailleurs and the other bandits of anarchy," ("le sale tirailleurs et la autre bandits de l'anarchie (sic)"), that is, the French light troops and irregulars, were exerting immense pressure upon his men.[161] The General urgently recommended the commitment of 15,000 men to deal with "la petit Corps de Trouppes (sic) légères que se trouvail (sic) a aux armée."[162] In an added footnote to this report Knobelsdorf requested immediate permission from Berlin to "retrait a poste (sic) la securité dans l'interieur."[163]

On 7 June 1793 Tauentzein sent a brief dispatch to his royal master noting that Prussian positions near Tournai, especially the observation posts were under hourly-increasing pressure "from the light troops." He suggested that the King at once approve "what local defensive measures may be deemed necessary by the leaders on the spot" and to perhaps "look to the 'Eastern cantons' for possible reinforcements."[164]

Berlin rejected the request for 15,000 reinforcements and Tauentzein was forced to fall back upon his own resources to deal with the increasingly serious situation at the front. On 17 July he informed Frederick William that 2000 men were

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[161] Ibid., Document 14. [162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid. [164] Ibid.

transported from Cologne to Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) to shore up the Prussian position there. Although he said of Aachen "la ville n'est pas grande," it was of considerable strategic importance as a supply and communications center, and the French had committed "first class troops" to this front.[165]

This dispatch contained a rather ominous observation in the form of an extended disquisition upon the less-than-brilliant performance of "les troupes de la maison Autriche," in their rôle of supporting Prussian positions.[166] Tauentzein described the activities of his Allies as "sansdessein" and commented upon the arrival of Archduke Karl at Brussels with the succinct observation "What good he may do there God alone knows!"[167] He then concluded his dispatch with a discussion of the possibilities of the appearance of an Anglo-Hanoverian expeditionary force on the coastal flank of the Allies but dismissed the effectiveness of this force by speculating that it will be drawn into a rôle as a support for the "ineffectual Austrian-Netherlandish forces" at Brussels and "will accomplish nothing in the way of aiding our endeavors."[168]

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[165] Ibid., Document 15.

[166] Ibid. This reflects the usual practice of blaming one's Allies when operations are not going too well.

[167] Ibid., Document 15, annex paragraph a.

[168] Ibid.

On 21 July Tauentzein had the "inexpressible satisfaction" of reporting to His Majesty the fall of Mainz, which surrendered to Prince Coburg "in the name of Your Majesty." The main reason for the great victory lay with the Prussian artillery whose "devoted batteries" unceasingly belabored the French until they submitted.[169] But, alas, his "great and veritable satisfaction" with all the arms of the Prussian force: infantry, young cadet officers, floating batteries, even the light cavalry units who secured the rear-areas from French marauders, all these valiant men were tempered with the knowledge that the Prussian position at Trier was becoming "increasingly untenable" and would either have to be abandoned or "be in the situation of Mainz."[170]

The less-than-perfect relationship with Prussia's Allies was also a subject of some discussion in the July 21 report. Tauentzein felt that any help from the Austrians at Brussels or from the Anglo-Hanoverians was extremely unlikely "in any event that can be conceived."[171] The Prussian

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[169] Ibid., Document 17, Tauentzein also attributes the fall of Mainz to the storming of the crucial strongpoints Ravelins 38 and 39 by Prussian infantry at a cost of 30 men lost. He also claims that the Prussians captured 43 French officers and men and killed or wounded over a hundred more.

[170] Ibid., Document 18. An extension of the previous report which was apparently sent in two parts.

[171] Ibid.

leader also mentioned that the Austrians were "quite exercised" over a report that the French had discovered "an underground road" ("un chemin souterrain") and that troops were secretly pouring into the area between Mons and Brussels.[172] Tauentzein expressed his disbelief in this tale but added that this story, combined with unceasing French propaganda, was having an overall subversive affect upon the soldiery of Austria and England, especially the Irish troops.[173]

On 29 July the indefatigable Prussian General was again up in the front lines. In a note sent to the King on that date Tauentzein declared that Valenciennes would be in a position to effectively resist all "threats and investments" as of 1 August. He himself had personally overseen the transporting of "L'artillerie, munitions et provisions" to the garrison. He also admitted that a French assault upon the town prior to his writing would probably have succeeded as the defenses had been in "un état pitoyable."[174]

The remainder of the summer of 1793 saw Tauentzein's men busy with fortification, resupply and defensive patrolling, interspersed with occasional raids and probes of the advanced posts of the French. The front changed little and

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[172] Ibid. [173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid., Document 19.

casualties were in general light, even trifling.[175] Desertion was, as usual, frequent but "under control,"--most deserters either returning to their units or being apprehended promptly by the patrols of Hussars in the rear areas. Tauentzein also expressed gratitude for the prompt cooperation by the Austrians in mutual returns of deserters from the respective armies.[176] As for defection to the French, reports of the numbers of such "malefactors" had been highly exaggerated. It was true that there had been incidents of line crossing "but mainly from Rhineland units, not from the loyal men from further east."[177] Tauentzein assured the sovereign that such incidents would not occur in the future.

By the end of September the positions of the Allied forces seemed everywhere secured and invulnerable: "From

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[175] Ibid., Document 22. Tauentzein describes his losses as "tres légère."

[176] Tauentzein was benefiting in this respect from the May 17, 1792 Convention between Frederick William II and the Austrian Emperor for a mutual return of deserters Zurücklieferung from their mutual respective forces engaged against the French. For the terms of this convention see A.G., Folio IV, Document 79.

[177] T:K., Document 22. French propaganda may have indeed been more effective among the West German units than from the more truly Prussian ones. One example of such propaganda was a leaflet in German: Die Rechte fremder Nazionen ben der neuen Französischen Staatsveränderung which flooded the Rhineland in the spring of 1792. It is a clear and reasoned defense of the Revolution and appeals to the Allied soldiery not to oppose "The Course of History." See G.K.G.F., Folio I, Document 3.

Douay to Arras a formidable army is ready to support expeditions or diversions."[178] In view of the fact that the Allies did not at this time occupy the above mentioned area it would appear that Tauentzein was urging an advance in this area. It is certain that he did disagree with a plan jointly proposed by Coburg and Wurmser for a general advance all along the line further towards the coast.[179] In this proposal of his cavalry chief and Austrian opposite number, the Prussian commander saw "signs of intrigue, of personal advantage, of personal considerations," when the safest of courses was that pursued with "unending caution."[180]

On 26 September Tauentzein sent his monarch the news that the Prince of Orange with 16,000 men would arrive on 4 October to reinforce the armies of the Duke of York and that extensive action would be better postponed until after that date. "Tout est parfaitement tranquille a toute parte."[181] He did however suggest that Prussian forces might support a diversion near Maubeuge or support "clearing operations" in the Valenciennes area "as these types of actions would most accord with caution and consideration."[182]

By mid-October a clear picture of the state of the

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[178] T:K., Document 20. [179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid. [181] Ibid. [182] Ibid.

Allied positions in the Low Countries had emerged. The Prussian commander was able to confidently report to Potsdam that most of the major French troop concentrations had been located with the most important one near Guise facing chiefly Austrian troops and an attached emigré-Prussian "corps of observation" commanded by a "Monsieur Clerfaye."[183]

It was assumed that this force would operate mostly on the right bank of the Sambre in an area held by some 26,000 troops, which would soon be reinforced by 5000 Anglo-Hanoverians.[184] The Austrians had requested the further addition of a small corps of Prussians under Beniofsky, a force which would be mainly used to link the Austrians with the bulk of the Prussian cavalry now being drawn up in divisions in the plains.[185]

Facing the latter formations were the forces of General de la Tour and Tauentzein indicated his intention to reinforce the Prussian horse with battalions of line-infantry "attached to the rear to lend support."[186] Most

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[183] Ibid., Documents 22-24, a very lengthy situation report.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid. Beniofsky's force was concentrated mainly around the Beaumont area.

[186] Ibid.

of these units were under the command of Hohenlohe whose headquarters were at Dornstein.[187]

The Prussian leader expressed "general confidence" in the "invincibility" of the Prussian positions but expressed some concern about Hohenlohe's forces which were under considerable and unremitting pressure from "un parties des Francaises chevallerie" which were "charging about and discouraging movement beyond camp lines."[188] Hohenlohe was authorized to "pull back from any position that is badly menaced and whose loss would not weaken the main position."[189]

A few days later another dispatch to General Headquarters reflected a much less cheerful attitude: Although Maubeuge was entrenched heavily for defense and with its supporting armies' occupying "a premier defense line around Berlaincourt and Deschamp," the advanced outposts at Ferrière were under intense pressure.[190] Further south the position in the village of Dorleur was "obliged to be abandoned" due to heavy French artillery shelling augmented by "murderous and continuous sniping" which caused "grievous

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[187] Ibid. [188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid. These outposts were only weakly held.

loss" to the Prussian grenadiers holding the town.[191]

As if this were not bad enough, poor Beniofsky's men were now receiving increased attention from their foes. The corps was "much afflicted" by parties of tirailleurs and chasseurs à cheval who infiltrated behind its positions and caused "much damage."[192] Beniofsky was urgently requesting the dispatch of dragoons and hussars for relief from these "pests." Tauentzein wondered whether a better solution would be to completely abandon the position of liaison between the cavalry and the Austrians and allow Beniofsky's men to fall back "as far as necessary for safety."[193]

This dolorous dispatch went on to complain of continued Austrian failure to effectively observe or contain the French forces opposite them and maintained that they were "tres ignorant la défaite(s) des françaises."[194] Reproaches from Tauentzein to his Austrian opposite number did no good and the conclusion was that Austria was of little aid

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[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid. However, a marginal note observes that most of the damage seems to have been inflicted on civilians rather then the troops.

[193] Ibid. Beniofsky seems not to have agreed with Tauentzein on this.

[194] Ibid., Document 24, annex paragraph a.

and no protection to her friends.[195] Clearly there was little harmony or cooperation between the Allies.

Having discussed this vexing matter Tauentzein then again turned to the continuing French pressure upon his front: In an eloquent passage he heaped praise upon the three infantry regiments of von Stein, Klebeck, and Hohenlohe (a younger relation of the Prince commanded this unit), who had performed "prodigies of valor" against the enemy before Mons. But after more fulsome praise the writer admitted to his readers in Potsdam that all of these "prodigies" were performed in covering the retreat of General de Terry's unit from the Mons area![196]

At long last Tauentzein came to the real meat of this long dispatch of 17 October: He recommended that the entire "projet sur Maubeuge" (which was an offensive probing of the area near that town)[197] be abandoned. He tersely summed up what was only too obviously a potentially disastrous situation by referring to the operation as "a sortie which is fast becoming a retreat and may soon become a rout!"[198] In addition to abandoning a really risky operation the Prussian soldiers involved were needed to

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[195] Ibid. [196] Ibid. [197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid. This was perhaps an excessively pessimistic estimate, and Beniofsky, in an attached memorandum (Document 24a) denied that the French pressure was irresistable.

"steady up the general alignment of the troops and aid in the closure of gaps in the main line."[199] French light raiding and scouting parties were beginning to take advantage of these gaps (which were partially caused by the shifting of Colloredo's Austro-Hanoverian troops to the right) to slip through to "raid, harass, destroy and recruit (?) in the rear of our forces."[200]

Permission was quickly given by the High Command to give over the Maubeuge operation[201] but the general overall situation for the Allies did not improve. Indeed, it worsened decisivly, and a gloomy tone crept into Tauentzein's next report, on 22 October: The General reported that Allied positions all along the Sambre had been "gravely compromised," and that the Kaunitz Batallion had been severely defeated and forced to retreat,[202] and that the English campaign near Dunkirk had failed, with "très

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[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid., apparently Tauentzein was aware that numerous sympathizers with the Revolutionary forces were inhabitants of the area.

[201] Ibid., Document 26, acknowledges this permission to abandon.

[202] Ibid., Document 15. The type of unit that the Kaunitz Batallion was is not given, perhaps it was a light infantry formation.

malades" and "malgre qui la nation anglais."[203] Furthermore, all the area around Marbeuge had come under a massive French assault following the failure of the Allied sortie. The French forces are credited with possession "un supériorité bein margie et j'etois Surpris qu'on aittache (sic)."[204] It was feared that the whole position would have to be given up.[205]

Three days later Tauentzein reported a general retrograde movement of the Allied armies in the Low Countries and a great advance for the French. The latter had "pushed past the guard of the Austrians," and of Beniofsky's weak corps, and the whole position was laid open to the menace of 50,000 Frenchmen, with an immediate and pressing danger to Mons.[206] The entire front was in a state of "dangerous flux."[207]

But Tauentzein assured his monarch and superiors that the Prussians were so far holding their main positions and were "repelling the hordes of attackers," and that the French position "c'est ne sans danger (sic)."[208] General Alvintzy, commander of the Austrian reserves, and his men

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[203] Ibid., Document 26.

[204] Ibid., Document 27.

[205] Ibid. [206] Ibid., Document 29.

[207] Ibid. [208] Ibid.

were being "rushed to the fore" as were all Prussian reserves and "tranquillité" would soon be restored. The General ended his dispatch with assurances also that he was looking forward with "great ardor" to the impending arrival of His Majesty's emissaries at the front.[209]

Tauentzein's confidence that the situation would improve was soon justified. October 29 saw him inform Berlin that the Allied forces had that week successfully "reoccupent leurs ancient Postes la Flandre (sic)."[210] The French had nearly everywhere fallen back "upon the approach of Your Majesty's troops" and were taking up a defensive position between Ypres and Menin.[211] Further south the Duke of York was marching to occupy Tournai and drive out the French troops under Lannoy but had also already lost six cannon in fighting in this area.[212]

The Prussians were now undergoing considerable Austrian pressure, at least at the command level: Austrian General Otto Kray had assumed command of the Austrian contingent and was urging a further general advance west. This proposal was definitely not to Tauentzein's liking: "We, on the other hand, prefer to be in our own positions on

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[209] Ibid., Document 29.

[210] Ibid., Document 21.

[211] Ibid. [212] Ibid.

the Sambre facing Lannoy."[213] Reports were also received that the French in Alsace had received 20,000 more troops and thus any advance would be "too dangerous with the forces we now can field."[214]

During the next several days talks between the Allied leaders resulted in a halting of further westward movement. It was also decided to shift the bulk of Kray's troops to the area of the Sambre running to the Flemish coast. Or rather it was decided to recommend this shifting to the Austrians and General Tauentzein begged his King to suggest this to the Austrian Emperor while he urged his suit upon Kray.[215]

The weather in Flanders now began to change into the usual autumnal conditions normal for the area: cold, soaking rain mixed with sleet. Ground conditions began to be transformed into a state that inhibited extensive or even limited movement and the fighting along the front sputtered to a halt. The positions of the opposing forces as 1793 ended were about where they had been when the year began.[216]

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[213] Ibid. Apparently Kray wanted to occupy the area around Marchenoir, which was fairly heavily forested.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid., Document 21a. This was apparently a confidential memo to the King appended to the main situation report.

[216] Ibid., Document 1a. Although placed out of sequence in the folio this is a report dated 29 December and

The Prussian command was not displeased with the results of the fighting in the Low Countries. However, Tauentzein was most disappointed in the campaign's achievements. He felt that more might have been accomplished had cooperation among the Allies been better, had more reinforcements been available to him, and had the rear areas not drained away so many fighting men for security and police duties.[217] Nevertheless he expressed satisfaction that all "major positions occupied in January were still in Prussian hands" at the end of the year.[218]

Strategically the fighting in the Low Countries had been a failure for Prussia and her Allies. Despite some opportunities to seize major French positions or to at least disrupt French areas of concentration, the Allied forces had been handled with excessive caution, even timidity, and with little or no coordination. The French had been allowed to retain the strategic and tactical initiative during most of the period and the Prussians and their friends had played a role of reacting to French moves rather than acting upon the French situation and exploiting opportunities when they presented themselves.

Tauentzein himself was not without blame in the

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is obviously an end-of-year appreciation of the state of the front and forces.

[217] Ibid. [218] Ibid.

conduct of operations in Flanders. He constantly thought in defensive terms and all his correspondence to Frederick William II reflects this. His dispatches are filled with assurances and expressions of confidence in the ability of the Prussian soldiers to "hold and maintain their positions."[219] He bickered with Coburg over the smallest projected raids and invariably tied down most of his mounted units in subsidiary operations directed toward the maintenance of security and supply and protecting against French raids instead of raiding the French.[220]

In all fairness to the Prussian commander the obstacles facing him, both front and rear, were formidable:

The terrain, although flat, was not always an aid to the offense. In places thickly wooded, other areas were waterlogged, and tended to bog down any extensive traffic, foot and wheeled, which might traverse it. Towns were fairly close together but were often fortified and thus restricted large flanking movements or rapid advances by the Prussian regulars. Rain was frequent and turned the

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[219]This phrase recurs with increasing frequency in all of Tauentzein's dispatches.

[220]Apparently there was a personality clash between Coburg and his commander. Tauentzein, in a letter to the King dated 1 October 1794, mentions that he once commanded the Coburg Dragoons and "knows for a long while how to deal with this young officer." Evidently the Prince had been a junior officer under him. See T:K., Folio 27, Document 2.

unmetalled roads into quagmires which retarded and discouraged marching by large bodies of men.[221]

The French forces opposing the Prussians were another important obstacle. Though initially not formidable, wanting in motivation and morale more than in numbers,[222] they improved as time went along. Probably always superior in numbers to their opponents,[223] they were in the main well-led and imbued with an offensive spirit that expressed itself in raids and sudden and fierce attacks upon their more stolid adversaries. That most of these attacks either failed or were only partially successful was less important than the fact that they contributed to keeping the Allies on

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[221]All these factors were to hamper modern armies fighting in the same areas in both world wars.

[222]In an early report from General Wartensleben, one of the first commanders in the area in 1792 to come into contact with the French, he dismisses many of their units as "scarcely better than mobs of banditti." See G.K.G.F., Folio I, Document w.3.

[223]This is admittedly hard to prove with any absolute certainty, but many of the dispatches and memoranda from Tauentzein, Rüchel, Möllendorf, and more junior commanders make repeated reference to the "clouds of enemy sharpshooters," and of the "hordes of French chasseurs and light foot." This certainly seems to have given the Prussians the impression of vast numbers of French troops opposite them and even more sober intelligence reports consistently credit the French with having more troops on each particular sector than do the Allies. How accurate these assessments were is of course somewhat conjectural but the fact that the Allies believed they were heavily outnumbered must have had some effect upon their operational planning.

the defensive and discouraging offensives that might really have threatened the revolutionary homeland.[224]

In addition, the high proportion or light and semi-irregular units among the French decreased the dependence of the latter upon supply depôts and fixed magazines. Able to live off the country, to forage in enemy-held territory as well as their own, these units were much less vulnerable to Prussian assaults on their logistical bases than was the converse. In fact, the very lack of vulnerable rear-area targets contributed to Prussian-Allied tactical lethargy--there simply was a dearth of targets for any small raids.[225]

In addition, the political and (sometimes ethnic) sympathy of much of the civilian population was with the French. This was even true in parts of the Rhineland and other areas west of the river. (At least in the beginning, although French plundering and indiscipline alienated a great

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[224]Clausewitz realized this even when he was a young officer cadet in the Prussian forces in 1793. He also correctly diagnosed the reason for Prussian failure when he wrote: "Prussia had neither anything to conquer nor to defend . . . she continued the war with a feeling of very little interest." Clausewitz, On War, Chapter 15.

[225]At least on any consistent basis. The same problem confronted the German forces on the Russian front after 1943 when the Red Army's very lack of sophisticated supply systems frustrated most German counterattacks designed to disrupt the Russian advance.

deal of this sympathy as time went on.)[226] Tauentzein himself complained that French raiders frequently recruited in his rear and "often found a welcome and safe haven with the deluded peasantry."[227] This sympathy helped French field intelligence and deprived any but the smallest-level Prussian movements of any secrecy and surprise.[228]

Prussian operations were also crippled, or at least hampered, by Tauentzein's unsatisfactory liaison with his Austrian allies. Memories of past conflicts between the two states, language barriers between the Prussian soldiers and the non-German majority of the Austrian rank-and-file, religious differences, and personality discords among the commanders, contributed to this unfortunate state of affairs.[229] And there was considerable disagreement between Tauentzein and the allied commanders over the ultimate goals of their operations.[230] In general, the allied forces

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[226] As at Mainz. For a discussion of the unfortunate effects of French indiscipline see Parkinson, p. 26.

[227] T:K., Folio 27, Document 32.

[228] See above Note 200 and Ibid.

[229] See above, pp. 33-35 and Tauentzein's observations in his Korrespondenz.

[230] The Austrians were urging more extensive operations in the Flanders coastal area, whereas the Prussian view was that this area was unproductive "of potential achievements that would be at all decisive." T:K., Folio 27, Document 21.

operated as they pleased, although one force might aid another in local situations.[231]

Tauentzein did not always enjoy complete support or understanding from Berlin either. Requests for substantial drafts of men and equipment were not always granted and lines of communication between Tauentzein and Möllendorf and other Prussian commanders did not always function properly. The High Command in Berlin-Potsdam did not always understand the situation or the goals of the Flanders campaign and Tauentzein was continually having to explain, justify, describe, the simplest operations to his sovereign before getting permission to proceed.[232] Advice from home was often proffered, though seldom taken.

Möllendorf and other Prussian leaders were quite frankly less than pleased with the presence of Prussian forces in the Low Countries anyway. Möllendorf believed that the campaign in this area was at best subsidiary and at worst useless to the main designs of Prussian strategy. He believed that the main object of Tauentzein's forces was to guard the approaches to Cologne and Koblenz and that further operations further west simply weakened and detracted from

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[231]See above pp. 15-18.

[232]See above.

this task.[233]

The Marshal viewed the entire Netherlands as a strategic dead-end, that nothing achieved in this area could have more than a marginal effect upon the French war-machine, that any gains were not worth the effort and merely exposed valuable units of the Prussian Army to unnecessary danger. He went so far as to state that the operations of the Prussian forces in the Low Countries were as valueless to the Prussian State as if they were taking place in Italy![234] Needless to say, Möllendorf's willingness to cooperate with the Prussian forces north of him was severely limited.

All of these factors combined to limit the effectiveness of Prussian arms in the Netherlands. What had appeared to be a promising area of operations became instead just a stagnant, mud-soaked front tying down large numbers of Prussian soldiers in a largely-sedentary role of engaging in a series of defensive struggles against numerically superior and better-motivated foes for possession of meaningless territory.[235] The battles that raged here more

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[233] M:K., Folio I, Document 109.

[234] Ibid., Document 105.

[235] Certainly meaningless in itself, only useful for launching an offensive into France.

resemble the ghastly and purposeless fighting of the First World War than the dynamic cut-and-thrust combats of the Napoleonic Wars. As far as Möllendorf was concerned, the Low Countries offered no inviting strategic prospects anywhere and, by mid-1794, he turned his eyes elsewhere.[236]

The defensive successes resulting from the fighting around Kaiserslautern led Möllendorf to take a long overview of the general situation of the Prussian Western Front in a long memorandum on 6 June 1794:

He began this report by lamenting the general supply situation of the Prussian forces and noted that the lack of harness for the cavalry and artillery mounts was especially galling and a major factor in "curtailing the mobile operations normally expected of such forces."[237] He denied that he blamed the commanding officers but attributed this supply shortage to "an unconscionable delay in shipments from the rear."[238]

As if this was not enough, Möllendorf noted that the Prussian forces on the Rhine and Moselle had been forced to

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[236]Although in June 1794, the English did request aid from the Prussians in initiating offensive operations in Holland. See M:K., Folio I, Document 100 which is a request from Lord Cornwallis requesting a diversionary attack by the Prussians to the south of the British theater of operations.

[237]Ibid., Document 120, 6 June 1794.

[238]Ibid.

"engage continually in small battles throughout the winter," while the other units elsewhere rested and repaired their losses.[239] But despite this lack of rest the "main armies in the West" who, due to the demands of the forces in Flanders, had been deprived of the "basic materiels needed," had saved the Palatinate and other areas. They had thus caused the enemies of Prussia to fail. Nevertheless the foe continued unceasingly to plot against Mannheim and Trier.[240]

Möllendorf then went on to discuss the demands of "certain royal advisors" that a campaign in the Low Countries in support of British operations along the coast be undertaken. This was impossible so long as the main Prussian forces were lacking "everything they need to wage war successfully."[241] While all the other armies enjoyed a long rest in winter quarters "where nothing bothered them" the Prussian armies on the Rhine's left bank were engaged in "foiling the attacks of the foe."[242]

Reviewing the successful battle at Kaiserslautern where "the enemy entrenched up to their teeth was dispersed

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[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid., Document 121, a continuation of 120.

[242] Ibid.

and destroyed,"[243] the Marshal maintained that such defensive triumphs were the best type to attain under such parlous circumstances as the Prussians were forced to face:

> The news of this combat carried the alarm as far as Saarlouis, and (forced the French) to fear for this place as well as for their lines at Gueich and at Landau. This fear forced the enemy to abandon with haste its siege on Liege, and to bring the most prompt aid on the Saar side. A glance at the map will prove that the defense line which we have assigned to the enemy demands the doubling of troops which it needed before the Kaiserslautern battle.[244]

But, alas, the reconnaisance of enemy posts from the Saar to the Rhine revealed that "he has not neglected any of the essential points," and everywhere placed sufficient troops to ward off "any but the most seriously conducted attacks." True, to be present in such strength had forced the enemy to draw much reinforcement from Flanders "at the expense of the northern army," and to this degree the Kaiserslautern victory was of usefulness to the forces in Flanders.[245]

But Möllendorf was not sanguine about the prospects of further success if Prussia took the offensive in the Low

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[243] Ibid., Document 120. This dramatic description was the actual wording used by Möllendorf in his situation report, which was in French. (Translated for this writer by Professor John H. West, Dept. of Foreign Languages, University of South Carolina--Union Regional Campus, Union, S.C.)

[244] Ibid.

[245] Ibid., Document 121.

Countries. The forces there would have to be reinforced from the Rhine forces and this would entail "consummating a difficult march" by the reinforcing units. "The enemy will be given all the time to make a most dangerous advance on the Rhine" because of the weakening of Prussia's forces there. Not having to fear for their positions at Saarlouis or Landau the French will be able to also execute "their most audacious plans" in Flanders before the arrival of the Prussian forces and attack further south as well![246]

> It is in vain for us to flatter ourselves that Flanders can thus be won while having aid brought in this manner. It is only through an imposing diversion through and against Alsace and Lorraine that one can hope to arrest the enemy's plans. And the end of the last campaign proves how sensitive he is to the dangers which threaten these provinces.[247]

Thus even a massive attack would probably be strongly opposed by the well-entrenched French while dispatching troops to Flanders would only encourage French counter-assaults that might not be successfully contained. The pursuit of successes in the Netherlands risked disaster on the Rhine. The additional fact that few reserves would be made available from Prussia also was a factor in urging great operational caution.[248]

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[246] Ibid. [247] Ibid.

[248] Ibid. Möllendorf didn't mention it, but the Polish troubles evidently had absorbed most available Prussian units in the East and this is what he was evidently obliquely referring to.

But the Marshal was not urging total operational passivity for the coming months. The perilous position of the Allied force in the Low Countries "surrounded by a too numerous enemy,"[249] demanded action. To divert the French attention and reserves "and to facilitate the extrication of the Combined Armies" he proposed a spoiling attack against French positions in the Saar and adjacent areas. "The blows that it will carry there will not fail to relieve the forces in Flanders," and the risks of much Prussian loss will be avoided.[250]

> For the enemy already reassembling in force against the post of Trier and in the surroundings of Bliescastel, will not delay in sending some considerable detachments to succor Alsace and Lorraine.[251]

Möllendorf expressed the strongest support for this alternate plan and stated that it was his duty to entreat the Ministers of His Royal Highness to "fix the state of things, under the real point of view," not to disregard the true interests of their government. He urged the immediate rejection and renunciation of "the dangerous idea of sending the main Prussian Army into the Low Countries."[252]

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[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid., attached memorandum Document 122.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid. Möllendorf apparently feared that the Prussian High Command was seriously contemplating such a move.

To do as the advocates of an offensive in the Netherlands suggested was to "require the ousting of an engaged army from its theater. That is sinning against military calculation!"[253] The end result would merely be frustration in Flanders, unnecessary casualties "one has not talked at all of the losses and dangers that a march into the Low Countries will bring upon that Prussian Army itself!", and merely open the most vital field, the banks of the Rhine, to the enemy.[254]

> Will not this march open up our own provinces to the enemy's enterprise? Our stores, our hospitals, our civilians--what will become of them? It is in the country that all our depôts are established. May one count the expense and all of the sacrifices that it will be necessary to make for putting them in the range of the transferred army? It is thus under this point of view, which intimately persuaded with the equity of our Allies, we presume that you will want to reflect on the dangers to which we would find ourselves delivered by a march whose succession of events one could not doubt to be most fatal for us in particular as for the comman cause.[255]

In sum, Möllendorf urged an over-all strategy of resolute defense and retrenchment, of strengthening all occupied posts and awaiting the enemy. But tactically he advocated limited assaults in exposed areas to frustrate offensive plans of the enemy in areas where Prussian and

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[253] Ibid.

[254] Ibid.

[255] Ibid.

Allied forces were menaced and to discourage threats to those regions vital to Prussian security. This was the strategic-tactical campaign plan that Möllendorf advocated in his long memorandum of 6 June 1794.

On 22 June Möllendorf, in response to criticism of his plan, replied that the main rôle he saw for himself and his forces was "Le defence de Coblentz" and that any alternative operations which might weaken or endanger that mission were not acceptable.[256] He added that his staff agreed with him in this view of the rôle of the main Prussian forces in the West. Prussia would aid her friends and be steadfast in defense, that was the plan for 1794.

Elsewhere in Europe earlier events both political and military operated to the advantage of the French:

In those areas of Poland recently occupied by Russian and Prussian forces (the second partition of Poland was not completed until September, 1793)[257] a general revolt broke out.[258] Encouraged by a sharp defeat of the Russians at

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[256] Ibid., Document 109.

[257] R. H. Lord, The Second Partition of Poland (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1915).

[258] The Second Partition was inspired by sweeping Polish reforms carried out by the so-called "Four Years' Diet," which gave the decaying state a moderate, reformed constitution, and a more representative governing structure.

The prospect of a revived Poland was unattractive to Catherine of Russia and she commenced the occupation of Poland, with the collaboration of a reactionary cabal of

Raclawice on 4 April, Polish insurrectionary fervor spread into areas earlier occupied. Both Prussians and Russians found themselves faced with a full-scale campaign of reconquest and pacification.[259] And the Polish rising could not have come at a worse time for Prussia.

As a reflection of the Prussian concern over Poland the King himself took command of the forces available to crush the insurgency. In May 1794 Frederick William led 50,000 troops into the disaffected areas. By 15 June the Prussians had reoccupied Cracow and the areas to the west of that city and half of their field force had joined with 15,000 Russians to push on toward Warsaw. Arriving at the Polish capital, the Allied army began a rather desultory siege.[260]

Polish nobles.

In response to this Russian move, Frederick William II, not pleased with the prospect of a Russian Poland stretching to the Oder, threw Prussian troops earmarked for the West into the border districts of Thorn and Posen.

Although the Poles resisted they were without European support and were forced to submit to Russian and Prussian demands. The Austrians, who had remained outside these activities, gained nothing from this Partition and their consequent resentment was the main cause of Austro-Prussian dissension in the West. See Lord, pp. 193-199.

[259]The leader of the Polish revolt was Kosciuszko.

[260]This brief account of Prussian operations against the Polish insurrectionists is taken primarily from August von Treskow, Beitrag zur Geschichte des Polnischen Revolutionskrieges: Feldzug der Preussen im Jahre 1794, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Staatsverlag, 1936).

But in the open fields of Poland serious defects in the Prussian war machine began to manifest themselves:

Most of the Polish forces consisted of fervent peasant volunteers supported by mounted units drawn mainly from Polish cavalry deserters from the Russian armies.[261] Against these formations, which Frederick the Great would have contemptuously brushed aside, Prussian command reactions were hesitant and sluggish.

Many of the higher officers, drawn from the available pools of command after these had been combed out for service in the West, proved too old for the efficient performance of their tasks. Two general officers were dismissed by the King for "incompetence and sloth."[262] Only the handful of Prussian light-infantry and Husaren were in any way effective, having little trouble defeating and dispersing any Polish resistance they encountered.[264]

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[261]Paret, p. 63. See also Hermann von Boyen, Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des General-Feldsmarschalls Herrman von Boyen, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Leipziger Verlag, 1889.)

[262]Boyen, I, 49.

[263]Ibid.

[264]Ibid. Boyen was an adjutant to a former commander of one of these light units, General von Gunther.

The campaign against Warsaw began to stagnate as the summer wore on. Although the defenders were known to be beset with considerable internal dissension, Frederick William just could not steel himself to ordering an all-out assault on the city. His indecision communicated itself to the army and the siege dragged on and on.[265]

Meanwhile Prussia's difficulties were increased as the supply trains upon which the besiegers were dependent were repeatedly raided or otherwise obstructed by the Polish insurgents. These burdens were signally increased by a belated rising in the town of Posen (Poznan).[266] As this rising occurred athwart Prussian lines of communication it had an effect out of all proportion to its military importance.[267]

The Posen revolt convinced the not-very-valorous monarch that his forces were in serious danger. Consequently he raised the siege on 6 September and retired precipitately beyond the Vistula. As a consequence of this retreat Bromberg (Bydgoszsz) also rose against the faltering Prussians and the frightened King expressed fears that the

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[265] Ibid.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid.

Poles would soon drive west of the Oder![268] Units scheduled for the Rhine were hastily rerouted to the defense of Berlin, Dresden and Frankfurt on the Oder.[269]

Luckily for the King's peace of mind the Russians now paid serious attention to the situation. In October 1794 the great General Suvorov crushingly defeated the Polish revolutionaries to the east of Warsaw and moved relentlessly upon the capital. The merciless butchery of a number of outlying Polish garrisons was sufficient to overawe the Warsaw defenders, who surrendered the city on 6 November.[270] The Polish rising was thus crushed by the efforts of the Tsar's soldiers, not those of Berlin.

Prior to the Russian "bail-out" of Frederick William's men in Poland the continuing difficulties had forced Prussia to draw upon her forces in Westphalia for service in the East.[271] The Westphalian troops had served the dual rôle of being shield of the north flank of the Western armies against French penetration raids, and also

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[268] Ibid.

[269] M:K., Folio II, Document 3.

[270] Treskow, p. 235.

[271] W.a.R., Folio V, Document 188. Müffling notes the detachment of the bulk of the Leib Cavalry Regiment, for "service in the East." This memorandum is dated "Oktober 1794," but whether these detachments actually went to Poland is uncertain.

providing reserves with which to counter serious crises along the fronts. The denuding of this force had the effect of restricting long-range tactical and strategic operations against the French and contributed markedly to the increasingly somnolent posture of the Rhine-Saar-Flanders armies.[272]

In the meantime Austria, fearful of losing her holdings in Poland (a fear perhaps justified by the Prussian occupation of Cracow),[273] rushed troops into Galicia and began thinning out her forces in the Netherlands. Negotiations began between Austria and Russia which indicated to the Prussian government that a further partition of the remnant of Poland might commence--a partition in which

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[272] Much of the Westphalia force was strung out in garrison and depôt duty before the Polish uprising and had, by the end of 1793, pretty well dispersed whatever reserves were initially on hand. Westphalian depôts were in about the same shape as poor Hannewurf's installation. (See Notes 110-125 above.)

[273] Cracow had been awarded to Austria in the First Partition. It was seized by Polish rebels during the uprising and then had been occupied by Prussian forces before Austrian troops could regain it.

The Austrian Foreign Minister, Thugut, anti-Prussian in sentiment, suspected that the latter wished to keep the area, and began making representations to the Russians. These diplomatic moves in turn forced the Prussians to reinforce their garrisons in Poland and Silesia. K. T. von Heigel, Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen bis zur Auflosung des alten Reichs, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Maier, 1899-1911), pp. 192-8.

Prussia would have no part.[274]

To prevent this it would be necessary to mass the main part of the Prussian Army in the East--and the main forces of the Nation were now facing the French in the West. So long as there still existed hostilities with the Revolutionary regime, it would just not be possible to detach sufficient Prussian formations for the East. Thus there grew increasing pressure upon Frederick William II to negotiate with the French. This desire to opt out of the struggle with France so as to be in on the final carving-up of Poland also had its effect upon military operations in the West.[275]

Möllendorf and the Prussian commanders in the West were only too conscious of the increasing unpopularity of the struggle with France. This is reflected as early as 2 August 1794 in a dispatch to Tauentzein in which he warns against Prussian forces "trying to break conventions."[276] He urged Tauentzein to "honor agreements of no hostilities where made," but also reminded him that "resolute defense is still desirable in all instances where attacked."[277]

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[274] Ibid.

[275] Ibid.

[276] M:K., Folio I, Document 113.

[277] Ibid.

Operations against the French continued as the year drew on: Möllendorf became more and more anxious about the security of rear area depôts and Provianten (supply-trains). He was favorably impressed by an idea of General von Courbière's for securing "colonnes" (columns) from attack by French marauders by combining Jägers and Husaren and placing them around and among the Provianten to deal on the spot with raiders. Although the Marshal called this idea "somewhat outrageous" ("Ziemlich übermässig") he gave Courbière permission to implement it.[278]

If the French were generally satisfied to hold their gains and allow the Allies to hold theirs, they were not totally inactive. On 24 October Möllendorf reported to Berlin that two French attempts to "break through to Frankfurt" had been launched and repulsed. He went into almost lyrical description of the staunch infantrymen of Prince Hohenlohe's command "dealing most severely" with "clouds of sharpshooters" who tried to "sweep over our positions."[279] He also mentioned that Kalkreuth's men had "held their own in a fire fight with some of Hoche's best men."[280]

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[278] Ibid., Document 238. [279] Ibid., Document 244.

[280] Ibid. The date of this latter action was not given.

Möllendorf kept his men from initiating attacks and was in the main satisfied to hold the line and let negotiations procede between Prussia and France (they had begun in October).[281] He also continued to be suspicious of excessive innovations in both tactics and strategy as he indicated in a critical report he dispatched to Berlin on 1 November.

This reported an action involving a group of Husaren led by Major Arndt. On 31 October Arndt's unit was attacked by a large force of chasseurs à pied accompanied by Tirailleurs. Arndt ordered his men to dismount and fight on foot behind any available cover "sowie Rot-Indianer oder Amerikaner Miliz!"[282] as the disapproving Möllendorf described it. The Marshal admitted that Arndt's tactic was successful and enabled his men to hold their ground and then drive the enemy from the field with loss.[283] However, he concluded, such tactics were hardly in the line tradition and had a "Kranklich Balkänlandisch" flavor to them which was "most undesirable."[284]

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[281] Paret, p. 100.

[282] M:K., Folio I, Document 246.

[283] Ibid. Total French losses are not given, but fifteen French were taken captive.

[284] Ibid.

As November progressed Möllendorf became ever more placid and content. On 22 November he wrote that he was "planning a fourth Campaign," (presumably for 1795), but his letter dealt mostly with the improved defenses of Mainz.[285] Hochheim, where so many of his fire-eating memoranda had been written, now began to take on the atmosphere of a permanent, rear-area contonment and command post. Most of the posting orders and other reports that issue from the base have a routine, even dull, tone.[286] And on 28 November Möllendorf wrote to General Le Coq (a Prussian corps commander) that "suspension of hostilities" was possible.[287]

Winter weather and the lack of men and supplies, which had been siphoned off for Poland, combined to bring operations to a halt for the rest of the year. In March 1795, just at the beginning of the campaigning season, peace was concluded between France and Prussia. By the Treaty of Basle (5 March 1795) Prussia withdrew from the conservative coalition against France and thus permitted the government

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[285] Ibid., Document 254.

[286] See a series of routine posting orders, ibid., Documents 240-2, and 256-280.

[287] Ibid., Document 257.

of regicides to survive.[288]

France had weathered the first serious threats from her conservative foes, had fended off the first serious responses to her Revolution. In so doing she had begun to forge the new military weapon that would defeat and humble those who had once threatened her very existence.

Two days after the signing of the Treaty Möllendorf penned a brief memo to Haugwitz. In it he plaintively admitted to the General Staff Minister that "the preceding campaign has not been completely successful." However, the reasons for this lay not in any basic deficiency in the Prussian military establishment, but rather was due to French superiority of numbers, training weakness in some Prussian units, Austrian laziness and duplicity, and possible pro-French subversive activities among the Rhinelanders and the Flemish people.[289]

Less than a month later the Marshal again wrote Haugwitz suggesting that perhaps a study-commission might be set up to look into some minor improvements in cantonments, interior security, discipline, and related matters. He ended this note by suggesting that Haugwitz might care to

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[288]George Lefevbre, The French Revolution: From Its Origins to 1799, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 12.

[289]M:K., Folio I, Document 261.

suggest this to the King "for the good of the people, the army and state."[290] Haugwitz replied on 18 April that the suggestion had been made but that the King "was concerned with other affairs at the moment."[291]

A week later Möllendorf wrote for himself a brief Reflexion on the war, its successes: the successful defending of the Rhineland, the recapture of Mainz, its failure: to defeat and to eliminate the revolutionary spirit from Europe. But he consoled himself with the knowledge that the Prussian military machine had met the challenge and was "unverletzt" ("intact").[292] He ended his memoir by assuring himself and any other who read it that France must ultimately collapse internally and gave thanks for the stability of the Prussian state system.[293]

Following the Basle Treaty, Möllendorf and the Prussian military leadership turned their thoughts and efforts eastward, to Poland. Here an inglorious campaign had given way to a comfortable process of digesting fragments of the once-mighty Polish Kingdom into a growing, healthy Prussia. Once the process of incorporation was

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[290] Ibid., Document 287.

[291] Ibid., Document 292.

[292] Ibid., Document 311.

[293] Ibid.

complete the army looked forward to returning to its beloved drill and the King to resuming full time his favorite sport: lechery.[294]

The war against France had done little to alter the military thinking of the Prussian High Command. In general, the Prussian soldiers had acquitted themselves quite well against the newly-developing armies of Revolutionary France. Valmy, the only real reverse suffered by Prussian arms, could be written off as the trifling repulse of a heavily-outnumbered and disease-ridden army by a larger force entrenched on high ground and led by tried professionals.[295]

Certainly later operations had confirmed the soundness of Prussia's men and the excellent quality of their training. The siege and recapture of Mainz showed the fortitude and expertise of Prussian infantry and artillery; while fights such as that at Kaiserslautern demonstrated the solidity of Frederician line tactics and the excessive fragility and inherent instability of the "disorderly" French foot. If the battlefield was truly the

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[294]Parkinson, p. 25.

[295]See Notes 27-28. Heigel reports that many Austrians maintained that the Duke of Brunswick had retired from Valmy without really fighting as a favor to Dumouriez who, like himself, was a Freemason. Heigel, II, p. 196.

classroom of war then the lessons learned by Prussia between 1792 and 1795 were merely confirmations of facts they already knew.

To say that the Prussian leaders were too complacent in their view of the emerging French military machine is true. But to declare, as many critics have, that their complacence was totally ill-founded is not totally so. The Prussian experiences against the young French armées de masse were inconclusive so far as they went. The Prussian Army had been tried by fire and by assault and had not, generally speaking, been found wanting by its commanders.

At any rate, doubts about the effectiveness of his army were the farthest things from Frederick William II's mind. The deficiencies displayed before him in Poland were demonstrated by the second-line troops and undisciplined militia. The main force of the army was sound. Möllendorf had assured him of this and that was enough. All senior officers were in agreement with the Marshal--and this was enough. The system was sound and he would head it for many years to come.

Two years after the Treaty of Basle, King Frederick William II succumbed to his own vices and lecheries.

Nine years after the death of the King, the great and complex military system over which he had so hesitantly presided succumbed violently on the battlefield to new methods

of waging war which it had never felt incumbent upon itself to learn.

Conclusion

Was There Truly a Decline?

The term "decline" can often be a misleading one. An institution or an individual may be perceived as lessened in ability or expertise when in fact the relative efficiency or the professionalism of other individuals or institutions has merely increased. Thus the supposed "decline" of one thing may simply be the improvement of another in relation to it.

So it was with the Prussian Army during the decade following the death of Frederick the Great. During his years of struggle and triumph and defeat the Great King had created a military force locked into forms molded resolutely into a pattern that emerged victorious over its rivals. Operated by a leader who was and is one of the handful of

universally acknowledged military geniuses of history, the Prussian war machine's strengths overrode its built-in weaknesses.

In the years of peace that followed the Seven Years War, Frederick labored to solidify the army and its supports and thus to pass on to his successors an invincible defensive weapon that would ensure the safety of the state it defended and which would in its turn need little or no overhauling. He felt that this objective had been achieved and even the less-than-brilliant performance of the Prussian Army during the Erbfolgekrieg did not alter Frederick's conviction that his creation was fundamentally sound and healthy.

This belief was widely held in Prussia and the death of the Great King did not see his successor presented with demands for any widespread military reforms or alterations, nor did Frederick William perceive the necessity for them either. Some essentially cosmetic and generally minor changes were initiated but nothing that would have fundamentally altered the bases upon which the military machine rested.

The first military confrontation with Revolutionary France during the years 1792-1795 did not sensibly effect a change in the military attitudes of the Prussian leadership. In general the Prussian troops fought staunchly and succeeded in repelling most French assaults, though sometimes with

difficulty. French losses were invariably higher than Prussian and favorable "body counts" undoubtedly meant as much to Prussian commanders in 1793 as to American in 1972.

The danger posed to the "Established Order" by the Revolution in France was glimpsed by some but most of the leadership of the more conservative nations was no more alarmed by it than were those who led those nations in 1918 by the Russian Revolution. Disorder on the periphery, some expression of discontent among the "lower orders" might occur, yes, but nothing that could not be dealt with by the "forces of order."

In other words the challenge of the events in France was not seen as sufficient to invoke a serious response by the Prussian state and so none was invoked. Prussia under Frederick William II did not "decline" in any actual sense that its institutions and organizations deteriorated physically; but in its persistence in clinging to increasingly outmoded tactics, training, weaponry and recruitment techniques, the Prussian Army catastrophically decayed relative to the new armies produced by the ferment of the French Revolution. This decay was demonstrated tragically and dramatically in 1806 when, a bare score years after Frederick the Great had been laid to rest, his beloved and vaunted Prussian Army was destroyed in a single day of battle by Napoleon. Accompanying the army in death went the assumptions which underlay it and upon which Prussia had

built her national institutions.

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Primary Sources

Introduction

The bulk of the primary sources for this dissertation were obtained from the Zentrales Staatsarchiv. This is one of the two centers for historical records located in the German Democratic Republic (D.D.R.: Deutsche Demokratische Republik), better known in the West as East Germany.

The Zentrales Staatsarchiv contains most of the materials dealing with German, particularly Prussian and Saxon, history from the earliest medieval periods to about 1870. More recent documents are located in the archives at Potsdam.

Many of the documents relating to the period in which this writer was interested were extremely fragile and thus could not be microfilmed but had to be copied in longhand. Some of the more relevant documents were translated either by myself or, in the case of those documents in French, by my colleague, Professor John H. West, Jr., Professor of French and Spanish at the University of South Carolina--Union Regional Campus, Union, S.C.

The Zentrales Staatsarchiv is located in the small town of Merseburg in Upper Saxony, about fifteen miles from

the large city of Halle. Merseburg is the site of a Soviet armored base and is thus in a rather sensitive area. Those documents I was able to microfilm I could not take out of the country when I left as they had to be scrutinized by the internal security forces before they could be sent to me. Consequently there was a considerable lapse of time (nearly a year) before even the first documents were received, and some were not sent me for nearly two years.

So these source materials may appear somewhat out of sequence in the footnotes, or may appear to have been inserted at a later date than others (which is in fact the case). I hope that this will not affect the clarity of the narrative.

A. Archival Primary Sources

Militaria Varia, Repositum 63 84, especially Folio II.

Bayerisches Erbfolgekrieg, Repositum 63 85a. A collection of dispatches, after-action reports and ration and supply reports.

Landmilitz Sachsen, Repositum 63 85a. A series of folios dealing with the organization and performance of Saxon militia units both before, during and after the Erbfolgekrieg.

Marsch und Ruckmarsch eines Korps Königlichen-Preussischen Truppen durch Niedersachsen und Westfalen nach Holland, 1787-88, Repositum 63 86. The title of the documents adequately describes their contents.

Mobilmachung, Repositum 63 84 ai. This file deals in the main with the persistent problem of desertion and includes a number of edicts concerning the problem.

Mixta in Militaribus, Repositum 63 86A. A mixed series of folios and documents concerning mainly administrative and depôt matters but also including a few after-action reports and memoranda on a variety of military matters.

Acta 1790-2, Repositum 63 85 A.5. Most of the documents in this source deal with the establishment and maintenance of lines of supply and communication, also makes considerable mention of the diffculties of maintaining these lines.

Krieg gegen Frankreich, Repositum 63 86A. As above the title gives fairly ample description as to the contents of this file which is in the main a series of position, after-action and terrain-description, reports.

Westfalen an der Rhein, 1792-3, Repositum R63 86 A6. This file deals primarily with the problems of defending and securing the Rhine front through Westphalia from French light units and their irregular comrades.

Generalia in Militaribus, Repositum n86 A.1. A "mixed bag" of casualty, situation, and supply reports, interspersed with some high-level correspondence between commanders down to the regimental level.

Acta Generalia, Repositum 63 86A.3. In some ways one of the more interesting files, containing some rather lively descriptions of small cavalry and infantry actions.

Generalia Krieg Gegen Frankreich 1792-5, Repositum 63 86 A 1-9. A continuation of file #8 above.

Möllendorf: Korrespondenz 1794-5, Repositum 63 86A 24^{b}.

Tauentzein: Korrespondenz 1793-4, Repositum 26 258F.

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Appendix I

Having learned that there has been suspicion raised against my intentions, according to an alleged liaison that was assumed to exist between myself and Philip of Orléans, a French prince, known too well under the name of Equality: desirous of maintaining the esteem of which I receive daily the most honorable proofs, I hasten to declare that I do not know (I am unaware) if there really exists an Orléans faction; that I have never had any intercommunication with the Prince, whom one supposes to be the leader of it, or who is the pretext for it; that I have never esteemed him; and that since the fatal period in which he ripped up the ties of blood and ignored all the known laws, by criminally taking away the life of the unfortunate Louis XVI, on whom he pronounced his opinion with an atrocious shamelessness, my scorn for him has changed into an aversion, which leave me only the desire of knowing him to be delivered into the

severe hands of the Law.

As for his children, I believe them to be endowed with as many virtues as he has vices: they have perfectly served in the armies I commanded, without ever showing any ambition. I have a great friendship for the older (one), founded on the most deserved respect; I believe I'm right in saying that he is very far from aspiring to ever climb on the throne of France, he would flee to the end of the Universe rather than see himself forced into it. Moreover, I declare that, if according to his father's crimes, or by the atrocious results of the seditionmongers and the anarchists, he should find himself in the case of balancing between the virtues that he has shown up to the present and the baseness of taking advantage of the terrible catastrophe that has put in mourning the healthy part of the nation and all of Europe; and that if ambition is blinding him to the point of ever aspiring to the crown, I would vow an eternal hatred for him, and I would have the same scorn for him that I bear for his father.

/s/ General Dumouriez

Frankfurt am Main
20th April, 1793

The English translation of this declaration of General Dumouriez was rendered by Professor John H. West, Jr., Assistant Professor of French and Spanish, University of South Carolina--Union Campus, Union, South Carolina.