

**THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE  
MILITARY PUBLIC SPHERE: WAR, KNOWLEDGE,  
AND MILITARY ELITES IN WEST GERMANY,  
1940-1989**



**Jan Tattenberg  
New College  
University of Oxford**

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## Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	3
<i>List of Abbreviations</i> .....	4
<i>Note on Military Ranks</i> .....	4
<i>Abstract</i> .....	5
<i>Extended Abstract</i> .....	5
<i>Introduction</i> .....	8
<i>Chapter 1: War Injuries, Rearmament, and Military History, 1940-1956</i> .....	34
From Wartime Hierarchies to Post-War Networks.....	38
Honour and Injury .....	44
Military History.....	66
Conclusion.....	88
<i>Chapter 2: Nuclear War and Fragmenting Elite Cohesion, 1956-1972</i> .....	91
Neutrality, Nuclearisation, and the Military Public Sphere.....	97
The Military Public Sphere on the Margins .....	111
From Schlieffen to the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft .....	121
Conclusion.....	128
<i>Chapter 3: Higher Education and Military History, 1968-1979</i> .....	131
Andreas Hillgruber and the Military Public Sphere .....	137
Writing the History of Rearmament .....	158
Werner Hahlweg and the Military Public Sphere.....	164
Conclusion.....	176
<i>Chapter 4: The Peace Movement and Military Counter-Publics, 1979-1989</i> .....	180
The Darmstädter Signal.....	184
Streitkräfte und Strategien.....	207
Baudissin and the IFSH .....	213
Conclusion.....	225
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	228
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	248

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## List of Abbreviations

AfW	Arbeitskreis für Wehrforschung
BfV	Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz
BMVg	Bundesministerium der Verteidigung
BND	Bundesnachrichtendienst
BVerwG	Bundesverwaltungsgericht
CG	Clausewitz-Gesellschaft
DGFK	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung
DS	Darmstädter Signal
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FAZ	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
FüAkBw	Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GfW	Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde
IFSH	Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik der Universität Hamburg
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte
KSK	Kommando Spezialkräfte
MAD	Militärischer Abschirmdienst
MGFA	Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt
NDR	Norddeutscher Rundfunk
OG	Organisation Gehlen
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
S&S	Streitkräfte und Strategien
VdS	Verband deutscher Soldaten
WDR	Westdeutscher Rundfunk
WTS	Wehrtechnische Studiensammlung

## Note on Military Ranks

Military ranks have been translated literally. Care needs to be taken only in one instance: before 1945, the Wehrmacht's lowest general officer rank was *Generalmajor*, with the next highest rank being *Generalleutnant*. The Bundeswehr created a new lowest general officer rank, *Brigadegeneral*, resulting in the below configuration for land army and air force. Naval ranks are omitted here because only three naval officers feature in the thesis.

<b>Wehrmacht</b>	<b>Bundeswehr</b>
Generalmajor	Brigadegeneral
Generalleutnant	Generalmajor
General der Waffengattung	Generalleutnant
Generaloberst	General
Generalfeldmarschall	No Equivalent

## **Abstract**

The history of the Federal Republic of Germany is generally told as one of liberalisation. Denazification and demilitarisation in the immediate post-war years were long regarded as having founded a new liberal-democratic state, worthy of “the West”. The armed forces, too, were said to have been cleansed of the old militaristic spirit and imbued with a new ethos. But repeated scandals suggest that military institutions were, and remain, resilient to civilian control. The thesis argues that this is the result of continued organising by networks of conservative soldiers. They dominated military and military-adjacent structures and organised various kinds of networks and associations to preserve their power over military decision-making and younger generations of officers. The thesis sketches the evolution of these networks over five decades and shows just how they organised for various political, social, and economic causes and thus preserved their influence. Military historical knowledge played a foundational role as old military elites initially organised for the purposes of distilling their war-time experiences, particularly that of the Eastern Front, which was to be mobilised for a coming war with the Soviet Union. Although they never mounted a fundamental challenge to the new political order, the networks endured for decades after this initial impetus, and the thesis follows them as they shift position and structure and compete for power and influence. The last two chapters in particular show how they pushed back against the emergence of more progressive voices from the 1970s onwards. The endurance of their power suggests that the story of strong liberal tendencies within the post-war West German armed forces is in urgent need of revision.

## **Extended Abstract**

The thesis argues that networks of conservative soldiers, long after the formal establishment of democratic structures in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) strained, often behind the scenes, to maintain older, authoritarian social and professional structures. Early histories of the rearmament of the FRG are recently receiving a long overdue revision. This new historiography has begun to locate the rearmament of the FRG not in the aftermath of the foundation of the new state, as had previously been supposed. Rather, it has made clear the even before the FRG was founded, moves were made to raise new armies to defend it. But the above-mentioned networks resisted democratisation and liberalisation for decades after rearmament, pushing back against efforts to bring the armed forces more in line with changing social and political norms. Although they never amounted to a fundamental challenge to the new political order, these networks did shape the image soldiers had of themselves and that which they communicated to civilian society. In approaching these questions from the point of view of soldiers, not from the point of view of civilian society, the thesis presents what amounts to a significant methodological pivot. It approaches military institutions from the inside out, rather than the outside in.

Much of this new historiography is unverifiable by historians other than those who have been given exclusive access to archives held by the intelligence services or by families of those involved in early rearmament processes. There is also concrete evidence that the archival record, even where accessible, is incomplete due to the intentional destruction of material. These studies, then, while providing important insights into the early security architecture of the FRG, can only with great difficulty be taken as a point of departure for new histories, which must contend with significant problems of access. This thesis takes another approach. It takes the limits of our knowledge not as an obstacle, but as a point of departure. Instead of attempting to glean from the new secondary literature hitherto unavailable details which are

difficult or impossible to verify, it takes as its object of analysis the networks which so actively and in such a lasting fashion obstructed the production of historical scholarship and asks about their relationships to other networks and their ambitions for doing so. It thereby contends that what we do not know is to a certain degree less important than who produced the knowledge we now appear to lack and may be unable to ever reconstruct in full. To move forward, historians must find a way of asking *why* these lacunae were produced in the first place, not just *what* might help us fill them.

Central to the thesis is the idea of a “military public sphere”, which serves to delimit the spaces in which soldiers interacted primarily with each other rather than with civilians. But the conceptual transition at play here is not a straightforward one. The term “public sphere” generally refers to debates which take place in civilian contexts, famously associated with the rise of bourgeois civil society as such by Jürgen Habermas to whose foundational work the title of the thesis is an homage. But the thesis does not follow Habermas. Rather, I focus on a set of structures ranging from the covert, semi-official, like the Organisation Gehlen, to the official, such as the Federal Republic’s Military Historical Research Office (MGFA). These multiple publics, with some being more, others less accessible to outsiders, negotiated military, security, and defence issues. Thereby they formed an overall relatively cohesive military public sphere dedicated to the debate of certain military-political issues.

The thesis proceeds both in a thematic and a chronological manner. It is organised into four chapters, each of which is organised into three sections. These deal with different kinds of networks revolving either around particular structures, for instance the MGFA, or individuals at the centre of often informal networks, like Werner Hahlweg. The first chapter focuses on the networks which came to shape West German military and political structures in the wake of the Second World War. I argue that relationships of authority and command continued to shape even informal networks of former soldiers who never wore uniform again after 1945. The argument extends the existing literature by insisting upon the centrality of social status for soldiers’ organising after 1945. While economic and political considerations were important, for many the primary concern was the retention of the social status which rank and military elite membership had conferred upon them. Economic and political restitution were often simply means towards that end. The chapter also engages the foundation of official structures for the writing of military history, both of the last war and more generally.

The second chapter focuses on the nuclearisation of strategic thought and the rifts this produced in the military public sphere. It also traces the life of Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm whose career on the margins shows how the military public sphere could both constrain individual choices and boost individual careers, if so desired. The final section argues that the establishment of a new society for former general staff officers showed just how saturated and static the military public sphere had become by the middle of the 1960s. The society amounted to a formalisation of some of the networks of former general staff officers which had always existed in the wake of the Second World War. The establishment of the new society revealed that younger officers were increasingly uninterested in such associations, which unnerved older officers given they desired in part to help shape their younger comrades, and thereby future military leaders, by means of the association. The result was a partial opening of military elite networks to outsiders in order to increase their long-term viability.

The third chapter focuses on the structural cooperation between members of the military public sphere and the higher education sector, arguing that such cooperation might even have

been desired by students under the right circumstances, at the very height of the student movement. Particular focus is on the elevation of Andreas Hillgruber to a chair at Freiburg University in 1968 in a bid to secure an interface between the MGFA and the university. Werner Hahlweg, the only designated professor of military history in the FRG, served as a node around which engagement by soldiers coalesced. His popularity with students put Hahlweg in a unique position. He was able to offer the military public sphere lessons which might be drawn from military historical study which may prove useful in the suppression of revolts across the globe. Student radicals meanwhile found in him a teacher sympathetic to the political struggles for independence and self-determination which so animated the student movement. Hillgruber and Hahlweg show how the military public sphere became integrated into the higher education section in Germany, with varying levels of success. Beyond these two cases, the early 1970s also saw first efforts at an official history of rearmament, which was significantly shaped by the old networks and thereby provoked irritation, even in the military public sphere.

The final chapter focuses on critical voices which grew more powerful from the late 1970s onwards. It argues that by this time conservative voices had structured the military public sphere in ways which marginalised their political opponents by design. The Darmstädter Signal provided an opportunity for young, left-leaning soldiers to organise and to voice their opposition to prevailing security policies. The soldiers did battle in the courts in order to protect their right as members of the armed forces to speak their minds in opposition to government policy, an endeavour which was not always successful. This legal scrutiny showed how conservative military structures of command really were, and how successful they were at reframing what progressives argued was a question of freedom of opinion as one of obedience and loyal service. The chapter also focuses on the role more popular media, in particular radio, played with regards to widening participation in discussions on military and security issues in the FRG, with the NDR programme *Streitkräfte und Strategien* in particular opening up avenues for critical voices on defence issues to be heard, although this remained the exception rather than the rule.

Together, the chapters show that the military public sphere resisted liberalisation and democratisation far longer than official military structures. By doing so, it enabled advocacy on behalf of conservative soldiers to continue, both politically without and within the armed forces. While it is tempting to view these networks as a reserve pool for political influence to be mobilised, this does not nearly go far enough and misses the fact that higher-ranking former officers, such as the former chief of the army general staff Franz Halder most notably, never viewed the commanders of the new armed forces neither as entirely legitimate heirs nor as their social equals. When the influence of the likes of Halder waned, the conservative networks and associations which they had helped found maintained course, pushing back against efforts to bring the armed forces more in line with changing social and political norms. This meant that even when critical voices reached wider audiences from the late 1970s onwards, their influence remained limited. Furthermore, their influence waned, and has continued to do so, even as the far-right threatens to capture the centre of the political landscape of the now reunited Germany. Military institutions remain firmly conservative, giving shelter to numerous far-right extremist networks. The questions here concerned are thus more relevant than ever, although the political conclusions to be drawn are decidedly grim.

## Introduction

On 15 March 2007, Lieutenant Colonel Jürgen Rose became the first German conscientious objector to the war in Afghanistan. The occasion for Rose's objection was the planned deployment of Tornado aircraft of the *Taktisches Luftgeschwader 51 "Immelmann"* in order to provide reconnaissance support for US operations.<sup>1</sup> Criticism of Rose's decision was widespread, within and outside the ranks.<sup>2</sup> On 28 July, Rose received an email which identified him as an "enemy within", who was to be "smashed" by "officers of a new generation". The sender, Daniel K., was a Captain in the German special forces, the *Kommando Spezialkräfte* (KSK), which he had co-founded.<sup>3</sup> He received a reprimand as a result but was allowed to stay in post. Rose, who then called the KSK "a sewer", was fined 3000€.<sup>4</sup> Rose retired from service in 2010. But in February 2019, Daniel K., having been promoted twice and now himself Lieutenant Colonel, was suspended from the ranks. Military intelligence had identified him as a far-right extremist, an active *Reichsbürger*.<sup>5</sup> Before he joined the armed forces in 1991, he had also been an active member of the youth wing of the neo-Nazi NPD. In late 2020, a court overturned K.'s dismissal, issued earlier that year.<sup>6</sup> In the following, I ultimately try to understand why someone like Rose felt so unwelcome in the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Soldat verweigert Tornado-Einsatz', *taz*, 16 March 2007; on a similar case in the context of the Iraq war, see 'Urteil vom 21.06.2005', BVerwG 2 WD 12/04; Timo Hebler, 'Der Widerstreit von Gehorsamspflicht und Gewissensfreiheit des Soldaten – Anmerkung zum Urteil des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts vom 21.06.2005 (2 WD 12.04)', *Kritische Justiz* 39, no. 2 (2006): 209–18; evaluating, Peter Derleder, 'Das Gewissen des Militärs', *Kritische Justiz* 39, no. 3 (2006): 332–35.

<sup>2</sup> 'Erster deutscher Soldat verweigert erfolgreich Tornado-Einsatz', *Spiegel*, 16 March 2007, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afghanistan-erster-deutscher-soldat-verweigert-erfolgreich-tornado-einsatz-a-472235.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ulrike Demmer, 'Feind im Inneren', *Spiegel*, 22 March 2008, <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/a-543364.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 'Disziplinarbuße für KSK-Kritiker', *Spiegel*, 16 June 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Matthias Gebauer, 'Wie rechts tickt das Kommando Spezialkräfte?', *Spiegel*, 8 February 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-wie-rechts-tickt-das-kommando-spezialkraefte-a-1252398.html>.

<sup>6</sup> 'KSK-Offizier darf trotz Rechtsextremismus-Verdacht bleiben', *Spiegel*, 18 December 2020, [https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-ksk-offizier-darf-trotz-rechtsextremismus-verdacht-bleiben-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000174544037?sara\\_ecid=soci\\_upd\\_wbMbjhOSvViISjc8RPU89NcCvtlFcJ](https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-ksk-offizier-darf-trotz-rechtsextremismus-verdacht-bleiben-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000174544037?sara_ecid=soci_upd_wbMbjhOSvViISjc8RPU89NcCvtlFcJ).

ranks, and someone like K. appears to have fit so naturally within them. I do this by focusing not on individuals, nor on policy or civil-military relations concepts, but on networks, associations, and other military-adjacent structures which assured the continuity of conservative ideas across multiple generations of soldiers.

In approaching these questions from the point of view of soldiers, not from the point of view of civilian society, the thesis presents what amounts to a significant methodological pivot. Studies of military institutions often aim from the outside in, rather than the inside out. They aim, for instance, at cultural representations of military institutions in order to ascertain the degree to which they contribute to the normalisation of, legitimation of and mobilisation for war.<sup>7</sup> That can lead to a focus on civilians' engagement with military institutions, rather than military institutions' focus on civilians as a target audience for messaging about military identity.<sup>8</sup> But communications issued by military institutions and directed at civilians have long been professionalised, and thus offer an idealised version of the soldier and the institution of which he is a part. The so-called *Berateraffäre*, the scandal around the employment of consultancies and public relations firms by the Federal Defence Ministry (BMVg) during the tenure of Ursula von der Leyen,<sup>9</sup> is only one recent example of this

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<sup>7</sup> A couple of recent examples are, Erica L. Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery in the Soviet Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); Tom Smith, *Comrades in Arms: Military Masculinities in East German Culture* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Although see Thorsten Loch, *Das Gesicht der Bundeswehr. Kommunikationsstrategien in der Freiwilligenwerbung der Bundeswehr 1956 bis 1989* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> One outgrowth of the engagement of public relations firms was a Youtube series on the KSK, the scandal-ridden special forces unit which has recently seen one of its three companies disbanded as part of a reform attempt given extensive far-right sympathies in the ranks. A brief overview of the problems with such advertising aimed in particular at teenage men, see 'Werbung für die Bundeswehr im Influencer-Format. Matthias Dell im Gespräch mit Max Oppel', *Kompressor* (Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 28 December 2018), [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/youtube-serie-ksk-kaempfe-nie-fuer-dich-allein-werbung-fuer.2156.de.html?dram:article\\_id=436477](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/youtube-serie-ksk-kaempfe-nie-fuer-dich-allein-werbung-fuer.2156.de.html?dram:article_id=436477); a former commander of the KSK claimed for the unit the tradition of the 'Brandenburg' Division, the Wehrmacht's special forces, Johannes Kramer, 'Spuren der Wehrmacht im asymmetrischen Krieg. Die Division "Brandenburg" als umstrittener Gegenstand militärischer Traditionspolitik und Sonderfall im öffentlichen Diskurs nach 1945', in 'So war der deutsche Landser...'. *Das populäre Bild der Wehrmacht*, ed. Jens Westemeier (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2019), 331–49.

trend.<sup>10</sup> In analysing publications and messages intended for consumption by civilian publics, scholars run the risk of reiterating ideas of military institutions as they would like to be seen. A further complicating factor is that the overwhelming majority of scholars of military institutions (including myself), have little or no personal experience of the same institutions to which their work is dedicated.<sup>11</sup> The thesis provides a different account of messaging on the part of military institutions. It focuses not on professional public relations campaigns by military institutions. Rather, it asks about informal networks and structures which viewed themselves, to a degree, as extensions of official military structures and their attempts to shape civilian opinion and attitudes.

Central to the thesis is the idea of a military public sphere. This is a novelty, as previously debates have either revolved around military tradition or “Geschichts-“ or “Vergangenheitspolitik”. Norbert Frei originally used the latter term to refer to a set of measures enacted by political parties from autumn 1949 until the middle of the 1950s which constituted a “termination, partially even a reversal” of Allied denazification and demilitarisation processes,<sup>12</sup> before widening it and identifying three key elements: “amnesty, integration, and delimitation.”<sup>13</sup> Soldiers tended to be beneficiaries of this process, but not its primary drivers. The term “military public sphere” serves to delimit the spaces in which soldiers interacted primarily with each other, rather than with civilians. The major difference, then, is that military public sphere describes a set of *structures* which continued to exist, continue to exist to this day, for decades beyond the scope of the *process* which Frei

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<sup>10</sup> Important, too, in this respect is the literature on recruitment ads more generally, see for instance Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Facade of American Empire, 1898-2001* (London: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> A notable exception is the MGFA, which is today dominated by trained officer-historians. On the origins of that development, see in particular Chapters 1 and 3 below, but also Martin Rink, *50 Jahre Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt. Eine Chronik* (Berlin: be.bra, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (München: C.H. Beck, 1996), 13.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

identified. There is, to be sure, overlap, particularly in engagement with questions around war criminals on which more in Chapter 1 below. While for Frei this constituted one of the major themes of the process of *Vergangenheitspolitik*,<sup>14</sup> for the military public sphere, this issue was largely settled by the time rearmament took place in earnest, allowing debates on other topics to emerge.

The conceptual transition to the military public sphere is not a straightforward one. The term “public sphere” generally refers to debates which take place in civilian contexts, famously associated with the rise of bourgeois civil society as such by Jürgen Habermas to whose foundational work the title of the thesis is an homage.<sup>15</sup> But Habermas’ ideas did stimulate a discussion of what I might call the military public sphere, as debates around the nature of the Enlightenment and the transmission of military knowledge in that period have been long-standing themes of research.<sup>16</sup> Work on such fora in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, is relatively sparse.<sup>17</sup> But the thesis does not follow Habermas, relying instead upon the notion of a public sphere formulated by Christina von Hodenberg, who defined the public sphere as “a structure of many co-existing forums in which a society selects topics for debate and negotiates patterns of interpretation, values and conflicting interests.”<sup>18</sup> The focus of the thesis, as made clear below, is on a set of structures and groups which ranges from the covert to official. These multiple publics, with some being more, others less accessible to outsiders, negotiated military, security, and defence issues. Thereby they formed an overall relatively cohesive

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–306, esp. 195–233.

<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Hohrath and Klaus Gerteis, eds., ‘Die Kriegskunst im Lichte der Vernunft: Militär und Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert Teil I’, *Aufklärung* 11, no. 2 (1999): 1–130; Daniel Hohrath and Klaus Gerteis, eds., ‘Die Kriegskunst im Lichte der Vernunft: Militär und Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert Teil II’, *Aufklärung* 12, no. 1 (2000): 1–144.

<sup>17</sup> An important exception, though lacking detail, is Markus Pöhlmann, ed., *Deutsche Militärfachzeitschriften im 20. Jahrhundert* (Potsdam: MGFA, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, ‘Mass Media and the Generation of Conflict: West Germany’s Long Sixties and the Formation of a Critical Public Sphere’, *Contemporary European History* 15, no. 3 (2006): 369, n6.

military public sphere dedicated to the, if unequal and uneven, debate of certain military-political issues. It is clear that, still, the public sphere concerned here is narrower than that of Hodenberg. For one, it is not always “public”, in that discussions often took place in guarded fora. But this is arguably, though in more familiar ways, equally true of the wider civilian public sphere. It is also worth noting that, given the size of the former officer corps, tens of thousands of former officers might have participated in the structures of the military public sphere.<sup>19</sup>

The thesis analyses a set of associations, institutions, and networks, which I refer to as “military adjacent structures”. This simply means that they understood themselves to exist in close proximity to and often in close coordination with official military institutions. Together, these structures formed the military public sphere. They range from unofficial groups, like interpersonal networks among former general staff officers, to covert, semi-official groups, like the Organisation Gehlen, to the official, like the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft. But whether a given structure was official, especially in the early post-war decades, mattered less than whether soldiers accepted its authority as though it were, an argument made in detail in Chapter 1. It is important to note that the thesis will not address veterans’ organisations in detail. The relationship between veterans’ organisations and the various organisations analysed in the thesis will be discussed in Chapter 1. Though initially prominent in the immediate post-war period, veterans’ organisations rapidly declined in relevance, becoming little more than social clubs by the late 1950s. They sat uneasily alongside the Federal Republic’s military institutions, and engagement with the men in the new uniforms often proved difficult. They are, therefore, omitted here because most were unable to stay relevant

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<sup>19</sup> The notion that one’s identity as a soldier amounted to a fundamental facet of personal identity presented, particularly for older generations, a legacy not of the National Socialist state, but a legacy of militarism in imperial Germany, Helmut R. Hammerich and Rudolf J. Schlaffer, eds., *Militärische Aufbaugenerationen der Bundeswehr 1955-1970. Ausgewählte Biographien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).

once rearmament had been completed. More interesting were those organisations who managed, in some way, to stay relevant, to negotiate carefully in order to maintain at least some their influence beyond the middle of the 1950s.

The military public sphere was, especially in the first three post-war decades, tightly controlled by former officers who were able to limit access to debates and organisations, and thereby forums of discussion. Many played a double role, “both as purveyors of meaning in their own right and as gatekeepers,”<sup>20</sup> since they actively took part in the debates the boundaries of which they guarded. This meant they had an exceptional power to frame arguments or topics of discussion in their favour, making dissent outside the bounds they themselves accepted extremely difficult. Those soldiers with the most standing, whose word mattered, were often not those who were most present in debates, but whose absence would be felt. Those, on the other hand, who were most effective in framing issues were not always the ones whose word might weigh most heavily in a given debate.<sup>21</sup> Part of this is conditioned by the fact that debates took place both out in the open, in published magazines and newspapers, and behind closed doors, with some officers acting quite self-consciously as buoys, marking hidden reefs. Others again acted as weathervanes, with response to their contributions showing which way the wind might be blowing.<sup>22</sup> The audience, or gallery,<sup>23</sup> for these debates was constituted both of former officers and of current policy makers, with active-duty officers only playing a role from the mid 1950s onwards, though a distinction between those involved in rearmament processes and those who were not, some of whom were making a transition to civilian life, was apparent as early as 1950.

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<sup>20</sup> Myra Marx Ferree et al., *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>21</sup> For the distinction between ‘standing’ and ‘framing’, *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> See below n346 for detail.

<sup>23</sup> Marx Ferree et al., *Shaping Abortion Discourse*, 9–10.

While the military public sphere was highly structured and near exclusive in terms of the gender of the participants,<sup>24</sup> it presented in both those senses not a difference in kind, but only a difference in degree from wider elite networks.<sup>25</sup> This is also true in terms of class, given the officer corps was only meaningfully open to working class soldiers from the late stages of the Second World War onwards. But those officers who came from working class backgrounds and were able to rise through the ranks were often seen to be committed to National Socialism in a way their middle and upper-middle class comrades were not.<sup>26</sup> Though whether this reflected genuine differences in ideological affinity, arising perhaps from the opportunity for professional advancement now available to committed National Socialists in the armed forces, or whether this reflected simply class-based antagonism or snobbery, is unclear.

Moreover, the thesis embraces a wider sense of what might count as the “inside” of a military institution by adopting a broader definition of what it means to be a soldier. In the entirety of the thesis, the term will be used not only to describe those still in active service, but to describe all those who wore uniform before or after 1945, and indeed some who did both.

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<sup>24</sup> One notable exception was Ursula von Gersdorff, who for decades was in charge of coordinating the MGFA’s publications. While I wish I had been able to consult her papers for the thesis, the pandemic and on-going negotiations with her surviving family precluded this. But see, for instance, Ursula von Gersdorff, *Geschichte und Militärgeschichte. Wege der Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard und Graefe, 1974); another example is Lucy Rommel, who helped shape the legacy of her husband, with acknowledgments in early publications making clear that she carefully exercised that role. See for instance acknowledgments in, Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944. Ein Beitrag zu Rommels und des Reiches Schicksal* (Tübingen and Stuttgart: Rainer Wunderlich, 1949).

<sup>25</sup> As Hodenberg is aware, many former Nazis were allowed back into the editorial offices, signalling a significant degree of elite continuity. In addition, as I will show throughout the thesis, a number of post-war journalists, too, were officers, and part of both the wider public sphere and the military public sphere. For the former point, see Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit, 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 103–44; Matthias Weiß, ‘Journalisten: Worte als Taten’, in *Karrieren im Zwielficht. Hitlers Eliten nach 1945*, ed. Norbert Frei (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2001), 241–301.

<sup>26</sup> Bernhard R. Kroener, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer “nationalsozialistischen Volksarmee”. Die soziale Öffnung des Heeresoffizierkorps im Zweiten Weltkrieg’, in *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland*, ed. Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Hans Woller (München: Oldenbourg, 1988), 651–82.

The choice to include even those who, like Andreas Hillgruber, wore uniform only briefly (1943-45), reflects the reality that military identity, the self-perception as a soldier, was something which many could never quite leave behind. It reflects their lived reality insofar as they always considered themselves to be soldiers, or that to have been a soldier defined them in some meaningful way for the rest of their lives. This is inspired by Thomas Kühne's work, which showed that for decades after the Second World War, the highest compliment former German soldiers paid one another was that the one or other had been a "*guter Kamerad*".<sup>27</sup> But rather than focus on "veterans' culture", as Kühne has done, the concept of the soldier here serves two purposes. First, it reflects that many did not think of themselves as veterans, but continued to think of themselves as soldiers, particularly in the early post-war decades.<sup>28</sup> This was in particular the case where men thought it was possible that they might still join the new armed forces, or when they believed they might still be mobilised in the case of an outbreak of war with the Soviet Union. Second, it reflects that some of these men were on active duty and thus not yet veterans themselves. This distinction rarely mattered to the men involved. Rather than dividing them into current and former soldiers, it united them, presented them with a shared identity, which they navigated together. This definition of a soldier aids to a certain extent in bridging the political and historiographical divide between the old, authoritarian German states and the new democratic polity of the FRG. In doing so, it does not elide the important distinctions which existed between ideas of the soldier in Nazi Germany and the FRG but nonetheless takes seriously that even those who did not ever wear uniform again after 8 May 1945 were actively involved in shaping what it ought to mean to be a soldier in the Federal Republic. If only because they were engaged in protecting the

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft. Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> On some of these tensions, Jörg Echternkamp, 'Mit dem Krieg seinen Frieden schließen - Wehrmacht und Weltkrieg in der Veteranenkultur, 1945-1960', in *Von der Kriegskultur zur Friedenskultur?*, ed. Thomas Kühne (Münster: Lit, 2000), 78-93.

social and political status which they believed they had acquired as a result of their military service.

But what did it mean to be a soldier? Both to those who did and to those who did not wear the uniform of the Federal Republic? Little has been written about military masculinities in the FRG in practice. The literature focuses primarily on tradition and the official civil-military relations concepts of the armed forces: the *Staatsbürger in Uniform* and *Innere Führung*. Their currency has come to stand in for the democratisation or liberalisation of the armed forces as a whole. While this will be addressed in detail below, rather more important for the thesis is a consideration of military identity which goes beyond these institutional concepts. I have made the point elsewhere that one stabilising influence of West German military identity into the late 1960s was not just anti-communism,<sup>29</sup> but *Abendland* ideology,<sup>30</sup> enduring inside the armed forces for longer than it did in civilian society.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the history of the FRG, women were never mandated to serve in the armed forces, with conscription, re-introduced in 1956, applying to men only.<sup>32</sup> As in other armies, masculinity is foundational to military identity in the FRG.<sup>33</sup> Just as politicians were debating new

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<sup>29</sup> Hermann Wentker, 'Antikommunismus in der frühen Bonner Republik', in *'Geistige Gefahr' und 'Immunsierung der Gesellschaft', Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, ed. Stefan Creuzberger and Dierk Hoffmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 355–70.

<sup>30</sup> Jan Tattenberg, "'The Fatherland Perished in the Frozen Wastes of Russia': West Germans in Search of the European Soldier, 1940–1967", *History of European Ideas* 46, no. 2 (2020): 190–208; more generally, Vanessa Conze, 'Facing the Future Backwards: "Abendland" as an Anti-Liberal Idea of Europe in Germany between the First World War and the 1960s', in *Anti-Liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization*, ed. Dieter Gosewinkel (Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 72–89; Rosario Forlenza, 'The Politics of the Abendland: Christian Democracy and the Idea of Europe after the Second World War', *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 2 (2017): 261–86.

<sup>31</sup> Vanessa Conze, *Das Europa der Deutschen. Ideen von Europa in Deutschland zwischen Reichstradition und Westorientierung, 1920–1970* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Women only joined the ranks of combat units in 2001, though from then on all positions were in principle open to them. In practice many units, including the special forces, rarely accepted women. Prior to 2001, women had served primarily as civilian employees of the armed forces, and in some specialist roles, including as medical personnel and musicians, Mike Szymanski, 'Ein zäher Kampf. Frauen bei der Bundeswehr', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 November 2020.

<sup>33</sup> A notable exception, at least in theory, with its gender neutral 'socialist soldier personality', was the NVA Smith, *Comrades*, 33–64.

frameworks for the military identity and thus masculinity of the new soldiers, military elite networks organised for political and economic purposes, but in practice also to safeguard older understandings of military identity. As Friederike Brühöfener has shown, the foundation of a new “sexual moral order” was fundamental for official concepts of military masculinity in the FRG, in which the heterosexual soldier at the head of a Christian household was imagined to be the first line of defence against Communism.<sup>34</sup> While conceptual political debates are important in framing the horizons of possibility or intelligibility of who counted or who did not count as embodying the masculine ideal of the soldier, they might tell us little about how this played out in practice. While this question is not at the centre of the thesis, it is one enduring concern, for who counted and who did not count as a soldier, or who embodied or did not embody the masculine ideal of the soldier was important in ascertaining who could and who could not speak legitimately on behalf of soldiers to civilian publics.

In focusing on military networks which resisted not just liberalisation but proved at certain points obstacles to democratisation, the thesis also forms part of a wider endeavour, far beyond German history, to understand transitions from authoritarian to democratic societies and political orders. Portugal and Spain are the paradigmatic European cases, given their somewhat later transition to democracy in the 1970s. While in Portugal, the military aided the transition to democracy, in Spain the armed forces obstructed that same process.<sup>35</sup> In the former case, a military coup unleashed revolutionary energies, galvanised by a series of colonial defeats.<sup>36</sup> In the latter case, attempts at reform after the death of Franco were

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<sup>34</sup> Friederike Brühöfener, ‘Sex and the Soldier: The Discourse about the Moral Conduct of Bundeswehr Soldiers and Officers during the Adenauer Era’, *Central European History* 48, no. 4 (2015): 525.

<sup>35</sup> José Javier Olivas Osuna, *Iberian Military Politics: Controlling the Armed Forces during Dictatorship and Democratisation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> On these see, for example, Ângela Campos, *An Oral History of the Portuguese Colonial War: Conscripted Generation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

obstructed by military elites loyal to the principles of the dictator's regime.<sup>37</sup> In West Germany, the scale of the defeat in 1945 and the subsequent occupation meant that military elites were in no position to obstruct the process. Democratisation of one kind or another was coming.<sup>38</sup> They were, however, in a position to shape the process.<sup>39</sup> The thesis focuses on the ways they organised, and the structures they used to do so, in order to show how they were able to shape attempts at the democratisation of military structures. The most prominent example is the way they campaigned for pensions, or their endeavour to obtain a declaration of the honour of the German soldier, which was ultimately given by both the U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.<sup>40</sup> But beyond, as we will see below, networks of current and former soldiers shaped the processes of liberalisation and democratisation, in some instances opposing and resisting them at every turn.

But the thesis is not just concerned with these early developments in the first decade of the FRG. It contends that networks of conservative soldiers, long after the formal establishment of democratic structures and processes, strained, often behind the scenes, to maintain older, authoritarian, social and professional structures. These never amounted to a fundamental challenge to the new political order, but they did shape the image soldiers had of themselves and that which they communicated to civilian society. Although the West German case is necessarily different than the Portuguese or Spanish one, it represents an example in which elite military structures within and outside the armed forces resisted democratic decision

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<sup>37</sup> José Javier Olivás Osuna, 'Revolutionary Versus Reactionary: Contrasting Portuguese and Spanish Civil-Military Relations during Democratisation', *War & Society* 38, no. 3 (2019): 225–48.

<sup>38</sup> Jörg Echternkamp, *Soldaten im Nachkrieg. Historische Deutungskonflikte und westdeutsche Demokratisierung 1945–1955* (München: Oldenbourg, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Alaric Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals, West German Society, and the Debate on Rearmament, 1949-1959* (London: Praeger, 2003), 15–48.

<sup>40</sup> Which aided in the creation of the 'clean Wehrmacht' myth, on which more below. Declarations of honour detailed in, Rudolf J. Schlaffer, 'Nach der Wehrmacht: Ritterlichkeit, Ehre und Pflicht - Tugenden für die Bundeswehr?', in *Ehre und Pflichten als Codes militärischer Tugenden*, ed. Ulrike Ludwig, Markus Pöhlmann, and John Zimmermann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014), 95–107.

making without ever outright challenging democratic decision makers' authority. Unable to resist formal democratisation, they were nevertheless able to shape it, at least in the military domain, which proved, as I will show below, much more effective than open opposition may have done. But it is clear, has become clearer perhaps in recent years, that exactly these kinds of anti-democratic networks appear to be gaining ground inside a number of armies, just as the far-right increasingly agitates for violent overthrow of democratic governments both in Germany and the United States.<sup>41</sup> There is, therefore, a pressing need to understand these kinds of networks. The scholarship, as I make clear below, has hitherto failed to integrate these early networks which shaped West German rearmament into a longer history of military opposition to democratisation. Doing so offers a chance to contribute to the analysis of emerging far-right networks by offering an analysis which can help historicise their development.

The *Staatsbürger in Uniform*, the Bundeswehrs's central civil-military relations concept, played an important role in defining the relationship between the military and political institutions of the new German republic. But its proponents, notably Ulrich de Maizière and Wolf Graf von Baudissin, were never representative of the armed forces as a whole.<sup>42</sup> As the thesis shows, West German military institutions were always defined by conservative forces, with only brief moments, particularly after the 1970s, in which progressive voices resonated more widely.<sup>43</sup> The existing scholarship on military institutions in the FRG deals to a large

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<sup>41</sup> In the United States, see participation by active duty and retired soldiers in the recent storm on the Capitol, as well as the rise of the so-called 'Oathkeepers', for Germany see citations below, Mike Giglio, 'A Pro-Trump Militant Group Has Recruited Thousands of Police, Soldiers, and Veterans', *The Atlantic*, November 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/11/right-wing-militias-civil-war/616473/>.

<sup>42</sup> Verging on hagiography are Rudolf J. Schlaffer and Wolfgang Schmidt, eds., *Wolf Graf von Baudissin, 1907-1993. Modernisierer zwischen totaler Herrschaft und freiheitlicher Ordnung* (Münster: Oldenbourg, 2007); John Zimmermann, *Ulrich de Maizière. General der Bonner Republik, 1912-2006* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> Pamela E. Swett, 'Neither Too Hard, nor Too Soft: Hellmuth Heye, the Quick Controversy and West Germany's "Citizens in Uniform"', *German History* 37, no. 1 (2019): 54–76.

extent with changing ideas of military tradition.<sup>44</sup> And while that scholarship has produced some valuable insights into the changing institutional preconditions for military identity, there are limits to this approach. It tends to reproduce an older historiography which has understood the post-war history of the armed forces as one in which traditionalists were pitched against modernisers.<sup>45</sup> This narrative tends to focus on the highest echelons of military institutions, neglecting the lived reality of most soldiers, even those at the very top, who while endorsing certain conceptions of tradition themselves might in private, or once retired, have had a more difficult relationship to the Bundeswehr's central civil-military relations concepts. Progressive voices were always on the margins, and in recent decades appear to have been pushed out of the institutions to a degree not seen since the early 1960s. This argument has resonance also for the current conjuncture, during which it appears the new far-right has found refuge in particular in the security services, including in the Bundeswehr.<sup>46</sup>

The thesis contributes to an on-going effort to rewrite the history of the early Federal Republic, which has been underway since the late 1990s. Early histories offered a triumphalist account: the first crop of new national histories which emerged in the wake of German re-unification understood the early history of the FRG as basically one of the development of liberal democratic structures with a modernised economic base. The war had

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<sup>44</sup> Just one recent survey is, Eberhard Birk, Winfried Heinemann, and Sven Lange, eds., *Tradition für die Bundeswehr. Neue Aspekte einer alten Debatte* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> John Zimmermann, 'Zwischen Reformern und Traditionalisten? Aushandlungsprozesse zum Traditionsverhältnis in der Bundeswehr', in *Sonderfall Bundeswehr? Streitkräfte in nationalen Perspektiven und im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Heiner Möllers and Rudolf J. Schlaffer (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 295–310; A critical view on this historiography, Leonie Ziegler, 'Gibt es eine deutsch-deutsche Militärgeschichte als neuere Zeitgeschichte?', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 76, no. 1 (2017): 181–89; Jörg Echterkamp et al., 'Deutsche Militärgeschichte von 1945-1990 im internationalen Kontext', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 76, no. 1 (2017): 132–70.

<sup>46</sup> I return to this in Chapters 3 and 4, as well as the conclusion. For now, see Saskia Schäfer and Thomas Meaney, 'The Right-Wing Rot at the Heart of the German State', *The New York Times*, 3 October 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/03/opinion/chemnitz-maassen-afd-far-right.html>; Christina Schmidt, 'Hannibal's Shadow Army', *taz*, 13 December 2018, <https://taz.de/taz-Recherche-auf-Englisch/!5558072/>.

done its part to, if not break, then at least partially limit the power of old industrial and land-owning elites and thereby cleared the ground for the “economic miracle” of the 1950s.

Liberalisation was understood to have begun with denazification and culminated in the disintegration of the GDR, which was viewed as perhaps inevitable. A middle generation of historian of the Federal Republic emphasised liberalisation while acknowledging the legacy of the Nazi past in the new institutions.<sup>47</sup> It appeared in the post-war period that German conservatism might have been tamed, just as it would appear by the 1990s that the remnants of the radical right was finally in terminal decline.<sup>48</sup> The collapse of the GDR finally made available the accomplishments of West German society and economy also to those who had hitherto been living under the last dictatorship on German soil.<sup>49</sup> At that moment, at the oft-heralded “end of history,” there was no room, or perhaps no perceived need, to acknowledge the reality of the FRG’s foundation amid a difficult negotiation between imperatives associated with the nascent Cold War and the desire by some West German and Allied interests to punish the crimes which had been committed under the Nazi Regime. It was perhaps even less desirable to acknowledge that anti-communism regularly won out, functioning as a means for the reintegration of perpetrators.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik*; Axel Schildt, *Konservatismus in Deutschland. Von den Anfängen im 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 1998); Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit. Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit. Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger, 1920-1960* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007); Martina Steber, *Die Hüter der Begriffe. Politische Sprachen des Konservativen in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1980* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017); for a mistaken claim on the decline of the radical right, Jan-Werner Müller, ‘From National Identity to National Interest: The Rise (and Fall) of Germany’s New Right’, in *German Ideologies since 1945: Studies in the Political Thought and Culture of the Bonn Republic*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 185–205.

<sup>49</sup> Frank Biess and Astrid M. Eckert, ‘Why Do We Need New Narratives for the History of the Federal Republic?’, *Central European History* 52, no. 1 (2019): 1–6.

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard Sälter, *Phantome des Kalten Krieges. Die Organisation Gehlen und die Wiederbelebung des Gestapo-Feindbildes »Rote Kapelle«* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2016); Sabrina Nowack, *Sicherheitsrisiko NS-Belastung. Personalüberprüfungen im Bundesnachrichtendienst in den 1960er-Jahren* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2016); more generally, Stefan Kreuzberger and Dierk Hoffmann, eds., ‘Geistige Gefahr’ und ‘Immunisierung der Gesellschaft’: *Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (De Gruyter, 2014); Norbert Frei and Dominik Rigoll, eds., *Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche. Weltanschauung und Politik in Deutschland, Europa und den USA* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).

Elite male intellectuals played a leading role in the liberalisation and in its historiography. The process was in part driven by the so-called "forty-fiver" generation of historians, those who had been born in the late 1920s and early 1930s, some of whom had taken part as teenagers in the final days of the war, including Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Wolfgang Mommsen, Hans Mommsen, Gerhard A. Ritter, Heinrich August Winkler, Volker Berghahn, Konrad Jarausch, and Jürgen Kocka.<sup>51</sup> The idea of "generations" as analytically useful is contested, but it does have utility for groups which are relatively cohesive in terms of their socialisation, their political identities, or their class structure,<sup>52</sup> such as the ones analysed in the thesis. As A. Dirk Moses has argued, liberalisation, while a powerful force, was anything but inevitable for the forty-fivers. Rather, "moral pollution" which had characterised the new FRG on account of the continuing presence in social, political, and economic life of formerly influential Nazis had to be removed.<sup>53</sup> In the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s, political discourse increasingly became more whiggish and more future oriented,<sup>54</sup> ultimately enveloped by a polarisation between "redemptive republicanism" and resurgent nationalism by the 1980s.<sup>55</sup>

In recent years, the historiographical consensus on the FRG has begun to shift. Its history has been modernised and globalised, and in the course of that process, it has become clear that no straight path of liberalisation, democratisation, or westernisation led from 1945 to the present

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<sup>51</sup> A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); cf. Paul Nolte, 'Die Historiker der Bundesrepublik. Rückblick auf eine "lange Generation"', *Merkur* 53, no. 5 (1999): 413–32.

<sup>52</sup> Ulrich Herbert, "'Generation der Sachlichkeit'. Die völkische Studentenbewegung der frühen zwanziger Jahre in Deutschland', in *Zivilisation und Barberei. Die widersprüchlichen der Moderne*, ed. Frank Bajohr, Werner Johe, and Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Christians, 1991), 115–44; Bernd Weisbrod, 'Generation und Generationalität in der Neueren Geschichte', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 2005, no. 8 (2005).

<sup>53</sup> Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 38–54, esp 50–54.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Möckel, 'Zukünftige Generationen. Geschichte einer politischen Pathosformel', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 2020, no. 52–53 (2020).

<sup>55</sup> Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 219–45.

day. The teleology was broken, fragmented at best.<sup>56</sup> But this has created room for histories of the lives of those, for instance, who helped shape West German society in the post-war period without until recently seeing their stories reflected in the historiography. This includes not just the so-called “guest workers” and other migrants, whose stories had long been neglected,<sup>57</sup> though German expellees from the now lost Eastern territories had been subject to more extensive analysis.<sup>58</sup> Sex and sexuality, too, came increasingly into focus, a desideratum not least because the FRG had retained legislation passed under the Nazi regime criminalising male homosexuality. Entangled with decriminalisation campaigns and wider movements for LGBTQ rights were issues of race and class.<sup>59</sup> Any modern military historical work must take account of all these developments, and questions of race, sex, gender, and class all feature in the thesis. This is due both to the obvious relevance of questions of sex and gender for military identities, particularly concepts of military masculinity,<sup>60</sup> as well as the importance for situating soldiers in socio-economic terms, particularly in light of the bourgeois class background many of the ones here concerned shared.

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<sup>56</sup> As Astrid M. Eckert and Frank Biess have argued, more recent histories have made clear the limits of such approaches, Biess and Eckert, ‘New Narratives’, 6–10; Pointing for instance to the fact that the United States Army originated in a social order itself segregated and fundamentally racist are, e.g. Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Timothy L. Schroer, *Recasting Race After World War II: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Two more recent examples are, Jennifer A. Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s to 1980s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Lauren Stokes, ‘The Permanent Refugee Crisis in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949-’, *Central European History* 52, no. 1 (2019): 19–44.

<sup>58</sup> Though engagement still is productive, see R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of Germans after the Second World War* (London: Yale University Press, 2013); Ian Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Recently made clear by Christopher Ewing, ‘The Color of Desire: Contradictions of Race, Sex, and Gay Rights in the Federal Republic of Germany’ (New York, The City University of New York, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> On early questions around military masculinity in the FRG, Friederike Brühöfener, ‘Sending Young Men to the Barracks: West Germany’s Struggle over the Establishment of New Armed Forces in the 1950s’, in *Gender and the Long Postwar: The United States and the Two Germanys, 1945–1989* (Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 145–64; Brühöfener, ‘Sex and the Soldier’.

Central to the early history of the Federal Republic had always been the question of its sovereignty, which was understood not to simply relate to the status of the new polity under international law, but also to its contribution to the possible defence of Western Europe. As such, the historiography of the Federal Republic has long since been bound up with the question as to how it might be defended, making rearmament a central node around which political histories have revolved. The 1970s saw the first products of the official endeavour to write a history of the early security architecture of the FRG.<sup>61</sup> The second historiographical wave brought into particular focus the social pressures exerted by veterans and former military elites upon early rearmament processes. It appeared in the wake of German reunification and reached its apex in the wake of German participation in the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan.<sup>62</sup> These histories broadly argued that the Korean War had provided the impetus for rearmament.<sup>63</sup> They are recently receiving a long overdue revision. As a result, paramilitary networks have come into focus,<sup>64</sup> and the role of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), in the form of the Organisation Gehlen, in particular as an incubator for rearmament has had to be reassessed.<sup>65</sup> This shift has allowed rearmament processes to be located not in the aftermath of the foundation of the new state, as had largely been supposed previously, but

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<sup>61</sup> Most famously Hans-Jürgen Rautenberg and Norbert Wiggershaus, 'Die Himmeroder Denkschrift von Oktober 1950', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 21, no. 1 (1977): 135–206, which will be dealt with critically in Chapter 3; Recently critically, Thomas Vogel, 'The Himmerod Memorandum and the Beginning of West German Security Policy', in *Rearming Germany*, ed. James S. Corum (London: Brill, 2011), 3–28.

<sup>62</sup> If this set of histories, then, appeared in just the moment at which there was some concern over the direction united German foreign and defence policy might take, there is perhaps in general a need to evaluate the historical conjuncture which is giving rise to the new histories currently emerging. For this older set, see, e.g. Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals*.

<sup>63</sup> Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, 4 vols (München: Oldenbourg, 1982–1997).

<sup>64</sup> Tobias Schmitt, 'U.S. Intelligence and the Nascent Transatlantic Security Architecture of the Cold War - The Case of the "Gesellschaft Für Wehrkunde"', *Journal of Intelligence History* 19, no. 1 (2020): 103–21.

<sup>65</sup> Agilolf Keßelring and Thorsten Loch, 'Himmerod war nicht der Anfang. Bundesminister Eberhard Wildermuth und die Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 74, no. 1–2 (2015): 60–96; Agilolf Keßelring, *Die Organisation Gehlen und die Neuformierung des Militärs in der Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2017).

rather has made clear that they predated it. Even before, in other words, the FRG was founded, moves were made to raise new armies to defend it.<sup>66</sup>

But one problem which remains, in spite of this new historiography, is the fact that much of it is unverifiable by historians other than those who have been given exclusive access to archives held by the intelligence services,<sup>67</sup> or by families of those involved in early rearmament processes.<sup>68</sup> There is also concrete evidence that the archival record, even where accessible, is incomplete due to the intentional destruction of material, as in the case of Hans Speidel, who routinely asked interlocutors to destroy his letters.<sup>69</sup> These studies, then, while providing important new insights into the early security architecture of the FRG, can only with great difficulty be taken as a point of departure for new histories, which must contend with significant problems of access.<sup>70</sup> This thesis takes another approach. It takes the limits of our knowledge not as an obstacle, but as a point of departure. Instead of attempting to glean

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<sup>66</sup> Informal structures appear to have existed which would have allowed for the mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of men in the event of a crisis. It appears unlikely, however, barring improved access to archives still deemed sensitive, that much more will be known about them, Keßelring, *Neuformierung*, 113–14.

<sup>67</sup> I am primarily referring here to the results of the independent historical commission for the early history of the BND (UHK/BND). Historians were granted unique access to hitherto unavailable BND material, which is only slowly becoming available via the Federal Archives. One additional problem is that the old BND catalogue references referred to in these volumes now will be replaced by new catalogue references in the Bundesarchiv, meaning even when material will be available more widely, it may still be difficult to track down in order to verify, *Veröffentlichungen der Unabhängigen Historikerkommission zur BND-Geschichte*, 13 vols (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2016–2021).

<sup>68</sup> Access to the Speidel papers, for instance, has proven particularly elusive, except for Dieter Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger. Freundschaft und Geschichtspolitik im Zeichen der Weltkriege* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016); and Agilolf Keßelring and Thorsten Loch, ‘Der “Besprechungsplan” vom 5. Januar 1950 Gründungsdokument der Bundeswehr? Eine Dokumentation zu den Anfängen westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik’, *Historisch-Politische Mitteilungen* 22, no. 1 (2015): 199–230; another example is the Nachlass of Gehlen himself, part of which was acquired, in 2017, by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, though wherefrom is unclear, Willi Winkler, ‘Jäger, Sammler, Vogelfreund.’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2 December 2017.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Staedke to Speidel’, 3 March 1954, Doc 281, Fiche 5, BW 9/3366, BArch-MA.

<sup>70</sup> A recent and welcome addition has been an edited volume on clandestine military networks, which, however, omitted to go further than 1945, and even then focusing only in one chapter on the 20 July 1944 conspiracy, Gundula Gahlen, Daniel M. Segesser, and Garmen Winkel, eds., *Geheime Netzwerke im Militär, 1700-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016); yet exactly that conspiracy is already well covered, see recently only Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg, ed., *Verräter? Vorbilder? Verbrecher? Kontroverse Deutungen des 20. Juli 1944 seit 1945*. (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2016); a survey of the investigation which followed the attempted coup in Linda von Keyserlingk-Rehbein, *Nur eine ‘ganz kleine Clique’? Die NS-Ermittlungen über das Netzwerk vom 20. Juli 1944* (Berlin: Lukas, 2018).

from the new secondary literature limited yet hitherto unavailable details which are difficult or impossible to verify, it takes as its object of analysis the networks which so actively and in such a lasting fashion obstructed the production of historical scholarship and asks about their relationships to other networks and their ambitions for doing so. It thereby contends that what we do not know is to a certain degree less important than who produced the knowledge we now appear to lack and may be unable to ever reconstruct in full. To move forward, historians must find a way of asking *why* these lacunae were produced in the first place, not just *what* might help us fill them.

In foregrounding these questions, the thesis is able to expand the scope of the scholarship beyond the early decades of the FRG, allowing it to point at continuities in military structures and debates around military identity into the 1980s.<sup>71</sup> To those who worked to obscure their own activities in the context of rearmament and in the following decades, like Speidel, their identity as soldiers was foundational for their sense of self. As a result, wartime military hierarchies remained meaningful to them. These hierarchies offered not just the rationale, but the means by which certain narratives of rearmament were promoted over others. The political dimension of soldiering was minimised as a result. By placing these issues at the front and centre of analysis, the thesis is able to connect rearmament histories and associated networks to a wider set of questions relating to military structures and networks in the FRG, paying particular attention to how and whose power and influence were wielded in the production of knowledge, both historical and contemporary, on military issues in the FRG.

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<sup>71</sup> One example is the kind of more limited scope is the work of Frank Reichherzer. Though the analysis here is excellent, the problem is an overly narrow set of conceptual tools restricts Reichherzer's work to a timeframe roughly between the interwar period and the late 1950s, which has already been subject to extensive analysis, Frank Reichherzer, '*Alles ist Front!*' *Wehrwissenschaften und die Bellifizierung der Gesellschaft im Zeitalter der Weltkriege* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012).

This is not to be understood to be implying that all or even most of the networks or individuals the thesis engages with are or were members of the far-right. Some, certainly, propagated ideas using rhetoric resembling that of the contemporary far-right.<sup>72</sup> And some of those who did and others who did not may have shared a hope that a unified Germany may be restored to its proper hegemonic place in Europe. But many others were critical of such ideas. While such voices were few and far-between in the early post-war years, they multiplied, particularly from the late 1960s onwards, as Chapters 3 and 4 will show, with the latter in particular focusing on peace activists and critical journalists. And it is part of the ambition of the thesis to bring these critical voices together with these conservative or traditionalist tendencies, as they can sometimes appear to have formed part of entirely different public or political institutional spheres. Yet they clashed constantly, if not directly then due to their differing stances on the military issues of the day. And so critical journalists and academics formed as much a part of this story as did revanchist retired former general staff officers.<sup>73</sup> What connected them all is that they were all soldiers, and so these debates were related to, or in some instances came to stand in for, the wider question of what it meant to be a soldier loyally serving one's country, a question which in the late 1970s and early 1980s in particular was regularly adjudicated by the courts.

A long-standing feature of anglophone studies of militarism and militarisation has been a focus on thinktanks and the attendant so-called defence intellectual. The latter was a distinctly Cold War figure who “researched, analysed, and advised decision makers on national security issues while moving between a newly created network of think tanks, government institutions, and academic centres”, moving, in other words, inside a “military-

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<sup>72</sup> See for example racialised rhetoric on the Eastern Front, Tattenberg, ‘Fatherland’.

<sup>73</sup> The overwhelming majority of the academics and journalists concerned, and all of those engaged with in detail, satisfy the expanded definition of soldiers formulated above.

intellectual complex”.<sup>74</sup> The former, the thinktank, meanwhile helped clear the ground for the rationalisation of policy-making within liberal capitalist democracies.<sup>75</sup> While a focus on these two elements has allowed for a critical analysis of the United States’ foreign and defence policy in particular, a strange lacuna has developed. While many of those who shaped RAND and other institutions which have been identified as crucial for the development of these military-intellectual structures were German or German-Jewish émigrés,<sup>76</sup> the concepts which have been developed to understand their impact in their new home have so far relatively rarely been applied by those wishing to understand the development of military-intellectual structures in the country which they were forced to leave. This can, of course, be partially explained by the fact that the United States now became a global hegemon, while Germans were forced to reckon with the fact that their bid for global power had ended in defeat and genocide.<sup>77</sup> The thesis functions in part as a corrective, demonstrating the, albeit limited, applicability of concepts coined by historians of the United States. This conceptual transposition allows the thesis to build on these ideas to develop its own framework for the analysis of military-intellectual formations, which in turn may be useful for analyses of other contexts.

To borrow from Terence Renaud, all the soldiers here concerned were “insider intellectuals”. They were “networkers, institution builders, and power brokers,” and offered ideas which

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<sup>74</sup> Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual* (London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 3.

<sup>75</sup> S.M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003); on the post-Cold War legacy of some of these ideas, Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurology, Futurists, and the Struggle for the Post-Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (London: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>77</sup> On the United States’ trajectory, see most recently, Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (London: Harvard University Press, 2020); on West German intellectual reconstruction, Sean Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

tended to “reinforce rather than critically transform the existing ideologies of their time.”<sup>78</sup>

There are important differences between those insider intellectuals Renaud identifies and mine. His were primarily émigrés, often Jewish, who came to help define liberal democratic norms and mid-century technocracy. None of mine are émigrés, nor are they necessarily supporters of liberal democracy. But they did possess expert authority, which they guarded and wished to remove from the sphere of influence of democratic decision making. Their expert authority, they regarded as a means of shielding military institutions from the interference of democratically elected decision makers. They were able to inhibit or promote the dissemination of particular kinds of knowledge about military, defence, or security issues. Some were insulated by ministerial bureaucracy and military hierarchies, but ironically it was the very fact that many among them were on the outside of established military structures which most effectively insulated them from control and oversight without significantly impeding their ability to exert their influence over military institutions by means of informal networks. Just like the neoliberal technocrats to which Renaud points, the “mid-century responses” dreamed up by the military public sphere have solidified and given room to antidemocratic forces, in this particular case far-right extremists in uniform.

The thesis proceeds both in a thematic and a chronological manner. It is organised into four chapters, each of which is organised into three sections. These deal with different kinds of networks revolving either around particular structures, for instance the MGFA, or individuals at the centre of often informal networks, for instance around Werner Hahlweg. The first chapter focuses on the networks which came to shape West German military and political structures in the wake of the Second World War. I argue that relationships of authority and command continued to shape even informal networks of former soldiers who never wore

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<sup>78</sup> Terence Renaud, ‘Insider Intellectuals and the Crisis of Democracy’, *German History* 37, no. 3 (2019): 394.

uniform again after 1945. The argument extends the existing literature by insisting upon the centrality of social status for soldiers' organising after 1945. While economic and political considerations were important, for many the primary concern was the retention of the social status which rank and military elite membership had conferred upon them. Economic and political restitution were often simply means towards that end.<sup>79</sup> The chapter also engages the foundation of official structures for the writing of military history, both of the last war and more generally.

The second chapter focuses on the nuclearisation of strategic thought and the rifts this produced in the military public sphere. It also traces the life of Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm whose career on the margins shows how the military public sphere could both constrain individual choices and boost individual careers, if so desired. The final section argues that the establishment of a new society for former general staff officers showed just how saturated and static the military public sphere had become by the middle of the 1960s. The society amounted to a formalisation of some of the networks of former general staff officers which had always existed in the wake of the Second World War. The establishment of the new society revealed that younger officers were increasingly uninterested in such associations, which unnerved older officers given they desired in part to help shape their younger comrades, and thereby future military leaders, by means of the association. The result was an opening of military elite networks to outsiders in order to increase their long-term viability.

The third chapter focuses on the structural cooperation between members of the military public sphere and the higher education sector, arguing that such cooperation might even have

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<sup>79</sup> This echoes to a certain extent recent scholarship on German expellees, in the sense that in both cases while the stated ambitions were relatively grand, with expellees calling for the return of lost territories and officers for the return of an older social order, in both cases did these groups come to the conclusion relatively quickly that this was not to be. On expellees, see e.g. Demshuk, *The Lost German East*.

been desired by students under the right circumstances, at the very height of the student movement. Particular focus is on the elevation of Andreas Hillgruber to a chair at Freiburg University in 1968 in a bid to secure an interface between the MGFA and the university. Werner Hahlweg, the only designated professor of military history in the FRG, served as a node around which engagement by soldiers coalesced. His popularity with students put Hahlweg in a unique position. He was able to offer the military public sphere lessons which might be drawn from military historical study and which may have proven useful in the suppression of revolts across the globe. Student radicals meanwhile found in him a teacher sympathetic to the political struggles for independence and self-determination which so animated the student movement. Hillgruber and Hahlweg show how the military public sphere became integrated into the higher education section in Germany, with varying levels of success. Beyond these two cases, the early 1970s also saw first efforts at an official history of rearmament, which was significantly shaped by the old networks and thereby provoked irritation, even in the military public sphere.

The final chapter focuses on critical voices which grew more powerful from the late 1970s onwards. It argues that by this time conservative voices had structured the military public sphere in ways which marginalised their political opponents by design. The Darmstädter Signal provided an opportunity for young, left-leaning soldiers to organise and to voice their opposition to prevailing security policies. The soldiers did battle in the courts in order to protect their right as members of the armed forces to speak their minds in opposition to government policy, an endeavour which was not always successful. This legal scrutiny showed how conservative military structures of command really were, and how successful they were at reframing what progressives argued was a question of freedom of opinion as one of obedience and loyal service. The chapter also focuses on the role more popular media, in

particular radio, played with regards to widening participation in discussions on military and security issues in the FRG, with the NDR programme *Streitkräfte und Strategien* in particular opening up avenues for critical voices on defence issues to be heard, although this remained the exception rather than the rule.

Throughout, the thesis draws on primary material which has not yet been analysed by other historians. In some cases, this is due to logistical issues. The Wehrtechnische Studiensammlung (WTS), for instance, has little room to accommodate readers wishing to access Hahlweg's papers. Baudissin's papers at the Bundeswehr's Command and Staff College (FüAkBw) are only slowly being catalogued. The interviews compiled by the émigré Hans Speier at SUNY Albany have so far only been drawn on by historians of the United States, in spite of easy access.<sup>80</sup> Documents relating to the early history of the MGFA are accessible but have so far been of interest only to historians dealing narrowly with its institutional history. The files of the Darmstädter Signal have only recently become available to historians, and Chapter 4 shows how important a reference point this material might be for future research. While some of the questions addressed by the thesis might feel familiar, then, it draws substantially on new material and a new theoretical framework, and this helps it develop an approach which pushes for a resolution to some of the issues which have plagued the historiography until now, as outlined above.

Together, the chapters show that the military public sphere resisted liberalisation and democratisation far longer than official military structures. By doing so, it enabled advocacy

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<sup>80</sup> Some of Speier's interviews drawn on below were published, but much of the most interesting information had been removed, Hans Speier, *From the Ashes of Disgrace* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981); Speier also published anonymised extracts from the interviews shortly after he conducted them, Hans Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War: The Views of German Military and Political Leaders* (Evanston: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957).

on behalf of conservative soldiers to continue, both politically without and within the armed forces. While it is tempting to view these networks as a reserve pool for political influence to be mobilised, this does not nearly go far enough and misses the fact that higher-ranking former officers, such as the former chief of the army general staff Franz Halder most notably, never viewed the commanders of the new armed forces neither as entirely legitimate heirs nor as their social equals. When the influence of the likes of Halder waned, the conservative networks and associations which they had helped found maintained course, pushing back against efforts to bring the armed forces more in line with changing social and political norms. This meant that even when critical voices reached wider audiences from the late 1970s onwards, their influence remained limited. Furthermore, their influence waned, and has continued to do so, even as the far-right threatens to capture the centre of the political landscape of the now reunited Germany. Military institutions remain firmly conservative, giving shelter to numerous far-right extremist networks. The questions here concerned are thus more relevant than ever.

## Chapter 1: War Injuries, Rearmament, and Military History, 1940-

### 1956

Military associations in which officers came together and debated the most pressing military or defence issues of the day have a long tradition in Germany, dating perhaps in their modern form to the *Militärische Gesellschaft* founded by Gerhard von Scharnhorst in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> These modern iterations are generally associated with the Prussian military reform movement and the influence of Enlightenment ideas on military institutions.<sup>82</sup> But the landscape shifted, and before the First World War the questions revolved around the potentially global deployment of German power in pursuit of a colonial empire to match other European great powers,<sup>83</sup> however unlikely that may have been in practice.<sup>84</sup> Increasingly, rather than the mobilisation of limited resources for war, the mobilisation of society at large came into focus and the institutional setup of military associations reflected this, culminating in the new intellectual endeavour of *Wehrwissenschaften*, which aimed ultimately to mobilise the entirety of society's material and intellectual resources for war, as Frank Reichherzer has shown.<sup>85</sup> It thus proved particularly susceptible to mobilisation by the National Socialist regime, having been promoted in part by Erich Ludendorff in his quest for political power and rehabilitation in the interwar period.<sup>86</sup> New structures sprung up to

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<sup>81</sup> Charles Edward White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (London: Praeger, 1989).

<sup>82</sup> Daniel Hohrath, 'Spätbarocke Kriegspraxis und aufgeklärte Kriegswissenschaften: Neue Forschungen und Perspektiven zu Krieg und Militär im „Zeitalter der Aufklärung“', *Aufklärung* 12, no. 1 (2000): 5–47; Arthur Kuhle, *Die preußische Kriegstheorie um 1800 und ihre Suche nach dynamischen Gleichgewichten* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> Susanne Kuss, *German Colonial Wars and the Context of Military Violence*, trans. Andrew Smith (London: Harvard University Press, 2017); Christoph Kamissek, *Kriegslust und Fernweh. Deutsche Soldaten zwischen militärischem Internationalismus und imperialer Nation* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2018).

<sup>84</sup> Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886–1914* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1984); Marilyn Shevin Coetzee, *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>85</sup> Reichherzer, *Alles ist Front!*, 16–21.

<sup>86</sup> Jay Lockenour, *Dragonslayer: The Legend of Erich Ludendorff in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021).

promote this kind of thinking, characterised by their position at the interface of military institutions and academic ones, most notably the institute for *Wehrpolitik* at the University of Berlin, as well as the seminar for *Kriegsgeschichte* at the University of Heidelberg, and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wehrpolitik und Wehrwissenschaften* (DGWW).<sup>87</sup>

These structures were, as Reichherzer has shown, greatly diminished in the post-war period. This was in part due to the official demilitarisation policies pursued by the Allies, and in part due to the fact that many who had shaped these ideas, such as Ludendorff himself (†1937), but also Friedrich von Cochenhausen (†1946), president of the DGWW, had died. But, as this chapter will argue, following Reichherzer to a degree, other structures and networks took their place. That is not to say that they continued to pursue the total mobilisation of West German society for war, but their planning went far beyond what officials were willing to entertain or discuss publicly. At the same time, these structures served to cement the power and influence of military elites for long after the army and state which they had served had been abolished. This chapter traces the networks and structures which allowed them to do so, while paying close attention to the social foundations of their power which they carefully guarded so as to maintain their political influence. It proceeds in three sections.

The first section provides some context for the development of the often informal and covert networks by means of which military elites preserved their power in the absence of formal military structures. The second section focuses on the importance of honour and physical injury for military elite activism in this period. It shows that the networks sketched in the first section were engaged not just in a fierce fight for political power, but in a wider movement

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<sup>87</sup> Reichherzer, *Alles ist Front!*, see respectively, 253-327, 328-365, and 191-252; on the mobilisation of the earlier Prussian reform tradition in this context, Peter Baldwin, 'Clausewitz in Nazi Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 5-26.

for legitimacy and primarily social restitution, from which political and economic claims followed. This marks an important departure from the existing literature, which has so far focused on political and economic claims. The third section shows how these networks endeavoured to preserve their influence by focusing on the institutions which shaped the writing of military history in West Germany in this period as places in and through which this struggle for legitimacy was waged. They contributed to the rise of an early historiography of the Second World War, which saw them help narrate the history of events they had participated in or shaped fundamentally, often sanitising their own pasts alongside that of the armed forces they had served.

In the process, difficult questions regarding the past, present, and future of the armed forces needed to be settled. How, for instance, could the deep rifts among the military elite over wartime issues, from the conduct of individual battles to campaign planning and logistics, as well as the more general attitude towards Hitler and his regime, including the attempted coup of July 1944, be approached now? How could differences on these issues be negotiated? And in what forum? What role should debate about or answers to some of these questions play for the future armed forces? And how should the history of all this be written, and by whom?

These questions were as difficult to disentangle then as they are now. But this is true not just in the sense of their implications, but it is also true because most participants in these debates commented on a wide range of issues. This means that across the chapter, personalities will appear, disappear, and re-appear, as coverage of networks and debates shifts. This is intentional, as it shows the fluidity with which individuals moved across the military public sphere which, while at this point largely closed to outsiders, was wide open to the former military elite, allowing for powerful intellectual and interpersonal crosscurrents to emerge.

In 1952, Hans Speier was in Germany on research assignment from the RAND Corporation, where he headed up the Social Sciences Division, to conduct research on German attitudes towards rearmament. Speier made three extended trips to West Germany in the early 1950s to this end and conducted numerous interviews with high-ranking officials and formerly high-ranking military officers. Speier was what Daniel Bessner has called a “lister”, “a person mentioned in lists of mid-century intellectuals (and usually towards the end).”<sup>88</sup> Speier was born in Berlin and completed his PhD as the first doctoral student to Karl Mannheim in Heidelberg in 1929. A socialist married to a Jewish paediatrician, he and his family emigrated to the United States in 1933, where he became a defence intellectual.<sup>89</sup> In the first and second part of this chapter, Speier will serve as a guide to the various networks which shaped West German rearmament, a role to which he is perfectly suited given his outsider position to the occasionally inscrutable networks described earlier. Speier interviewed about 50 of the most important surviving generals.<sup>90</sup> As one interviewee summarised it, upon hearing who Speier had spoken to: “You have seen the elite.”<sup>91</sup> His interview partners appear to have been intrigued by the American with a German background and surprised he was “interested in opinions”, rather than simply in facts.<sup>92</sup> Good contacts to American occupation authorities allowed for easy introductions to some generals, who appeared to have been happy to introduce Speier to ever more former comrades. His insights are unique, not just due to his access, but also due to his notes. A perceptive observer, Speier was able to use his sociological training to analyse for RAND the social dynamics among the former military

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<sup>88</sup> Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*, ix.

<sup>89</sup> See in the Introduction above, as well as *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>90</sup> Of 3,191 generals and admirals of all branches by the end of the war (2,344 in the land army), about 13.7% did not survive it. This rate is likely to be significantly higher by the late 1940s and early 1950s, given their advanced age and the strain war and imprisonment had on these men. If we assume that around 30% of all generals and admirals had perished by the early 1950s, this leaves us with just over 1,600 remaining army generals by the time Speier begins his interviews. These numbers in Christian Hartmann, *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg. Front und militärisches Hinterland 1941/42* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2009), 182, n627.

<sup>91</sup> The man in question was Rudolph-Christoph von Gersdorff, ‘Various Activities - Mehlem- Cologne’ (1 April 1954), 4, Box 9, Folder 5, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Interview with Reinhard Gehlen’ (17 June 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 4, Hans Speier Papers.

elite. As a result, Speier was granted a look behind the scenes and in following his observations it becomes clear that previous accounts have perhaps overstated the political savvy of men like Franz Halder or Reinhard Gehlen.

### From Wartime Hierarchies to Post-War Networks

Speier's position as an outsider meant that his account is perhaps one of the most insightful available to us, particularly given the uneven archival record, of which perhaps the only thing we can say with certainty is that it was altered and significantly shaped by powerful personalities. Hans Speidel's papers, for instance, are still privately held with access extremely limited. We also know that Speidel regularly asked his correspondents to destroy letters.<sup>93</sup> Gehlen's personal papers may have been destroyed, though we may never know. Access to the papers of Adolf Heusinger remains restricted. In addition, couriers, such as the young naval officer Heinz-Eugen Eberbach, were routinely employed to aid the communication among former general staff officers in sensitive matters.<sup>94</sup> Participants at the famous Himmerod Conference,<sup>95</sup> for instance, were briefed individually beforehand by Johann Adolf Graf von Kielmansegg, who travelled across the republic to this end.<sup>96</sup> Speier, then, is in many ways perhaps our best chance at gaining access to an account of these networks which is shaped, if not by no political or historiographical considerations, then at least perhaps by ones which appear less likely to be convergent in terms of their interests with those of the former military elite. He was able to cut across the various debates in order to, explicitly as an outsider who appeared to have no stake in these debates directly, witness

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<sup>93</sup> 'Staedke to Speidel', 3 March 1954; 'Staedke to Speidel', 1 April 1954, Doc 270, Fiche 5, BW 9/3366, BArch-MA.

<sup>94</sup> The informal and clandestine nature of these networks allowed for many an opportunity to shape the early historiography of rearmament in the early 1970s, which Chapter 3 will engage with in more detail, for now, see Keßelring, *Neuformierung*, 122–23.

<sup>95</sup> A brief account of the conference in, Vogel, 'Himmerod Memorandum'; the original memorandum produced by participants, Rautenberg and Wiggershaus, 'Himmeroder Denkschrift'.

<sup>96</sup> 'Kielmansegg to Nostitz' (9 October 1950), N 3/6, BArch-MA.

some of the manoeuvring which took place, and which is often only difficult to reconstruct or hidden from view entirely.

In May 1952, Speier was in Cologne to speak to Otto John. John had trained as a lawyer and had fled Germany after the attempted coup against Hitler on 20 July 1944 due to his resistance links. By the time Speier came to visit John, he had become the first chief of the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (BfV), Germany's scandal ridden domestic intelligence service. The case of John himself is one of the most bizarre. On 20 July 1954, John took part in a memorial service for the ten-year anniversary of the attempted coup in the *Bendlerblock* in the same courtyard where leading conspirators had been shot.<sup>97</sup> That evening, John vanished, only to reappear in East-Berlin. In the following months he was taken to Moscow, interrogated multiple times by the KGB, and finally returned to West Berlin in December 1955. It seems likely that John went East of his own volition, as a result of extreme political naiveté and perhaps personal instability, but guided by his real concerns for West German democracy, which he saw at risk due to the Adenauer government's employment of formerly leading National Socialists.<sup>98</sup> In the course of the interview, John revealed to Speier what he believed to be machinations by conservative forces against the new democratic order. It was his task, "to see that no undemocratic practices develop and that only the right people get into important positions." Most formerly high-ranking military officers, John characterised as opportunists.<sup>99</sup> He particularly warned Speier of four men: General of the Infantry Günther Blumentritt, Major General Erich Dethleffsen, Lieutenant General Adolf Heusinger and Lieutenant General Hans Speidel. The former two, he viewed as Nazis. The latter two, as

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<sup>97</sup> The BMVg is still housed in this complex.

<sup>98</sup> Bernd Stöver, 'Der Fall Otto John. Neue Dokumente zu den Aussagen des deutschen Geheimdienstchefs gegenüber MfS und KGB', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 47 (1999): 103–36; Hartmut Jäckel, 'Porträt: Das Geheimnis des Doktor John', *Die Zeit*, 1 July 2004; Mark Fenemore, 'Victim of Kidnapping or an Unfortunate Defector? The Strange Case of Otto John', *Cold War History* 20, no. 2 (2020): 143–60.

<sup>99</sup> 'Interview with Dr Otto John' (23 May 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

politically naïve. But unbeknownst to John, Blumentritt and Dethleffsen, were, by this time already, Speier's most important contacts in Germany. Heusinger and Speidel were to become the faces of West German rearmament, widely regarded today as the founding fathers of the new armed forces.

All four men were part of a number of overlapping and intertwined networks. Two of these networks in particular proved formidable in their influence and organisation. The first was centred around Franz Halder, former Chief of the Army General Staff (OKH), who in American captivity had become leader of a group of former general staff officers who compiled operational and tactical lessons learned from the Second World War for the use of the American armed forces as well as future West German contingents.<sup>100</sup> Halder continued to officially lead this group, the Operational History (German) Section of the U.S. Army's Historical Division, until 1961, although his influence reached far beyond its institutional confines. The second group was referred to as the *Organisation Gehlen* (OG), after Major General Reinhard Gehlen, formerly chief of military intelligence on the Eastern Front, known after 1956 as the BND, the official West German foreign intelligence service. This paramilitary organisation, already accused by contemporaries of aiding fugitive Nazis,<sup>101</sup> was intended to be clandestine and its archives remain largely inaccessible to historians. When he heard about John's defection, Gehlen is said to have exclaimed, referencing John's links to the 20 July 1944 attempted coup: "Once a traitor, always a traitor!"<sup>102</sup> Speier himself had heard rumours that Gehlen was orchestrating a campaign against John to rid him of his job.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> They also helped construct the myth of the 'clean Wehrmacht', Esther-Julia Howell, 'Bauen am Denkmal. Franz Halder, die Historical Division und die Legende von der "sauberen Wehrmacht"', in *'So war der deutsche Landser...'. Das populäre Bild der Wehrmacht*, ed. Jens Westemeier (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2019), 41–62.

<sup>101</sup> Badis Ben Redjeb, 'The Gehlen Organization, Nazis, and the Middle East', *Journal of Intelligence History* 18, no. 2 (2019): 220–32.

<sup>102</sup> 'Pullach intern, 2. Fortsetzung', *Spiegel*, 1971.

<sup>103</sup> 'Interview with Dr Otto John', 1.

This animosity was no doubt partially grounded in the fact that John had done battle with men like Gehlen before. He had known Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, Nazi Germany's most high profile Eastern Front commander, in British captivity where the two had gone on long walks together. Later, John had led the pretrial investigation against the Field Marshal, which resulted in Manstein's war crimes conviction and imprisonment.<sup>104</sup>

By the time Speier interviewed Gehlen in 1952, he had acquired a reputation as a notoriously enigmatic man always in control, if not of his own organisation, which was as scandal-ridden as that of John, then of his own image and self-fashioning. Yet when Speier arrived, it turned out that Gehlen had only agreed to the interview because he had mistaken RAND, of which he had never heard, for a film production company.<sup>105</sup> Gehlen had served on Halder's staff in 1940 and 1941 (as aide-de-camp), before being transferred to serve under Heusinger in the Operations Department of the OKH.<sup>106</sup> By the end of the war, he had created what appeared to be a powerful intelligence apparatus aimed squarely at the Soviet Union, which meant American patronage for Gehlen and his men was all but guaranteed after 8 May 1945. Gehlen's service has long been understood as an incubator for a new West German general staff, but newly available archival evidence suggests that it was both more and less than that. More, in the sense that it reached deep into West German politics and society, surveilling even the highest political targets in pursuit of intelligence which, it appears, was not always deployed simply for use by the Adenauer government, but was kept on file for other purposes, rumoured to extend to blackmail for the intelligence agency's own ends.<sup>107</sup> Further,

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<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Carter Hett and Michael Wala, *Otto John: Patriot oder Verräter. Eine deutsche Biographie* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2019), 63–78, esp. 75–78.

<sup>105</sup> 'Interview with Reinhard Gehlen', 2.

<sup>106</sup> 'Des Kanzlers lieber General', *Spiegel*, 22 September 1954.

<sup>107</sup> Bodo von Hechelhammer, 'Die "Dossiers". Reinhard Gehlens geheime Sonderkartei', in *Die Geschichte der Organisation Gehlen und des BND, 1945-1968. Umriss und Einblicke*, ed. Jost Dülffer et al. (Marburg: Unabhängige Historikerkommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte des Bundesnachrichtendienstes, 1945-1968, 2014), 81–89; Klaus-Dietmar Henke, *Geheime Dienste. Die politische Inlandsspionage der Organisation Gehlen 1946–1953* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2018).

it allowed for the former military elite to use their old connections ostensibly in the service of the new state, while at the same time pursuing the interests of their own community as well as individual interests. It is thus no surprise that some came to believe that whatever was good for them individually was good for the former general staff as a whole. But the *Org*, as members referred to it, was also less than all that, in the sense that it never came close to the point where it might be mobilised for war,<sup>108</sup> or where it could shake its scandal-ridden image.<sup>109</sup>

Earlier during his 1952 trip, Speier had also gone to see Gehlen's former boss, Heusinger, whom he called "the first soldier" of the new West German army. In the post-war decade, Heusinger was employed first by Halder, then by Gehlen, all the while he remained a leading figure in rearmament efforts. In the early 1950s, it seems the relationship was so close that Heusinger would himself travel to brief Gehlen on new developments and receive new intelligence in turn every other week.<sup>110</sup> It appears American intelligence even considered him for the position Gehlen ultimately received at the head of West Germany's foreign intelligence service.<sup>111</sup> In the end, he became the first chief of the new armed forces. But opposition to Heusinger was fierce, his department had planned the invasion not just of France, but of the Soviet Union, which was generally seen as catastrophic.<sup>112</sup> It was this failure of military planning which to fellow former general staff officers was a more serious

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<sup>108</sup> Agilolf Keßelring, 'Kriegs-BND: Planungen für die Mobilmachung des Bundesnachrichtendienstes von 1953 bis 1968', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 79, no. 2 (2020): 461–89.

<sup>109</sup> The most notorious example is the case of Heinz Felfe, a KGB double agent who had worked for Gehlen for over a decade before he was discovered in 1961, Bodo von Hechelhammer, *Spion ohne Grenzen. Heinz Felfe. Agent in sieben Geheimdiensten* (München: Piper, 2019).

<sup>110</sup> 'Interview with Gerhard Graf von Schwerin' (19 May 1952), 6, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>111</sup> 'General Adolf Heusinger' (n.d.), RG 263, Entry ZZ 18, Box 50, Folder 13, NACP.

<sup>112</sup> 'Interview with Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg' (25 May 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 4, Hans Speier Papers; on the disastrous logistics of Barbarossa, see also Gerhard P. Groß, *The Myth and Reality of German Warfare: Operational Thinking from Moltke the Elder to Heusinger* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 189–275; and David Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

point against Heusinger than the fact that the war had been one of annihilation, waged against not just Jews but Bolshevism and in service of a plan which saw millions starved to death and would have led, had it been successful, to the deaths of tens of millions more.<sup>113</sup> But in negotiating rearmament, Heusinger proved a more perceptive and inventive planner, for instance trying to assuage an older generation of former generals by convening a so-called “Council of the Aged”, which would allow them to voice their concerns for rearmament officially, minimising the whispering campaigns and pushback behind closed doors.<sup>114</sup> This was combined with a sense of fear a number of former officers expressed to Speier: if they were to publicly to draw into question the on-going process, led by Heusinger and Speidel and endorsed by Gehlen, they would suffer the consequences.<sup>115</sup>

If Heusinger was Gehlen’s liaison and the operational planner, then his partner, often even by contemporaries called his “twin”, Speidel, was the political operator.<sup>116</sup> Speidel had good connections to a number of leading politicians in the rearmament process, in part due to his social network in Swabia, in South-West Germany. But Speidel also had strong connections to France. His daughter had attended the Sorbonne and later married a French nobleman, he spoke fluent French, and was a regular correspondent of a number of high-ranking French military officers, even in the immediate post-war period.<sup>117</sup> It was Speidel who chaired the West German delegation at the European Defence Community negotiations, and it was Speidel who used his personal connections to manoeuvre himself and Heusinger into a position to lead rearmament. And this political power he and Heusinger acquired, they were

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<sup>113</sup> For details of the so-called ‘Hunger Plan’, Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).

<sup>114</sup> ‘Interview with Georg von Sodenstern’ (9 June 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 4, Hans Speier Papers; ‘Interview with Adolf Heusinger’ (23 May 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>115</sup> ‘Interview with Gerhard Graf von Schwerin’, 6–7.

<sup>116</sup> Though Speidel, too, was linked to Gehlen’s organisation, Keßelring and Loch, ‘Himmerod’, 81, n121.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Speidel to Ruge’ (24 June 1950), N 379/125, BArch-MA.

not afraid to use, letting Adenauer know that they would only meet with Eisenhower, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe, if he denounced the “defamation” of German soldiers.<sup>118</sup> In this sense both of them exercise far greater power over the structures of West German rearmament than either Halder or Gehlen. Halder, they both referred to as though he had never lost his station, deeming him the last “true” Chief of the Army General Staff before a series of largely short wartime appointments, one of which was Heusinger himself (though he was only in post for 41 days). Their relationship with Gehlen is more difficult to ascertain, due to a lack of clear documentation for the post-war period, though it was clearly good, and there can be no doubt that they largely pursued the same course.<sup>119</sup>

## Honour and Injury

It is necessary first to reconstruct, at least in part, the political, social, and economic situation former military elites found themselves in, for their quest for rearmament cannot be separated from a desire for social and economic restitution. When in 1951 Speidel received a letter “on behalf of former soldiers,” the author articulated clearly the central demands made in reference to the supposed “defamation” which German soldiers were said to have endured since the surrender in 1945. The demands were:

“Immediate release of former German soldiers and civilians who are, according to German law and German codes of honour, innocent, but are detained by foreign powers in jails and prisons. Immediate declaration of honour and rehabilitation of the former German Wehrmacht by the German parliament and the Atlantic powers. Immediate cessation of the in the last five years normalised defamation by the press and immediate

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<sup>118</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 136.

<sup>119</sup> Gehlen and Heusinger were in captivity together, and it appears the latter realised how fundamental the coming changes would have to be, while the former avoided the ‘bitter truth’, Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Reinhard Gehlen. Geheimdienstchef im Hintergrund der Bonner Republik: Die Biografie (Band 1: 1902–1950 & Band 2: 1950–1979)* (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2017), 426–27.

legislation which punishes such behaviour. Immediate support of those deprived of their rights and rectification of the injustices committed against this group since 1945.”<sup>120</sup>

These four key demands formed the bases of what the former military elite believed to be central to the political, social, and economic compensation they were due: the release of those still imprisoned, a declaration of the honour of all German soldiers, legislation to stop further “defamation”, and compensation and pensions. These demands varied little, and thus can be taken as a rather stable starting point. Particularly inseparable from the argument that German soldiers had been defamed since the German surrender in 1945 was the demand that the “war criminals”, a term always deployed in quotation marks thus suggesting that no war crimes had actually taken place, were to be released.<sup>121</sup>

When considering the actions of the former military elite in the post-war period, much has been made of their motivations and aims, in particular their manoeuvring to preserve their political authority over questions of defence. And while this certainly is a crucial element, questions around social and economic status have been left behind. If these questions are addressed, they are usually framed around the issue of pensions, which were understood as a means of pacifying the potentially unruly political energies of millions of Wehrmacht veterans, who felt themselves to be treated as second-class citizens and ostracised.<sup>122</sup> There was a palpable fear that these veterans might radicalise. Numerous surviving Freikorps

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<sup>120</sup> ‘Hauser to Speidel’ (5 January 1951), BW 9/3354, BArch-MA.

<sup>121</sup> The term refers to not just those who were sentenced at the last of the Nuremberg Trials, which aimed specifically at the military leadership, but to all those generals who had, on any front, been sentenced to imprisonment for war crimes. The calls for release were rarely nuanced, but rather complete, suggesting a broader political demand rather than a suggestion of concrete individual innocence, Valerie Hébert, *Hitler’s Generals on Trial: The Last War Crimes Tribunal at Nuremberg* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010); Jens Brüggemann, *Männer von Ehre? Die Wehrmachtgeneralität im Nürnberger Prozess 1945/46: Zur Entstehung einer Legende* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2018), 405–30.

<sup>122</sup> On veterans’ advocacy for pensions, Diehl, *Thanks*, 87–162. Diehl’s book is one of the most important sources on this subject, but is painfully outdated in the face of the new material which has emerged in the past few years.

members, whose example had not been forgotten, thereby became a living warning to the fledgling new republic.<sup>123</sup> Alaric Searle expressed confusion at the fact that the new veterans' organisations which were founded in the early 1950s amounted to little more than social clubs.<sup>124</sup> But if social restitution is what veterans sought, as I argue, this is precisely to be expected. Related to pensions, but largely treated separately is the literature on the ways the war had disabled millions of veterans. Underlying this separation, however, is the implicit assumption that disabled veterans may prove no, or at least a lesser, threat to the new political order. There is however the possibility that that inverse is true. It was precisely the physical and mental sacrifices made which required political action on the part of veterans. For only acknowledgment of the suffering endured on behalf of the Fatherland would make meaningful their pain. The reconstitution of the old networks therefore might be understood as a means to mobilise to make it so.

In making this argument, I follow Svenja Goltermann's effort to in questioning the "oft-confirmed sobriety of West Germany in the post-war period."<sup>125</sup> Beyond the millions of soldiers who perished in the Second World War, millions more were left forever changed, the war now inscribed upon their bodies and their minds. They were left permanently altered, either by the war or subsequent imprisonment or both, often unrecognisable not just to their friends or loved ones, but to themselves. This was true of both the rank and file, and the elite. And when considering their actions in the post-war period, the argument I make is that their own perceived, though now in multiple ways damaged, masculinity was sometimes mirrored at home by an adherence to models of relationships or femininity which were increasingly outdated. Only satisfaction of their honour as men and as soldiers could make meaningful the

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<sup>123</sup> Large, *Germans to the Front*, 60.

<sup>124</sup> Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals*, 164.

<sup>125</sup> Svenja Goltermann, *The War in Their Minds: German Soldiers and Their Violent Pasts in West Germany*, trans. Philip Schmitz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 6.

changes in their physicality and social and economic circumstance. Political demands for the restoration of honour were articulated as a result.

These demands were made in part due to the shared aristocratic background of many of the officers. The German officer corps prior to 1945 had been heavily dominated by the nobility, who as a result of their aristocratic status and their membership in this group former part of a wider social and political elite. The First and Second World Wars played an important part in breaking the elite position of the nobility in Germany and elsewhere, which in turn made way for the dominance of the middle classes.<sup>126</sup> As Bernhard Kroener has made clear, the “defeudalisation” of the officer corps which had begun in at the end of the First World War had only been delayed by the creation of a small professional army in the Weimar Republic. It was relentlessly pursued by the Nazis and could not be reversed when the Bundeswehr was founded, nor was there more than a passing interest in doing so.<sup>127</sup> *Pace* Kroener, the nobility was still overrepresented in the officer corps well into the 1960s,<sup>128</sup> although, as Eckart Conze has shown, the trend was clearly towards a relaxation of expectations with regards to the professional choices of the sons of noble families.<sup>129</sup> The West German officer corps, then, was one of the last bastions of aristocratic privilege and obligation. The sons of the same families who had long supplied officers in various German armies continued to serve and to feel part of the same tradition as their forebears and thereby accountable to some of the same codes of honour.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Helmut Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte Europas. 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 2007), 153–206.

<sup>127</sup> Kroener, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer “nationalsozialistischen Volksarmee”’, 682.

<sup>128</sup> By 1967, 15% of officers still came from aristocratic backgrounds and 4% had a working-class backgrounds. By 1975, the figures were 1% and 17% respectively, while the percentage of Protestant officers, hitherto the norm, declined to around 40%, Detlef Bald, *Die Bundeswehr. Eine kritische Geschichte 1955–2005* (München: C.H. Beck, 2005), 82–86.

<sup>129</sup> Eckart Conze, *Vom deutschen Adel. Die Grafen von Bernstorff im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000), 305–28, esp 317–19.

<sup>130</sup> The Baudissins and the von der Heydtes, for example, feature below. Another notable example, though largely absent from the thesis, are the Buttlars, though Peter von Butler makes a brief appearance in Chapter 4 below.

This section of the chapter thereby reframes the political activism on behalf of the former military elite. Rather than understanding moves towards economic and social restitution as means to preserving political power, I argue that attempts to preserve their political power can instead be seen as means towards economic and social restitution. The focus, therefore, of this section is less on political activism, and rather more on what I regard as some of the particular social and economic drivers of this political activism. They are, following the structure of the discourses around the supposed “defamation” former German soldiers understood themselves to be subjected to, honour and war injuries, both framed by a strong sense of a particular kind of military masculinity. By focusing on the former military elite’s political activism, while losing sight of their desire for social restitution, we have so far imagined them, in a way, the way they would always have liked to be seen. As young, strong, able-bodied men in uniform, at the height of their physical, social, economic, and political powers. They wanted to be seen, in other words, as the striking image of military masculinity. The section begins with a focus on honour, because honour became central to the identity of the former military elite. It was, to some of them, all they had left. This of course was no doubt rooted not just in military masculinity, but in bourgeois masculinity also, of which honour had long been an important constitutive concept.<sup>131</sup> They experienced history as they did their heartbeats: they knew it was there, but only became aware of its presence once something had gone wrong.<sup>132</sup> They had lost what they understood to be their proper position,

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<sup>131</sup> Eckart Conze, ‘Eine bürgerliche Republik? Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30, no. 3 (2004): 527–42; Hannes Siegrist and Hans Günter Hockerts, ‘Wie bürgerlich war die Bundesrepublik, wie entbürgerlicht die DDR? Verbürgerlichung und Antibürgerlichkeit in historischer Perspektive’, in *Koordinaten deutscher Geschichte in der Epoche des Ost-West-Konflikts* (München: De Gruyter, 2004), 207–43; Manfred Hettling and Richard Pohle, eds., ‘Das Mitbürgerliche und das Staatsbürgerliche. Politische Bildung, Bürgerlichkeit und Demokratie im Westdeutschland der 1940er und 1950er Jahre’, in *Bürgertum. Bilanzen, Perspektiven, Begriffe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 263–96.

<sup>132</sup> This formulation borrowed from Nicolás Medina Mora, ‘An American Education’, *N+1*, 2020.

their youth, some had lost their fortunes or their homes or families, and some, of course, had lost limbs, digits, hearing, or eyesight.

### *Honour*

If the demands to end “defamation” were fairly uniform, this cannot be said of “defamation” itself. Rather, the term in general entailed a number of perceived offences to the honour of the former military elite which served as a rallying point for the articulation of these demands. In general, “defamation” described a campaign which the former military elite perceived its political opponents to be waging. Who these opponents were varied: they could be German, British, French, or American. Mainly, journalists and politicians were identified as responsible, though comments about shadowy forces acting to undermine the will of the German people to defend themselves were commonplace. Jay Lockenour is right to say there is more than a sense of frustration at a loss of status, power, and wealth that can be detected here.<sup>133</sup> If some believed that the German defeat was due to the fact that “the officer corps had squandered the opportunities for conquest that Hitler's military genius had provided by their insufficient initiative, cowardice, or outright treason,”<sup>134</sup> the officers themselves perpetuated the idea that Hitler, in turn, had squandered the opportunities for conquest *their* military genius had provided *him*.<sup>135</sup> But their analysis of the early successes on the Eastern Front, which had seen Soviet armies pushed back 400km within weeks and suffer nearly five million casualties by the end of 1941, was less than convincing. Halder himself predicted in July 1941 that the war might end within fourteen days. Gerhard Groß wrote that, “very rarely had a chief of the German General Staff assessed the situation as glaringly wrong as did

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<sup>133</sup> Jay Lockenour, *Soldiers as Citizens: Former Wehrmacht Officers in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1945-1955* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> For the most notorious example, Oliver von Wrochem, *Erich von Manstein. Vernichtungskrieg und Geschichtspolitik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 212–36, 282–300.

Halder in those days.”<sup>136</sup> This arrogance was fuelled, at least in part, by a sense of racial superiority, which long pre-dated the emergence of Nazi racial doctrine.<sup>137</sup>

Those responsible for the “campaign of defamation” were believed to be, either unwittingly or intentionally, supporting Soviet interests. Not just in the sense that they might be “defaming” the memory of those Wehrmacht soldiers who had fought and died on the Eastern Front by implicating them in a failed political endeavour (the genocide was always absent), but in the concrete sense of undermining the future ability and readiness of Germans to fight to defend their country and the rest of Europe. Structurally, this discourse is similar to what Paul Hanebrink has called the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism. “Throughout the twentieth century,” Hanebrink writes, “nationalists in many different countries across Europe imagined the Jewish Bolshevik as a malevolent agent who worked tirelessly to subordinate the nation, which they imagined as a monoethnic community, to an international revolutionary order that had no place for ‘true’ national belonging or ‘real’ national identity.”<sup>138</sup> In describing the attendant image of the Bolshevik as “at once a rootless migrant Jew, the sign of an invading horde from the East, and an Asiatic Beast,”<sup>139</sup> Hanebrink captures the central elements of the former military elite’s view of the Soviet Union. Lockenour too, noted the “striking” similarities between beliefs held by former military elites and National Socialist doctrine in identifying “Asiatic Bolshevism” as the enemy in “an epic struggle for European culture.”<sup>140</sup> But such views were not just remnants of a now militarily defeated ideology. They were actively promoted by new associations, for instance the *Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde* (GfW)

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<sup>136</sup> Groß, *Myth and Reality*, 210.

<sup>137</sup> David Stahel, ‘The Wehrmacht and National Socialist Military Thinking’, *War in History* 24, no. 3 (2017): 336–61.

<sup>138</sup> Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (London: Harvard University Press, 2018), 8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–41.

<sup>140</sup> Lockenour, *Soldiers as Citizens*, 150.

which had received initial funding from the CIA, and which promoted the idea that “faced with the ‘Bolshevik threat’, the political integration into the ‘community of fate’ of the West was the only option that could ensure the future.”<sup>141</sup> In this way, older ideas of the racial, and thereby military, superiority of German armies past, present, and future, could be preserved to be mobilised again in the potential event of another war against the Soviet Union.<sup>142</sup>

The issue of the “so-called ‘war-criminals’”, represented, in the minds of the former military elite, a concerted effort on the part of their opponents to keep the German people down.<sup>143</sup>

When in the early 1950s the most prominent inmates, including Manstein, were released, the result was a noticeable shift in public opinion.<sup>144</sup> As Kerstin von Lingen has noted, the releases seemed to support the idea of a “clean war” which the Wehrmacht had supposedly fought. In Lingen’s telling, this was a generalisation of the narrative of the “clean war” which Field Marshal Albert von Kesselring and others argued they had fought on the Southern Front, delineating it clearly from the war of annihilation which, supposedly, primarily the SS had pursued in the East.<sup>145</sup> The conditions of possibility which allowed for the rise of the myth of the clean Wehrmacht, Lingen links to the didactic failures of the war crimes trials, one of which was early release. This allowed officers to claim that they had tried to temper the worst aspects of the war in the East.<sup>146</sup> But further, as Lingen illustrates with reference to

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<sup>141</sup> Schmitt, ‘GfW’, 12.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Conze, ‘Facing the Future Backwards’; specifically in a military context, Tattenberg, ‘Fatherland’.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Interview with Hans Röttiger’ (21 May 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers; a shorthand for the question of the ‘war criminals’ was to speak of “Landsberg” and “Werl”, the locations where the most prominent prisoners were held ‘Interview with Ulrich de Maizière’ (30 April 1952), 1, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>144</sup> As Speidel made clear to American High Commissioner John McCloy subsequently, ‘Speidel to Ruge’ (24 July 1952), N 379/65, BArch-MA.

<sup>145</sup> Work on how or why exactly the SS came to stand in for war crimes committed by all German armed forces is still a desideratum of research. No doubt professional, and perhaps social, antagonisms played a role, but this does not explain the phenomenon fully. For some indications of the means by which this process occurred, see the final section of the present chapter. Kerstin von Lingen, *Kesselrings letzte Schlacht. Kriegsverbrecherprozesse, Vergangenheitspolitik und Wiederbewaffnung: der Fall Kesselring* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 85.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

the trial of Kesselring, commanding officers owed it to their soldiers to stand in for their collective honour as soldiers. Commanders had to show they had done no wrong, with personal vindication thereby becoming caught up with collective salvation.<sup>147</sup>

Gehlen, too, raised the issue of defamation. “As long as a man like General Manstein [sic] is imprisoned,” he said to Speier, “I shall not put on a uniform again.”<sup>148</sup> But in spite of this, Gehlen insisted the convictions of Manstein and others did not need to be overturned, they only needed to be released.<sup>149</sup> This makes clear that he understood the symbolic power of a potential release. Even if guilt had been established in front of a court, releasing Manstein and the others carried with it a sense of the legitimacy of the conduct of the war on the part of the former military elite. The most prominent advocate for the release of Manstein in Britain was Basil Liddell Hart, who argued that the war in the Soviet Union had been less brutal than Caesar’s war in Gaul.<sup>150</sup> The release of Manstein and others was but one step in the perceived slights against their honour which the military elite detected as a result of the campaign of defamation. But this was, as noted above, not just a question of personal, but of professional honour. At stake was not just the honour of each individual officer, but that of the officer corps, the former military elite as a whole. This became evident too in their efforts at the writing of military history, as we will see below.<sup>151</sup> Bert-Oliver Manig has argued that the “politics of honour” served as a means of rehabilitating the former military elite, and thereby allowed them to be integrated into the new democratic state.<sup>152</sup> Manig is right to criticise the

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Interview with Reinhard Gehlen’, 7–8.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>150</sup> Wrochem, *Manstein*, 138–39.

<sup>151</sup> Bruno Thoß, ‘Institutionalisierte Militärgeschichte im geteilten Deutschland. Wege und Gegenwege im Systemvergleich’, in *Perspektiven der Militärgeschichte. Raum, Gewalt und Repräsentation in historischer Forschung und Bildung*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp, Wolfgang Schmidt, and Thomas Vogel (München: Oldenbourg, 2010), 193–94.

<sup>152</sup> Bert-Oliver Manig, *Die Politik der Ehre. Die Rehabilitierung der Berufssoldaten in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 8.

scholarship's reiteration of the soldiers' own view of themselves as supremely powerless. But missing from his account is a sense that by submitting to the demands of the former officer corps, the new democratic state upheld, to some extent, their professional self-understanding, shaped by anti-democratic norms. It preserved the status of the officer corps as a distinct not just professional but social class and helped protect a number of former officers who had an at best sceptical relationship to democracy.

In these highly stratified informal networks, communication took the expected form. As Speier described it, "this net of communications is entirely informal and based on personal contacts, letter writing, meetings and conferences... a great deal of gossip is trafficked this way".<sup>153</sup> The informal channels were the source not just of gossip but of critical information on rearmament and other matters. The reliance on these networks explains to some extent the scepticism of military elites towards the press.<sup>154</sup> It explains, too, the abstract dissatisfaction with the press and its political views Speier had witnessed on his trips to Germany. In one instance, he listened to Friedrich August von der Heydte, a mere Lieutenant Colonel during the war though he had been one of Germany's most senior paratroopers, and Halder complain about the press, while he "was at a loss," only later realising that they were "referring not so much to the news reported in the press but to the unsatisfactory political views of the newspapers," although "it remained a mystery which particular papers they were referring to," so unspecific was their discussion.<sup>155</sup> This rather abstract criticism in the form of a diagnosis of a lack of political reliability was a defining feature of the discourse around "defamation," too. It resulted perhaps from a loss of status, not just on the level of the officer class but in particular for von der Heydte and Halder on personal levels. The former strongly

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<sup>153</sup> Hans Speier, 'Some Notes on Overwork, Informal Communications, and the Blank Office' (May 1954), 1, Box 9, Folder 8, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> 'Conversation with General Halder' (17 May 1954), 5, Box 9, Folder 8, Hans Speier Papers.

identified as a member of the Catholic nobility and although Heusinger believed this was a group which should be taken seriously in any future army, the social winds had most definitely changed.<sup>156</sup>

Halder meanwhile had a similarly dissonant experience. On the one hand von der Heydte and others addressed him in the usually honorific fashion, and the busiest restaurants freely accommodated the *Herr Generaloberst*. As Speier noted,

“the moment Halder appeared on the premises the number of headwaiters in the establishment multiplied. Finally, a gentleman who seemed to be the supervisor of all of the headwaiters appeared in order to express his gratitude to Colonel General Halder for having honoured them with his visit.”<sup>157</sup>

On the other hand, he was shut out of the formal processes of rearmament and if not vilified then harshly criticised by politicians and journalists. And all this in spite of his own elaborate exculpatory strategy during the High Command Trial at Nuremberg.<sup>158</sup> It was perhaps the dissonance between these experiences which motivated the scepticism towards the press, the hostility towards politicians. For, if the daily lived experience of Halder and von der Heydte differed so markedly from that which was printed in the newspapers, how, they may have asked themselves, could the latter possibly be true.

The former military elite’s quest for satisfaction, aided by the Adenauer government’s quest for West German sovereignty which required rearmament in some form, was ultimately

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<sup>156</sup> ‘Interview with Adolf Heusinger’, 3.

<sup>157</sup> ‘Conversation with General Halder’, 4.

<sup>158</sup> For a critical analysis of Halder’s strategy via his war diaries, see Paul Fröhlich, ‘Der Generaloberst und die Historiker. Franz Halders Kriegstagebuch zwischen Apologie und Wissenschaft’, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 68, no. 1 (2020): 30–34, 40–45.

successful. Adenauer himself, as well as Theodor Blank, the first defence minister for whom the nascent defence ministry was initially informally named (*Amt Blank*), and Eisenhower all gave *Ehrenerklärungen*, declarations of the honour of the German soldier. The German soldier, they all declared, had done nothing wrong but had fought bravely for his country.<sup>159</sup> These declarations, combined with the early release of almost all imprisoned officers by the middle of the 1950s, erased any sense of their own guilt in the minds of the former military elite. This campaign against “defamation” set the stage for the re-establishment of military elite networks in the Federal Republic, and it would reverberate into the present, for it allowed for the rise of those ideas which would, fifty years later, re-emerge on the streets all over Germany in the course of the mobilisation by the far-right against the *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, which many older Germans regarded as a campaign of defamation not unlike the one, though they did not often explicitly draw this parallel, which the soldiers themselves had resisted in the immediate post-war period.

### *Masculinity & War Injury*

But if the military elite’s quest for satisfaction was successful, if they could be made whole in terms of their honour, so to speak, there were other ways in which this was simply impossible. For one, their social status had changed and the structure of the society they lived in was also changing. Uniforms would never again carry the kind of prestige they once held. Beyond the loss of status, the war disability system was dismantled by the Allies, and veterans’ organisations, even those advocating explicitly for the rights and needs of disabled

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<sup>159</sup> Schlaffer, ‘Nach der Wehrmacht: Ritterlichkeit, Ehre und Pflicht - Tugenden für die Bundeswehr?’, 98; the Waffen-SS was largely excluded from this process of rehabilitation in a way which suggests that differences in conduct during the war were less significant than a difference in status, influence, and class, Hanno Knoch, “‘Gewissenlose Führung’ und ‘anständige Landser’”. Die Wehrmacht im Wandel bundesrepublikanischer Erinnerungspolitik’, in *Verräter? Vorbilder? Verbrecher? Kontroverse Deutungen des 20. Juli 1944 seit 1945*, ed. Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2016), 55; Jens Westemeier, *Himmels Krieger. Joachim Peiper und die Waffen-SS in Krieg und Nachkriegszeit* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014), 619–35.

veterans exclusively, were banned and abolished as part of the policy of demilitarisation. This led to the bizarre situation that the new Federal Republic was, at least initially, able to provide much worse care and benefits to veterans than had the Weimar Republic, in the history of which veterans were long understood to have played such a disruptive role.<sup>160</sup> And it was perhaps due to a combination of factors related to these developments, that their loss was felt most acutely. This section, then, deals with some of the indicators of loss of status, and argues that it was a loss of status and war injuries that helped breed the kind of resentment which is often seen to fuel the political activity of the former officer corps in this period. But all the while the older officers were languishing in an existence much reduced in both prestige and wealth from its former days, a younger generation of members of the military public sphere lived a different life.

One example of this newer generation was Adelbert Weinstein, long-time defence and security correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and former Major in the general staff.<sup>161</sup> Speier had heard much about Weinstein, and Dethleffsen had said to him that “nobody writes [on military and defence issues] except Weinstein.”<sup>162</sup> Given his perch at the FAZ, Weinstein occupied a central position in the military public sphere. And while he was regarded as a “gifted journalist,”<sup>163</sup> he also represented a new ethos. He had dared to raise the point that Heusinger, who was by mid 1955 slated to be appointed as the first chief

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<sup>160</sup> Diehl, *Thanks*, 54–108.

<sup>161</sup> Christina Schäfer, ‘Erich Welter. Der Mann hinter der F.A.Z.’ (PhD Thesis, Würzburg, Julius-Maximilians-Universität, 2017), 220–21; the FAZ was an ‘Altverlegerpaper’ shaped by a group of journalists who had previously worked the Nazi paper ‘Das Reich’, Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit, 1945-1973*, 125–26, 131. The FAZ was founded in an initiative of the ‘Wirtschaftspolitische Gesellschaft’ of which Erich Dethleffsen was a member.

<sup>162</sup> ‘Interview with Erich Dethleffsen’ (28 September 1955), 2, Box 9, Folder 11, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>163</sup> Speier himself regarded Weinstein as ‘young, journalisticly ambitious, capable, and industrious,’ though criticising him as ‘somewhat rash,’ ‘Interview with Adelbert Weinstein’ (20 May 1954), 1, Box 9, Folder 8, Hans Speier Papers; though Weinstein’s focus on land forces and apparent ‘ignorance’ of the naval arm did raise some criticisms, ‘Interview with Dr Jürgen Rohwer’ (28 September 1955), 3, Box 9, Folder 11, Hans Speier Papers.

of staff of the new armed forces, had held no command over troops in 30 years.<sup>164</sup> This, of course, was understood to be a serious offence against the authority of a more senior officer.<sup>165</sup> Speier himself commented that Weinstein struck him “as one of those young literati who used to populate certain cafés in Berlin in the ‘20s,” a statement not altogether meant as a compliment, for Weinstein appeared to him rather erratic: “when he talks sentences pour forth from his mouth in great haste with syllables or even clauses half swallowed. Then he breaks into silence as he broke into speech...but soon another flood of words swamps the listener.”<sup>166</sup> Speier, after Weinstein had driven “like most Germans...much too fast,” and blared jazz music during a ride to the restaurant, diagnosed him with “bravado”, a kind of masculinity which was so different from that of the older generation. If Weinstein represented a kind of new and perhaps to a degree more rebellious masculinity embraced by some former general staff officers, most retreated into rather more conservative patterns, including into the comfort of their own homes and domestic relationships.

And Speier’s keen eye for the social and economic circumstances of his interview partners reveals important differences in the configuration of relationships, which may serve as an indicator of the accommodations made between the new social, political, and economic order, and the old military elite. Just a few days after meeting Weinstein, Speier went to see Oldwig von Natzmer, who, though only in his mid 40s, had ended the war as a Lieutenant General and served the entirety of the war on the Eastern Front. But, as Frau von Natzmer made clear to Speier when she delivered sandwiches for him and her husband, in spite of this experience,

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<sup>164</sup> ‘Überholt wie Pfeil und Bogen’, *Spiegel*, 13 July 1955.

<sup>165</sup> Weinstein’s reporting on American nuclear strategy and its impact on the immediate possibility for German reunification had, apparently, also ruffled feathers much higher up the chain of command, with Adenauer himself expressing displeasure, and the fear internally that the FAZ might appear as a ‘pro-communist newspaper’, Schäfer, ‘Erich Welter. Der Mann hinter der F.A.Z.’, 310–11.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Interview with Adelbert Weinstein’, 2.

her husband was now in a precarious position at his new job and would have to “hold his own against the old-timers” at his company.<sup>167</sup> Military experience was no longer an asset, but rather a liability, in a civilian world in which Natzmer competed against younger men with more experience in business. In a sense, this signals an early individual case of the shift in power from military towards commercial and financial elites, the most obvious indication of which was the naming of James von Moltke, grandson to Helmuth James and Freya von Moltke, leading members of the conservative resistance against Hitler, the former a grand-nephew of the Prussian Field Marshal, as Chief Financial Officer of Deutsche Bank in 2017.<sup>168</sup> Those who were somewhat older than Natzmer had more difficulties even attempting that transition into business. Blumentritt, for instance, a decade and a half older than Natzmer, now focused on work for Halder’s Historical Division, to the point where his wife apologised for the “disorder” this had created in their small living room to Speier on her husband’s behalf, though, she said, she was happy her husband was “still being kept busy.”<sup>169</sup> When visiting Georg von Sodenstern, Speier “was struck by the change in his manner of speech as we changed rooms.” In the presence of his wife, Sodenstern had “avoided the colourful soldier’s slang which he apparently uses when talking to a man without ladies present.”<sup>170</sup> This suggests not just some of the classic trappings of military masculinity, but more broadly an inability to reconcile past ways of being and acting in the world with demands of a domestic habitus which now was more fundamental to Sodenstern’s life than he may ever have anticipated.

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<sup>167</sup> ‘Interview with Oldwig von Natzmer’ (30 May 1954), 2, Box 9, Folder 8, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>168</sup> Georg Meck, ‘Der Banker mit dem Helden-Gen’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 May 2017, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/unternehmen/james-von-moltke-der-banker-mit-dem-helden-gen-14993960.html>.

<sup>169</sup> ‘Interview with Günther Blumentritt’ (3 May 1954), 1, Box 9, Folder 6, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Interview with Georg von Sodenstern’ (5 May 1954), 1, Box 9, Folder 7, Hans Speier Papers.

The most notable exception to this configuration was perhaps the relationship between Major Wolf Graf von Baudissin and his wife Dagmar. Speier had come to dinner at the Baudissins' and was struck by the smallness of their house near Bonn. Dagmar von Baudissin was, in all his interviews, the only spouse with whom Speier records having had a substantive conversation, about common acquaintances they had in Heidelberg in the late 1920s, and about East Prussia, where she had been born and which Speier had visited as a child and remembered fondly.<sup>171</sup> When Baudissin got a call that evening, informing him that he had to give a talk the next day which would require him to drive rather a long distance, there followed a "rather temperamental outburst on the part of the Countess against the Defence Ministry,"<sup>172</sup> because they could not now work together in an article on civil-military relations of the new German army as they had planned and which she suggested she had gotten Heusinger to approve for publication in the first place, rather than her husband.<sup>173</sup> Baudissin, of course, is best known as a great liberal reformer of West German civil-military relations, and it is perhaps unsurprising that his own identity as a soldier and his relationship to his wife appear to have been far more easily reconciled with the rather sudden social and economic shifts which had affected the profession of arms. And so, as a result, Baudissin viewed as the gravest threat to Germany in 1955 the rise of "rightist influence,"<sup>174</sup> while others, like Tippelskirch and Natzmer, imagined the greatest danger coming from the left.<sup>175</sup> But it is also true that given his employment and his wife's artistic output as a sculptor, the Baudissins were far better off than many others. Not only did they live in a house, albeit a small one, in Bonn, but they were still able to employ a domestic servant.<sup>176</sup> Natzmer, on the

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<sup>171</sup> 'Evening with Graf Baudissin and His Wife' (5 October 1955), 1–2, Box 9, Folder 11, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>175</sup> 'Interview with Kurt von Tippelskirch' (29 May 1952), 5, Box 9, Folder 4, Hans Speier Papers; 'Interview with Oldwig von Natzmer', 2.

<sup>176</sup> The Baudissins employed a 'very old lady who serves as cook and maid,' who did not appear to live with them as had been usual in the 1920s and 1930s, 'Evening with Graf Baudissin and His Wife', 1; on the evolution of domestic service in this period, Mareike Witkowski, 'Arbeit ohne Ansehen oder idealer

other hand, complained to Speier of “economic sacrifices” which he and others had made while serving.<sup>177</sup> And the biggest impediment to service which was raised across Speier’s interviews was the loss of income a return to a military position would entail.<sup>178</sup>

But some older conservatives were able to make new lives for themselves also. The most notable example of this Speier encountered was Fritz Berendsen, who had attained the rank of Colonel in the general staff during the war and had, by 1953, become a member of the Bundestag, a “most successful adjustment to civilian life.”<sup>179</sup> The Berendsens were well connected, enjoying occasional dinner parties with the French High Commissioner André François-Poncet, and lived in a newly built house outside of Duisburg, “with large rooms for luxurious entertaining,” though Speier was told they had “lost everything in the war.”<sup>180</sup> Speier recalled “few dinners superior in quality,” and was particularly impressed with their selection of wines. Though, most revealing, he noted that “here was a family to which its proper place in society had been restored.”<sup>181</sup> The Berendsens, by means of a swift transition to business, with Fritz serving as a leading *Prokurist* for a major steel company in Duisburg, had managed more successfully what Natzmer and others tried to do, placing their social prestige and wealth upon a new professional basis. But that evening, Speier witnessed that underlying this new basis, the old structures and connections remained powerful still. After the “gentlemen upon Berendsen’s suggestion withdrew for awhile to the library,” Speier

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Frauenberuf? Hausgehilfinnen in Deutschland, 1918–1960er Jahre’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 24, no. 1 (2013): 59–79.

<sup>177</sup> ‘Interview with Oldwig von Natzmer’, 6.

<sup>178</sup> Though this is something the former military elite were reluctant to reveal, often only doing so after they had been told by Speier that another high-ranking officer had done so, ‘Interview with Wend von Wietersheim’ (8 April 1954), 3, Box 9, Folder 5, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Evening with Fritz Berendsen’ (8 October 1955), 1, Box 9, Folder 11, Hans Speier Papers; Speier found Berendsen, when he first encountered him in April 1954 to be “immaculately dressed with a pearl in his tie. He is tall, looks highly intelligent. His courtesy is without flaw, but cannot wholly dispel the impression of hardness. I should suppose that his intelligence and his energy are not matched by the same degree of kindness,” ‘Interview with Fritz Berendsen’ (8 April 1954), 2, Box 9, Folder 5, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Evening with Fritz Berendsen’, 2.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

gained the impression that Berendsen was, after all, “a soldier in civilian clothes who has found it convenient and profitable to work in the industrial sector of German society.”<sup>182</sup> This impression was strengthened by the fact that, all throughout this all-male part of the evening, Berendsen would look to General of the Cavalry Siegfried Westphal, himself recently successfully transitioned into heavy industry, “as though he wanted to be sure how he was doing at this political map exercise.”<sup>183</sup> Berendsen did re-enter the armed forces in 1959, retiring as a Major General in 1964 and returning both to politics and business immediately, making a smooth transition across civilian and military boundaries which was extremely unusual.

The cases of the Baudissins, the Berendsens, the Blumentritts, the Natzmers, and the Sodensterns suggest that socio-economic and political-institutional re-integration might go hand in hand. They also offer a fascinating, if limited, set of case studies of elite military masculinity at work outside of the usual confines of military institutions. Without the social status, authority and the economic prosperity bestowed upon them by high military rank, the former military elite appeared increasingly isolated from wider social developments, except perhaps where authority and status could be gained from other activities. The nobility of the Baudissins, the Natzmers, and the Sodensterns seems to have been no decisive factor when it comes to successful post-war integration. The Baudissins and the Berendsens were well-connected and socially integrated to some extent regardless of the prestige conferred upon them by the position of the relevant husband within military circles. In the case of the Berendsens that appears to be due to social capital gained from activities in business and politics, while in the case of the Baudissins it appears the relevant fields were political and cultural. The

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>183</sup> Westphal was an old associate of Speidel and had, together with Halder, Manstein, and two others, written the so-called ‘Generals’ Memorandum’ in which they attempted to exculpate the general staff in the context of the Nuremberg Trials, *ibid.*, 5.

Blumentritts, the Natzmers, and the Sodensterns, and, as we will see below, to some extent the Halders, found this rather more difficult, and had experiences which appeared to have embittered them to a certain extent to German politics and society as a whole. They had gone from a secure existence and certain prestige to political, economic, and social precarity. This of course was an experience shared hundred-thousand-fold as those who might have embarked upon professional military careers in the 1910s and 1920s found themselves without the prestige and stability they had expected. It is partially as a result of these domestic and private developments, that the honour of the former military elite became a crucially important factor in discussions of rearmament and future military identity. Their honour had been as gravely insulted by the state to which many felt themselves reduced in their personal lives, as it had been by the professional and legal judgments rendered by the Allies at Nuremberg.

But this loss of status was felt not just through relationships, but also, quite importantly, through another aspect of the masculinity of members of the former military elite, namely physical integrity. War injuries played another important role in Speier's notes. General of the Armoured Corps Hasso von Manteuffel was influential in German politics in the post-war period, also by 1953 a member of the Bundestag, like Berendsen.<sup>184</sup> A central node in the network of the former military elite, he was instrumental to rearmament.<sup>185</sup> In Manteuffel, Speier encountered a man of extreme charm, with Blumentritt sharing an anecdote that Manteuffel had been hired into factory management following the war, and that to pre-empt any opposition by the workers' council, he had gone to the house of the leader of the council on a Saturday, and so charmed the man and his wife that there had been no opposition to his,

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<sup>184</sup> Manteuffel had, in 1950, endorsed a settlement of pensions and such before he would support rearmament, Manig, *Politik der Ehre*, 197–203.

<sup>185</sup> Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals*, 50–51.

a general, being hired.<sup>186</sup> Speier noted that Manteuffel spoke “clearly, says much, but tells you little,” and that he had “the physical sensation during the interview of being drowned in smiles and words.”<sup>187</sup> But Manteuffel, like others, had experienced injury. He had asked Speier to sit at his left, “pointed to his right ear, and said ‘I got a shot there’.”<sup>188</sup> Three days before, Speier had met with Lieutenant General Hans Röttiger, who would become the first chief of staff of the army after rearmament, and who, like Manteuffel, asked Speier to sit on his left side. An old artilleryman, he had lost hearing in his right ear.<sup>189</sup> While Manteuffel still had his charm, Röttiger was left with a “weather-beaten face,” which when he laughed to Speier revealed a “somewhat coarse, if not cruel, look.”<sup>190</sup> Röttiger assured Speier that those who had left military life behind would be reluctant to return to service if they were not given assurances that they “won’t have to go through the past experiences once more,” by which he did not mean a war of annihilation, but rather “the defamation of the military.”<sup>191</sup> New lives and, in some cases, fortunes, had been made, then, and those who had made the successful transition were loath to give it up for a future of uncertain prestige. But this was far from a certain truth. As we have seen above, Berendsen did, as did many others. At least some of the certainty projected by Röttiger might, then, be understood as strategic. If the Adenauer government and American decision makers were convinced that concessions were needed to coax former soldiers back into uniform, there was much to be gained.

Major Axel von dem Bussche, one of the few men who took part in the attempted coup on 20 July 1944 and survived the war, whom Speier met on his next trip in 1954, had suffered

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<sup>186</sup> ‘Interview with Hasso von Manteuffel’ (24 May 1952), 1, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 2 the rather lavish dinner Speier describes as having with Manteuffel, the latter wrote off as a business expense. Wrote Speier, ‘[in the Federal Republic] one does not dine in a restaurant without finding a way of charging it as a business expense.’

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> ‘Interview with Hans Röttiger’.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 3.

rather more severe loss than either Manteuffel or Röttiger. He had lost friends and comrades to a regime which many of the same men who had supported it that day now swore they had opposed. In his new position at the Amt Blank, it would now be his duty to help reconstruct the armed forces, and in so doing engage in negotiations over loyalty, duty, and military identity with the very same men who viewed him as a traitor for participating in the attempted coup. He had also lost a leg, and some fingers were missing from his right hand.<sup>192</sup> This left him with regular physical pain which was obvious to Speier, and he had “considerable difficulty in walking and complained that he was given an office on the fourth floor,” though he had difficulty navigating stairs.<sup>193</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Eberhard von Pfister, whom Speier met a week after von dem Bussche, too had lost his leg and appeared distinctly marked by his service, appearing significantly older than his 43 years. Pfister, though he was an active member of the military public sphere and was employed by the state of Hesse, supervising gambling establishments, appeared to Speier so financially insecure to the extent that he chose the cheapest dishes off the menu of the restaurant they lunched in.<sup>194</sup> And though physical and financial loss did not necessarily go hand in hand, they illustrate some of the ways in which former officers might find themselves at sea in a new political, social, and economic order. For both, von dem Bussche and Pfister, military service would now largely be a thing of the past. They had neither the opportunity, nor the physical capacity to serve in the way Baudissin or even Röttiger would do. For them coming to terms with their own physical disability was akin to coming to terms with a new and potentially precarious social position.

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<sup>192</sup> ‘Interview with Axel von dem Bussche-Streithorst’ (5 April 1954), 1, Box 9, Folder 5, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>194</sup> Eberhard von Pfister, ‘Politik im Schatten der Atomwaffen’, *Wehrkunde* 3, no. 11 (1954): 1–2.

### *Conclusion*

The supposed aim of the oft-evoked campaign of defamation was to rob the generals of what they believed to be the respect, influence, and status they were due. John cynically remarked that the generals squarely put the blame on others “as though there was nothing infamous about them.”<sup>195</sup> As if, in other words, they had not aided the rise of the Nazi regime, or its plans for conquest, or the war of annihilation in the East. And so, the belief in a campaign of defamation was dependent upon the view that the Third Reich ultimately bore no special responsibility for either the outbreak of the Second World War, or indeed its conduct. The Holocaust, unsurprisingly, did not feature in these calculations. General of the Armoured Corps Heinrich Eberbach, commander of German armoured forces in the West on D-Day, wrote that, in spite of defamation, “we should not throw ourselves without condition at the West, like the whores did when the Allied troops invaded. An army without honour is pointless. We can and we must therefore stipulate conditions [for rearmament].”<sup>196</sup> The misogyny of a comment like this is tightly linked to the chauvinism, racism and latent anti-Semitism which permeated the belief structures of the generals as in their references to shadowy forces conspiring against the German people. These interconnected phenomena continued to influence, then, in the shape of networks of former general staff officers which long endured the war and rearmament, military institutions and structures. Their prestige and standing were dependent upon the prestige and standing of the new military institutions, and so they sought to advocate for them and shape accordingly the newly emergent military identity, which, arguably as a result, was imperfectly compatible with liberal democratic norms, as we will see below in more detail.

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<sup>195</sup> ‘Interview with Dr Otto John’, 4.

<sup>196</sup> ‘Eberbach to Geyr’ (27 September 1950), ED 91/15, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

But even while some were merely clamouring for the restoration of their proper social and economic status, others were moving into position to shape the structure of the new armed forces. By late 1949, Speidel had officially received the task of setting up an organisation to coordinate rearmament. In order to achieve plausible deniability, Eberbach's son had acted as an intermediary.<sup>197</sup> Speidel had been selected in part because of his excellent political connections, but there can be no doubt that his campaign to publicly associate Rommel with the resistance ultimately played out to his own advantage, too, granting him a kind of prestige by association. He could draw on the support of Gehlen's organisation, which had since 1947 supported him, Heusinger, and others in creating blueprints for new German armed forces.<sup>198</sup> Circumstantial evidence suggests that in early 1950, Speidel was effectively authorised by Halder to lead the rearmament effort, with the latter withdrawing from rearmament debates and instead focusing on historical work.<sup>199</sup> That historical work is the subject of the next section, as it provided important support to the joint endeavour of cementing the social and political profile of the armed forces in the post-war period, as well as denying responsibility for both, the lost war and the genocide which was inextricably linked to it.

## Military History

The extensive networks of the former military elite were integral to the writing of what Paul Fröhlich has called a "kind of written oral history" in the immediate post-war period.<sup>200</sup> This kind of history originated in multiple overlapping and complementary purposes of the former military elite and various Allied interests. In particular, the United States Army hoped that by

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<sup>197</sup> More on this below in Chapter 3, Keßelring, *Neuformierung*, 122–23.

<sup>198</sup> Keßelring and Loch, 'Himmerod', 63.

<sup>199</sup> Keßelring, *Neuformierung*, 127; by that time, it had already become clear that Halder was in many ways a relic of the past. In 1952, he compiled a study which defended the use of horses by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front as military necessity, rather than as the result of limited industrial capacity, Franz Halder, 'German Employment of Horses on the Eastern Front' (1952), N 553/8, BArch-MA.

<sup>200</sup> Fröhlich, 'Der Generaloberst', 26.

formalising the lessons the Wehrmacht had supposedly learned on the Eastern Front, it might be able to better conduct a future war against the Soviet Union. This in part was a result of lobbying on behalf of the former German military elite. They believed not just that they might hold the key to a future Allied victory in the East, but also sought to exculpate themselves. That they had lost the war, committed mass atrocities, and participated in genocide, they barely mentioned. This section argues that nonetheless, military historical work provided an opportunity for the former military elite to renew and strengthen its networks. In doing so, allowed for an older approach to military history, one which aimed primarily at tactical or strategic lessons to be derived from campaigns previously conducted, often largely ignoring their political implications or contexts, to gain a new lease on life. The first part of this section will focus on the work of the Historical Division and the pivotal role of Halder therein. As mentioned above, Halder's group played an important role in rehabilitating the old military elite as well as giving many general officers too old for future service and having difficulties transitioning into civilian life a meaningful task. The second section examines the role of Basil Liddell Hart in lending legitimacy to the former military elite's quest for exoneration. The third focuses on the structures which were founded in the early post-war period for the writing of military history, in particular the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* (IfZ) and the Bundeswehr's own *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* (MGFA), and the division of labour which was formally agreed upon between them.

### *The U.S. Army Historical Division*

From as early as July 1945, an effort on the part of the United States' armed forces commenced which would endure, in some form, until 1961: the military-historical cooperation with formerly high-ranking Wehrmacht officers. The most prominent structure facilitating this cooperation was the Operational History (German) Section of the U.S.

Army's Historical Division. This cooperation began in earnest when the American armed forces began to move senior Wehrmacht commanders, the better to draw on their knowledge, to Stadtallendorf, near Marburg, in the autumn of 1946.<sup>201</sup> After the last German officers were released from American captivity in 1948, Franz Halder became the leader of the so-called "Control Group" which oversaw the activities of the former German officers. Most of the work was now produced by "Homeworkers", one example being Natzmer above, that is former officers now released from imprisonment and working from home, usually on the basis of scant documentary evidence, mainly relying on their own recollections and those of their fellow comrades.<sup>202</sup> This practice defined not just the work of the Historical Division, but the academic historiography of the war too, shaping most significantly the early work of the Göttingen military history circle around Percy Ernst Schramm and his doctoral students, including Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Andreas Hillgruber.<sup>203</sup> Access to documents was tightly regulated by allied authorities who regarded the captured documents as spoils of war, the return of which would eventually be secured only after fierce negotiation.<sup>204</sup>

The bargain struck over the Historical Division illustrates the convergence of interests between German and American military elites. Esther-Julia Howell has described this project as an organised American effort to generate as complete a picture as possible of their operations in the European theatre of war during the Second World War. They recruited their former opponents to give, so to speak, their side of the story, but in doing so they offered

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<sup>201</sup> Chern Chen, 'Das Steinlager Allendorf. Zur Geschichte der Kriegsgefangenenlager deutscher Generäle nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* 120 (2015): 189–206.

<sup>202</sup> In the studies which emerged, the atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht often vanished, though if it did not it sometimes became retaliatory, having been precipitated by Soviet actions, Esther-Julia Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen? Die kriegsgeschichtliche Kooperation der U.S. Armee und der ehemaligen Wehrmachtselite 1945–1961* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 6.

<sup>203</sup> On Jacobsen, Fröhlich, 'Der Generaloberst', 44–47. A section in Chapter 3 deals extensively with Hillgruber's involvement with the MGFA.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

them the opportunity to “formulate their apologetic interpretation of the Second World War.”<sup>205</sup> This opportunity, the former German military elite used not just to rehabilitate the Wehrmacht as an institution, but also to shift all responsibility for war crimes and the conduct of the war onto the political leadership and the Waffen-SS, creating, by contrast, an image of the officer corps as a community of resistance.<sup>206</sup> What is more remarkable than this endeavour itself, however, is that the studies which were produced were accepted by the Historical Division and later drawn on by the Bundeswehr.<sup>207</sup> It is clear, therefore, that former general staff officers thought they were doing American forces a favour. They were, after all, aiding them by transmitting to them their knowledge, their experience, won at terrible expense on the battlefields in the East, all in service of a shared goal: the defeat of “Asiatic Bolshevism”.<sup>208</sup> In the early post-war period, this discourse served not just the interests of the American armed forces, or the former German military elite, but the Adenauer government, in its pursuit of rearmament.<sup>209</sup>

The opportunities of and problems with Halder’s network were clear to those working officially on rearmament, most obviously Heusinger, who intended to conceive of a “council of the aged” to formalise the standing of a number of officers who were formerly higher ranking than he and Speidel, a notion which struck Speier as “truly Roman”.<sup>210</sup> Halder, in the

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<sup>205</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 9.

<sup>206</sup> That resistance to the regime and atrocities committed in its name could go hand in hand is exemplified by the general staff of Army Group Centre which had, in fact, been a resistance node, Hermann Graml, ‘Massenmord und Militäropposition. Zur jüngsten Diskussion über den Widerstand im Stab der Heeresgruppe Mitte’, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 54, no. 1 (2006): 1–26; but equally, resistors had themselves aided in the conduct of atrocities, and their reasons for joining the resistance did not, broadly, have anything to do with opposition to such crimes, Christian Gerlach, ‘Männer des 20. Juli und der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion’, in *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995), 427–46.

<sup>207</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 17–18.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 265; on the persistence of such thinking well into the 1960s, Tattenberg, ‘Fatherland’.

<sup>209</sup> Axel Schildt, ‘Antikommunismus von Hitler zu Adenauer’, in *Der Antikommunismus in seiner Epoche. Weltanschauung und Politik in Deutschland, Europa und den USA*, ed. Norbert Frei and Dominik Rigoll (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), 186–203.

<sup>210</sup> ‘Interview with Adolf Heusinger’, 2; Sodenstern was, apparently, another candidate for this council ‘Interview with Georg von Sodenstern’, 9 June 1952, 2.

end, decided not to join such a council. Tippelskirch wrote to Halder that the “young people” in Bonn “lacked authority”, a sentiment then widespread, and which presumably Heusinger’s council was intended to counter.<sup>211</sup> But what Speier may have missed here is the reality that Halder, Manstein, Colonel General Heinz Guderian and others still sought to exert the influence which, according to their rank, they believed they were due. The challenge faced by Heusinger, Speidel, and others working towards rearmament, was how to use these voices, which they could not control, to their advantage, while at the same time asserting that they still acknowledged the authority derived from the Wehrmacht ranks these men had once held. In part this was a bind the former military elite themselves created. They sought to be rehabilitated as a class, and their campaigning put their former rank at the very heart of their post-war identities.<sup>212</sup> But it was also a legacy of far more durable structures than the Wehrmacht, originating at least in part in the socialisation of a large number of former officers in the upper middle or upper classes, which had only marginally been disrupted during the war and to some extent undone in its aftermath.<sup>213</sup> It was a remnant of this socialisation which Speier had remarked upon when, over dinner with Halder and von der Heydte in 1954, he realised that the latter addressed Halder exclusively in the third person, expressing his great pleasure that the *Herr Generaloberst* had agreed with his opinions.<sup>214</sup> Older class structures were thus readily apparent to outsiders and continued to shape even the most informal of networks in a lasting fashion. As a result, these networks were not exclusively structured according to former military hierarchies, given the rise in the course of rearmament of slightly more junior officers, but also refracted through socio-economic class.

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<sup>211</sup> ‘Tippelskirch to Halder’ (15 June 1956), N 281/2, BArch-MA, Tippelskirch, too, addressed Halder in the third person.

<sup>212</sup> Hanns Hubert Hofmann and Georg Meyer, eds., ‘Zu Fragen der personellen Auswahl bei der Vorbereitung eines westdeutschen Verteidigungsbeitrages (1950-1956)’, in *Das deutsche Offizierkorps, 1860-1960*, Deutsche Führungsschichten in der Neuzeit; Bd. 11 (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1980), 351–65.

<sup>213</sup> Kroener, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer “nationalsozialistischen Volksarmee”’.

<sup>214</sup> ‘Conversation with General Halder’, 5.

The existence of and privileged access to captured files created tensions between civilian historians and members of the Historical Division. As late as 1954, Halder was “surprised how important it is to check one’s recollection against documentary evidence, because it seems inevitable that mistakes creep into one’s mind.”<sup>215</sup> This kind of attitude in a man who, Speier, believed was “evidently not used to having his judgment questioned,” seems a fatal combination for historical research.<sup>216</sup> The erasure of Wehrmacht crimes in the aftermath of the war may, then, not have been entirely intentional, but in part the result of a flawed methodology which favoured it. The access enjoyed by Halder and others meant that they had the potential to produce studies of considerably greater insight than civilian historians. And though occasionally civilian historians were allowed access to these studies, this was often under the condition that there could be no direct citation nor mention of the study’s author. This limited access was generally regarded as a favour bestowed by the former military elite on the less privileged and thus came with the further expectation that the studies could not be mentioned as the source of information and that criticism would be minimised.<sup>217</sup> But it was not the lack of access to files which was generally brought to bear as a point of criticism against civilian military historians, but their lack of personal experience of the war, even in cases where the historian in question had indeed served, albeit in a junior role. War experience thus functioned less as a strict criterion for exclusion and more as a moderating principle which could be deployed at will against those who were believed to miss the “essential context” for given decisions.<sup>218</sup> Any criticism which did emerge of their actions could thus be effectively dismissed by the former military elite.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>216</sup> Though Speier also remarked that Halder ‘gave altogether the impression of a man who never questioned himself,’ or indeed ‘as a man who does not derive his opinions on current issues from what he has read on these issues but who forms them independently from the facts available to him,’ *ibid.*, 9, 19.

<sup>217</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 285.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

*Basil Liddell Hart*

If the loss of the former military elite's political status was linked to loss of social status, then the quest for further rehabilitation needed to be pursued not just among the lines of political influence, but of those of cultural and social prestige. Among the most severe humiliations endured by them, in the minds of the former military elite was not just the continued imprisonment of prominent figures such as Manstein, Kesselring, and Colonel General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, but the mass internment of former officers in the immediate post-war period.<sup>219</sup> Some of those interviewed by Speier viewed it as a revenge plot by the allies against those they perceived to be "militarists".<sup>220</sup> But it also allowed the former Wehrmacht elite an opportunity to (re-)forge relationships and networks which may otherwise not have endured. Beyond these rather more predictable opportunities offered by internment, the former military elites' interests aligned sometimes rather neatly with those of others who intended to use the opportunity to raise their own profile. John told Speier that he had thrown Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart, a British strategic theorist, out of the prisoner of war camp where he was being held in the mid-1940s. The reason John gave was that Liddell Hart had been interviewing Blumentritt and Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, who, as Commander-in-Chief West had failed to repel the Allied invasion of Normandy.<sup>221</sup> Liddell Hart in his

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<sup>219</sup> 'Internment' here functions to summarise the various kinds of detention. Some officers were prisoners of war, others detained for the purposes of 'denazification' or 'demilitarisation', Kathleen J. Nawyn, "'Striking at the Roots of German Militarism': Efforts to Demilitarize German Society and Culture in American-Occupied Württemberg-Baden, 1945-1949' (PhD Thesis, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008), 215-84; Andrew Beattie, *Allied Internment Camps in Occupied Germany: Extrajudicial Detention in the Name of Denazification, 1945-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); on opportunities for networking, most prominently, Sönke Neitzel, *Abgehört: Deutsche Generäle in britischer Kriegsgefangenschaft 1942-1945* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2005); Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying. The Secret World War II Tapes of German PoWs.*, trans. Jefferson Chase (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

<sup>220</sup> 'Interview with Erich Dethleffsen' (15 May 1952), 2, Box 9, Folder 2, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>221</sup> On Rundstedt's conduct in 1941-1942, Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer. Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 280-310, 656-57; on the D-Day campaign, see Adam Tooze, 'Blitzkrieg Manqué or a New Kind of War? Interpreting the Allied Victory in the Normandy Campaign', 2016, <https://adamtooze.com/2017/08/27/blitzkrieg-manque-new-kind-war-interpreting-allied-victory-normandy-campaign/>.

post-war publications became a strong advocate for the lenient treatment of Wehrmacht generals.<sup>222</sup> He even arranged for German officers to publish their work in the official journal of the Irish Defence Forces.<sup>223</sup> John, in his own telling, had spotted an alliance in the making which, while mutually beneficial, would have disastrous political consequences: an ambitious military writer with not insignificant political influence advocating on behalf of the former Wehrmacht elite, who continued to pursue their own rehabilitation by all means available to them, not just in Germany but abroad, might be a powerful ally.

While Liddell Hart was clearly used by the German generals for their purposes, he equally, as Searle has made clear, benefited from the attention, though not exclusively positive, this collaboration brought.<sup>224</sup> Liddell Hart evidently enjoyed the acclaim he received as a result of editing Rommel's war diaries published as *The Rommel Papers* (1953). He wrote to Speidel that the most sweeping criticisms he received "came from reviewers who were of Jewish origin – it is very hard for such people to be objective."<sup>225</sup> Liddell Hart regularly interviewed the Wehrmacht generals imprisoned in England and Searle reports that his usual interpreter had once overheard the generals discussing what "historical line" they would take in an upcoming meeting with Liddell Hart, who when told of the incident refused to believe it had taken place. This suggests either awareness of this sort of development without wishing to consider the implications or a fundamental naiveté regarding the political and personal motives of the men who derived not insignificant privileges from humouring him and his

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<sup>222</sup> Oliver von Wrochem, 'Kriegsdeutungen und gesellschaftliche Transformation: Wehrmachtikonen, Sinnstiftung und soldatische Identitäten in Westdeutschland', in *Kriegserfahrung und nationale Identität in Europa nach 1945*, ed. Kerstin von Lingen (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 189–205.

<sup>223</sup> 'Interview with Kurt von Tippelskirch', 2; it was subsequently also in the pages of this journal that debates between former officers on Rommel's legacy were carried out, 'Geyr to MacCarthy' (19 April 1951), ED 91/12, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

<sup>224</sup> Alaric Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship: Basil Liddell Hart, Wehrmacht Generals and the Debate on West German Rearmament, 1945-1953', *War in History* 5, no. 3 (1998): 351.

<sup>225</sup> 'Liddell Hart to Speidel' (4 May 1953), Fiche 3, Doc 151, BW 9/1545, BArch-MA.

questions while imprisoned.<sup>226</sup> John, though he may not have been aware of the details, had a sense of these dynamics, cautioning Speier against Blumentritt, telling him to “be careful”. “Unless you know these people,” he said, “they will fool you,” as, he implied, they had fooled Liddell Hart to disastrous effect in the long-term. Liddell Hart helped them sanitise their reputations for an audience abroad, more perhaps concerned, as was the German government at this stage, with fighting communism in the future than with punishing past atrocities.<sup>227</sup>

John’s worries were proven entirely justified as Liddell Hart, alongside Desmond Young, was in no small part the architect, in English, of the glowing reputation of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the so-called “Desert Fox”, and of Rundstedt, for whom Liddell Hart had secured a role as technical advisor on the Hollywood film *Desert Fox* (1951).<sup>228</sup> Rundstedt, via Liddell Hart, also demanded that in the film he be “represented *in a decent manner* and not *as one having knowledge* of Hitler’s acts of shame.”<sup>229</sup> The film, as Patrick Major makes clear, helped not just to exculpate the Wehrmacht, but also to delineate it clearly from the crimes committed on behalf of the regime: “if war guilt was not black and white, it was at least black and field grey.”<sup>230</sup> John, when invited to a preview of the film by American representatives to the Allied High Commission for Occupied Germany in 1952 initially told

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<sup>226</sup> Searle, ‘Liddell Hart, Wehrmacht Generals’, 332–33.

<sup>227</sup> ‘Interview with Dr Otto John’, 2.

<sup>228</sup> The film was based on Young’s infamous hagiography, Desmond Young, *Rommel: The Desert Fox* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Peter Lieb has come to the conclusion that Rommel’s resistance credentials, for which there is scant evidence, were played up in the post-war period, most significantly by Speidel, Peter Lieb, ‘Erwin Rommel. Widerstandskämpfer oder Nationalsozialist?’, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 61, no. 3 (2013): 303–44; Speidel reported to Ruge that he had been told by Young that the latter was acting on assignment from Montgomery and Auchinleck in writing a biography of Rommel, ‘Speidel to Ruge’ (19 February 1949), N 379/65, BArch-MA; in his final assessment, Speidel said that he shared Ruge’s view that Young had ‘been useful to the German side,’ ‘Speidel to Ruge’ (9 March 1950), N 379/125, BArch-MA.

<sup>229</sup> Original emphasis, Patrick Major, ‘Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox (1951) and Hollywood’s Public–Private Diplomacy’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 39, no. 2 (2019): 217; Patrick Major, ‘“Our Friend Rommel”: The Wehrmacht as “Worthy Enemy” in Postwar British Popular Culture’, *German History* 26, no. 4 (2008): 525.

<sup>230</sup> In spite of the positive image conveyed by the film, Rommel’s wife and son had to be paid 3,000 DM each before they gave the script their blessing, Major, ‘Shooting Rommel’, 216.

his hosts to “burn it.”<sup>231</sup> In fact, John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, initially was firmly opposed to distribution of the film in Germany, and even American military bases were prohibited from screening it. Following some changes to dialogue, it appears even John endorsed its release and the film finally premiered in German on 22 August 1952.<sup>232</sup> Whether John believed the changes were sufficient to dispel the danger he felt the film had posed is doubtful, though it is unknown why he ultimately agreed for it to be screened regardless.

Beyond this episode in the whitewashing of Rommel and Rundstedt, German officers had long viewed Liddell Hart as an intermediary between themselves and British interests as well as American high command.<sup>233</sup> In fact, Liddell Hart may have been aiding an agenda a long time in the making. It seems that as early as 1946, Speidel, who had been Rommel’s last chief of staff in Normandy, had wished to turn his former boss into a “hero of the German people”. In this enterprise, he had the full backing of Gehlen’s organisation.<sup>234</sup> Blumentritt, who had a close personal connection with Liddell Hart,<sup>235</sup> for his part had supplied a history of the war in the West after D-Day which Liddell Hart published in his account of the war from the point of view of the German generals *The Other Side of the Hill* (1948).<sup>236</sup> As early as 1949, Speidel himself had waded into the fray, publishing an account of Rommel’s defence of the West and his supposed links to the men of the 20 July.<sup>237</sup> A significant

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<sup>231</sup> ‘Interview with Dr Otto John’, 3.

<sup>232</sup> Major, ‘Shooting Rommel’, 219–25.

<sup>233</sup> ‘Hans Speidel to Wilhelm Speidel’ (20 June 1952), Fiche 3, Doc 144, BW 9/3356, BArch-MA; ‘Interview with Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg’, 2.

<sup>234</sup> ‘Geyr to Hoesch’ (11 June 1964), ED 91/12, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

<sup>235</sup> Liddell Hart supplied Blumentritt’s family with clothing and food, and Blumentritt in turn visited him in England, ‘Liddell Hart to Blumentritt’ (10 January 1948), N 252/46, BArch-MA; ‘Liddell Hart to Blumentritt’ (2 March 1948), N 252/46, BArch-MA; Blumentritt helped Liddell Hart gain introductions to Rundstedt, Halder, Manstein, and others, ‘Liddell Hart to Blumentritt’ (7 June 1949), N 252/46, BArch-MA.

<sup>236</sup> Alaric Searle, ‘Die unheilbare Wunde. Der 20. Juli 1944 im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Wehrmachtsgeneralität, 1949-1969’, in *Verräter? Vorbilder? Verbrecher? Kontroverse Deutungen des 20. Juli 1944 seit 1945*, ed. Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2016), 102–3.

<sup>237</sup> Speidel, *Invasion 1944. Ein Beitrag zu Rommels und des Reiches Schicksal*.

proportion of Speidel's book had first been drafted as studies for the group led by Halder.<sup>238</sup>

It is worth noting, too, that this was not a situation of mutual admiration. Speidel, for instance, wrote to Colonel General Hans-Georg Reinhardt, a former commander of Army Group Centre who had been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment at Nuremberg and later became president of the GfW,<sup>239</sup> that he believed Liddell Hart to be "extremely overrated".<sup>240</sup>

But Speidel, John argued, had shown his hand too early. "Today, Speidel would write a different book," he said, hinting at the fact that resistance connections had proved more controversial than Speidel may have anticipated, giving ammunition to his political opponents.<sup>241</sup> But what may have been a misstep by Speidel could be compensated for by an extremely powerful political network, particularly in the South of Germany, where Speidel enjoyed high-level social and political contacts, including Theodor Heuss and Eberhard Wildermuth.<sup>242</sup> It was these contacts which meant he received, in November 1949, the task to coordinate rearmament. Beyond his own active role in the writing of military history in the immediate post-war period, therefore, Speidel defined the structures not just of rearmament but of the writing of the history of the National Socialist regime. It was through him that Gehlen's organisation helped shape the staff of the newly founded IfZ in Munich, not far

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<sup>238</sup> Hans Speidel, 'Generaloberst Beck - Hitler' (1947), ZA 1/117, BArch-MA; Hans Speidel, 'Zur Vorgeschichte des 20. Juli 1944' (1947), ZA 1/1073, BArch-MA; Hans Speidel, 'Die Schlacht in der Normandie 1944. Führung, Gedanke und Ende des Feldmarschall Rommel' (1948), ZA 1/1218, BArch-MA.

<sup>239</sup> Hébert, *Hitler's Generals on Trial*, 89–95.

<sup>240</sup> 'Speidel to Reinhardt' (27 May 1961), N 245/31, BArch-MA; Geyr too thought little of Liddell Hart as a military analyst and believed 'that Liddell Hart was misled by his German informants...and was not able to deal with information critically', 'Interview with Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg', 2; Liddell Hart in turn described most of the generals he dealt with as 'apolitical vacuum-men who have hitherto concentrated upon their professional work and have never thought about wider questions', Searle, 'Liddell Hart, Wehrmacht Generals', 332.

<sup>241</sup> 'Interview with Dr Otto John', 2–3; a further indication of the truth of this remark is that Speidel actively sought to be written out of the script for 'Desert Fox' in order to avoid publicity, Major, 'Shooting Rommel', 217.

<sup>242</sup> Keßelring, *Neuformierung*, 117; on the former's activities in this period, see Ernst Wolfgang Becker, 'Soldatentum und demokratischer Neubeginn. Theodor Heuss und seine Haltung zum Militär nach 1945', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 76, no. 2 (2017): 459–96; Thomas Boghardt, 'The American Candidate: US Intelligence, Theodor Heuss, and the Making of West Germany's First President', *Studies in Intelligence* 64, no. 2 (2020): 1–12.

from where Gehlen was headquartered in Pullach. The foundation of this institute and the MGFA is the subject of the next section.

### *MGFA & IfZ*

As early as 1951, it became clear at the higher levels of the Amt Blank that not only would the new ministry require its own military historical research office, but that the history of rearmament itself would need to be written, and that this required the presence, even at this early stage, of some dedicated historical expertise. This next section therefore deals with the early days of what would become the MGFA, led by Colonel Hans Meier-Welcker, a trained historian and general staff officer. Meier-Welcker, born in Freiburg, had joined the Reichswehr in 1925, and served mainly as a staff officer on the Eastern Front and as a liaison officer to Italian forces. He spent two years as an American POW before gaining a doctorate in medieval history at Tübingen under Hans Rothfels. In the course of the early 1950s, it was Meier-Welcker under whose supervision the new military history research office was born, and it was he who oversaw the turf wars between the nascent MGFA and the IfZ in Munich, which was shaped by Speidel and, through him, by Gehlen's organisation. This section engages a number of issues, including the choice of director of both institutions, their missions, academic approach, relationships with civilian historians and universities, and, above all, how the place of the two institutions within the military public sphere affected their operation and ultimately their achievements.

The MGFA was primarily founded to, first, provide the new armed forces with lessons learned from previous campaigns. Second, it was to develop a history of the Second World War.<sup>243</sup> The MGFA produced publications aimed at traditional academic audiences, as well

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<sup>243</sup> See Note 455 below.

as publications which might be used in officer education, all of which were generally of high quality, though debates over its mission always played a significant role in shaping its research outputs. The IfZ meanwhile was primarily to investigate the rise of National Socialism and has long occupied a unique position as an interface between German academia and semi-official historical scholarship. But part of its mission has also been comprised of education of a wider public on the basis of that scholarship. These two institutes came to shape military history in post-war West Germany, where Meier-Welcker's rejection of a "practical conception" of military history clashed with older conceptions of *Kriegs-* or *Wehrgeschichte*.<sup>244</sup> Endorsing an academic, rather than a practical concept of the new history of military force thereby became a key point of contention between older and younger generations of officers, leading ultimately to the split structure of the MGFA, the genesis of which will be explored below. The IfZ had similar problems, but they primarily related to the interpretation of the rise and character of the Nazi regime as a whole, which was the role allocated to it in part as a result of the division of academic labour I will sketch below.

In early 1951, when rearmament was already well underway, though its shape was as yet unclear, Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich de Maizière, who had also worked under Heusinger in the Operations Department of the OKH, had joined the Amt Blank at the behest of Kielmansegg, another of Heusinger's former subordinates.<sup>245</sup> By early 1952, it fell to de Maizière to find a historian to keep the Amt Blank's diary.<sup>246</sup> Although it appears, as de Maizière wrote to Meier-Welcker in early March, that "this idea has not yet been officially presented," appearing to mean that this was something he and others had hoped to push, but that they had

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<sup>244</sup> Rainer Wohlfeil, 'Wehr-, Kriegs- oder Militärgeschichte?', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 1 (1967): 466.

<sup>245</sup> While Kielmansegg would succeed Speidel as Commander Allied Land Forces Central Europe NATO in Fontainebleau, de Maizière became chief of staff of the Bundeswehr, five years after Heusinger had left the post.

<sup>246</sup> 'Notiz', 25 January 1952, N 241/48, BArch-MA.

not yet received sanction to hire Meier-Welcker, who was less than enthusiastic, in spite of the “great interest” de Maizière believed would be taken in their work from “the point of view of military science and military history.”<sup>247</sup> Meier-Welcker, however, was initially set on staying in academia. He had recently completed his PhD, and his professors, he wrote, “have already developed plans for my future path in academia.”<sup>248</sup> He appeared to be hedging his bets, suggesting that it would be difficult to return to research, clearly seeking surety from de Maizière, who was able to offer it in a subsequent letter, when he made clear that the post would now officially be created, although Meier-Welcker would still have to interview.<sup>249</sup> Meier-Welcker may, given the difficulties experienced by others as detailed above, have been reluctant to relinquish a successful transition into civilian life well underway in the face of uncertain professional and social prospects in the new armed forces. He may have believed that an academic position might confer upon him a kind of social standing returning to uniform was unlikely to.

The IfZ, which had been founded as the “Institute for the Study of National Socialist Politics” was to push the historical study of the regime far beyond the institutional and political confines which had constrained official histories after the First World War. To this end its remit was expanded to encompass recent German history more broadly.<sup>250</sup> But the new institute was dominated by various interests. Speidel and Gerhard Ritter, both members of the academic advisory board of the IfZ, appeared to be aligned due to their joint opposition to a “Catholic-Bavarian” direction, pushed by Gerhard Kroll, a CSU politician who became the institute’s first director.<sup>251</sup> In terms of the institute’s research into military history, it was

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<sup>247</sup> ‘de Maizière to Meier-Welcker’, 8 March 1952, N 241/84, BArch-MA.

<sup>248</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to de Maizière’, 12 March 1952, N 241/84, BArch-MA.

<sup>249</sup> ‘de Maizière to Meier-Welcker’, 17 March 1952, N 241/84, BArch-MA.

<sup>250</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 186.

<sup>251</sup> Speidel, and his longtime friend and powerful political patron, Theodor Heuss, identified strongly as both protestant and Swabian and therefore viewed this direction with some apprehension, *ibid.*, 186–87, n9.

General of the Infantry Hermann Foertsch who ended up in post. Foertsch had spent most of the war on the Eastern Front or in the Balkans and subsequently faced war crimes charges during the so-called Hostages Trial.<sup>252</sup> Foertsch was acquitted, unlike Speidel's brother Wilhelm who was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment (though released in 1951).<sup>253</sup> Foertsch is a critical character during this period. He was not just head of military history at the IfZ, but actively involved in the planning of rearmament at the highest levels, as well as being a member of the Organisation Gehlen.<sup>254</sup> It was Speidel, who was on the scientific advisory council of the institute, who had acted on behalf of Gehlen to secure the position for Foertsch.<sup>255</sup> The IfZ, therefore, saw in itself refracted the conflicts and divided loyalties which shaped much of the military-political landscape of the early post-war decades.

Klaus-Dietmar Henke has shown that Kroll provided inspiration for the OG to use the IfZ as a means of developing a "strategic intelligence service". The IfZ, in other words, was to be the basis for the OG's domestic espionage programme. Kroll, like Foertsch, owed his job to Gehlen and Speidel.<sup>256</sup> "If Kroll takes over the job," a longtime associate told Gehlen,

"the result will not be what the public hopes for, but attacks against Western democracy as such. He wants to show that not everything about National Socialism was wrong, although the basis was ethically not ideal."<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> On the effects of some of the post-war war crimes trials in cases with prominent defendants, see Lingen, *Kesselrings letzte Schlacht*.

<sup>253</sup> Manig, *Politik der Ehre*, 207, 197–233.

<sup>254</sup> Keßelring and Loch, 'Himmerod', 63 n17; Foertsch's cover name was 'Viersen'. He moved to the OG full time in the early 1950s and since 1953 he had been in charge of psychological warfare, in particular anti-communist propaganda. After 1956, he occasionally served as Gehlen's deputy when the latter was absent Thomas Wolf, *Die Entstehung des BND. Aufbau, Finanzierung, Kontrolle*. (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2018), 123, 261–262.; on the psychological warfare section of the OG, Dülffer, Jost, *Geheimdienst in der Krise. Der BND in den 1960er-Jahren* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2018), 463–69; Foertsch's son Volker joined the OG shortly thereafter and played an important role in the BND until his retirement in 2003, Henke, *Geheime Dienste*, 556.

<sup>255</sup> Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals*, 75–76; when Geyr, who had attempted to get the post which ultimately went to Foertsch, confronted Speidel about opposition to his candidacy, Speidel is said to have replied, 'I did not do this, Gehlen arranged it.' Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 192.

<sup>256</sup> It appears Gehlen and Kroll were at school together in Breslau, Müller, *Reinhard Gehlen*, 889.

<sup>257</sup> Henke, *Geheime Dienste*, 539.

Military history was a means to that end, as Kroll wished to promote “the opposition between SS-leadership and the general staff,” and ultimately, “the institute will publish nothing which could incriminate the general staff.”<sup>258</sup> This material, which cannot be verified as it is contained in BND archives, suggests that the IfZ may have been specifically mobilised by Kroll and networks around Gehlen in order to not just incriminate and undermine the SS, but specifically to elevate the former military elite, to bolster its political cause, and to finance its narrative, which must be understood to be foundational to the “clean Wehrmacht” myth.<sup>259</sup> And while this appears to have changed after both Foertsch and Kroll left their posts in 1951, the next director, Hermann Mau, though he died in a car crash in 1952, also had strong links to the OG which helped supply him with material on the so-called *Rote Kapelle*.<sup>260</sup> While the IfZ never amounted to the kind of intelligence centre which Gehlen and Kroll imagined it might become, it is clear that Kroll’s ambitions were ultimately fulfilled, even if not by himself. That was the case because they were, ultimately, relatively common and widely shared by Halder, Gehlen, Speidel, and many others, as we have seen.

The IfZ in its early days was plagued also by historical-political disagreements.<sup>261</sup> Especially between Hermann Brill, a socialist politician who had been incarcerated in a concentration camp, and Ritter, who had been a member of the conservative opposition. Brill had wanted to put political education at the centre of the institute, while Ritter had wanted to rehabilitate Prussia, to emphasise a break between Prussian Imperial and National Socialist Germany.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> See also detailed notes on a meeting between Gehlen and Kroll on 8 February 1950, *ibid.*, 544–50.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 562–68; Sälter, *Phantome des Kalten Krieges. Die Organisation Gehlen und die Wiederbelebung des Gestapo-Feindbildes »Rote Kapelle«*, 397–98.

<sup>261</sup> A good overview, though missing the covert scheming of Speidel, Gehlen, et al, Mathew Turner, Tony Joel, and David Lowe, “‘Between Politics and Scholarship’: The First Decade of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 1949–1958”, *European History Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2019): 250–71.

<sup>262</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 188.

In the end, Kroll resigned over differences with Ritter, and Mau took his place in 1951. In other words, while historiographical debates about the nature of National Socialism were taking place and disrupting the early work of the institute, careful manoeuvring took place covertly in order to install those friendly to the prevailing interests of the old military elite, thereby securing the political influence and cohesion of the military public sphere. By exerting control via the scientific advisory council, Speidel, Gehlen, and Foertsch ultimately wielded their influence to determine the direction of academic research, primarily at the IfZ, due to limited funding and publication venues available to those wishing to study the Second World War.

It was in this context of covert activism on behalf of a particular interpretation of the engagement of the former military elite with National Socialism that, by early April 1952, Meier-Welcker had taken over the role and contacted Foertsch at the IfZ. “It will be my task,” wrote Meier-Welcker to Foertsch, “to record the coming developments and create an overview of events in this area [around the Amt Blank] since 1945. To that end I am to create a relevant archive.”<sup>263</sup> It was Meier-Welcker’s intention to coordinate with Foertsch regarding the tasks of their respective institutions. For they ought, “only to be divided in terms of the historical work, but not in terms of the cause [*in der Sache*].”<sup>264</sup> Foertsch appears to have welcomed this coordinated approach,<sup>265</sup> and by July Meier-Welcker appeared settled into his new post enough to suggest that he visit Foertsch in Munich.<sup>266</sup> The fact that Meier-Welcker had barely been in post two months suggests that the coordination of tasks between the IfZ and the nascent core of what would become the MGFA was a central priority.<sup>267</sup> The

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<sup>263</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 25 April 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> ‘Hermann Foertsch to Meier-Welcker’, 16 May 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>266</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 3 July 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>267</sup> The fact that what appears to be a rather central meeting for the planning of the division of responsibilities in the military public sphere took place without the involvement of Halder or a representative from the Historical

“cause” they might be united in pursuit of was likely to not be an entirely academic one, but one which by means of academic research allowed for the rehabilitation of the officer corps, and for the creation of a historiographical mythology which protected the reputation of their profession, even if, as mentioned earlier, Meier-Welcker did help professionalise military historical work in the Federal Republic, these political considerations did play a major role.

Just two weeks later in mid-July 1952, the meeting had already taken place, and Foertsch appeared pleased with the outcome. But his suggestion that Meier-Welcker ought to make sure that both Speidel and Heusinger saw and signed off on the deal which had been struck suggests a lack of trust, perhaps in the face of the kind of covert machinations which he knew all too well could, and regularly did, take place.<sup>268</sup> Or perhaps Foertsch knew that without blessing from above, whatever they had agreed upon was subject to change. In that case, he was proven right, as Meier-Welcker relayed Heusinger’s reservations with regards to the division of labour which was to be established. The particular objection related to the acquisition of archival material by the IfZ. Hitherto, the IfZ had been free to acquire archival material. Now, Heusinger demanded that a sentence which granted the right of the IfZ to continue to acquire such material be struck.<sup>269</sup> With the return of the captured files looming perhaps, and given the fact that with its new director Mau the institute was now in the hands of someone largely independent of Gehlen’s circle, there was occasion, and indeed necessity, for a deal which favoured the new military institutions.<sup>270</sup> In early August, Meier-Welcker wrote again to Foertsch to say that negotiations between the Interior Ministry and the Amt

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Division suggests that it inhabited, in this new institutional order, a more precarious and less straightforward position. This is borne out, too, by the personal animosities between Halder and Meier-Welcker, with the former calling the latter an ‘ambitious youngling’, of whose methodology he disapproved, and with whom he would struggle over control of the studies prepared by the Historical Division. See, Fröhlich, ‘Der Generaloberst’, 37.

<sup>268</sup> ‘Hermann Foertsch to Meier-Welcker’, 15 July 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>269</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 21 July 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA; see also the original note in Hermann Foertsch, ‘Aktenvermerk’, 15 July 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>270</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 191.

Blank had now been completed, presumably regarding an exclusion of the military archive from the federal archive. Meier-Welcker wrote, suggesting a changed formulation to the offending clause to the effect that the IfZ would be free to acquire private papers and such, but that, once they were no longer needed, the new military archive would be able to acquire them.<sup>271</sup> This was a further limitation on the new institute to act and research independently and acquire its own materials to do so. Yet, Mau sanctioned this change to the agreement.<sup>272</sup>

A note left by Foertsch makes clear not just the agreement between the two nascent institutions, but more fundamentally the purposes of the office headed by Meier Welcker. It was the intention of the Amt Blank, not just to compile an archive, but to “similar to before the Second World War, create a military archive, and not to integrate the future military archive and research institution into the federal archives.”<sup>273</sup> This suggests, at least in the initial design, the intention to create an institution similar to the old *Reichsarchiv*, which would exercise far greater control over not just military historical scholarship but access to military archival material than the MGFA eventually did.<sup>274</sup> And while the IfZ ought to have privileged access to this new military archive, the note envisages a concrete coordination in terms of research between the two organisations. The IfZ was to focus on “military political,” Meier-Welcker’s new office on more specifically military issues (*militärisch fachliches Gebiet*).<sup>275</sup> The division of labour between the IfZ and Meier-Welcker’s office was not uncontroversial as meeting minutes supplied by Speidel to Meier-Welcker showed. The minutes for the meeting of the scientific advisory council and the board of the IfZ in early

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<sup>271</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 5 August 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>272</sup> ‘Hermann Foertsch to Meier-Welcker’, 11 August 1952, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA; rather enigmatically, Foertsch also asked Meier-Welcker to convey this agreement to ‘the relevant American authorities’, and later he suggested that the IfZ had abdicated, to American authorities, any claim to captured documents, ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 5 August 1952.

<sup>273</sup> Foertsch, ‘Aktenvermerk’, 15 July 1952.

<sup>274</sup> Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914–1956* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

<sup>275</sup> Foertsch, ‘Aktenvermerk’, 15 July 1952.

December 1953 show that the director of the Bavarian state archives objected to a use of the Nuremberg Trial files by the institute in a fashion which could not be controlled by his own administration. In other words, at issue here, though not directly the relationship between the future MGFA and the IfZ, was the question of public accountability and accessibility.<sup>276</sup>

Limited access to military archives was clearly perceived as a means of limiting the possibilities of civilian military historians and thereby perhaps prevent the emergence of a critical historiography unchecked by military institutions, which is entirely in line with the exalted social status the former general staff believed they were due, as we have seen above. The idea that civilian historians would, now or in future, be able to criticise them publicly without their ability to claim that a lack of knowledge had produced misunderstandings or misinterpretations, they clearly understood as a weakening of their position.

Although this appears to suggest as though the MGFA was off to a good start, by March 1954, Meier-Welcker complained about a lack of funding, staff and protracted negotiations regarding the establishment of the research institute. It appears that, contrary to the state of the existing scholarship, Meier-Welcker helped organise the foundation of the *Arbeitskreis für Wehrforschung* (AfW).<sup>277</sup> Until now, the AfW has been seen, as by Esther-Julia Howell, for instance, as an association the founding of which was initiated by Sodenstern, representing the interests of the Historical Division, and Halder in particular.<sup>278</sup> While at first that appeared to be the case, Meier-Welcker wrote to Walther Hubatsch in early 1954 that, “we want to support the foundation of a new military scientific association [*wehrwissenschaftlicher Forschungskreis*] and, after long-standing efforts are close to

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<sup>276</sup> See note in pen by Speidel, the IfZ was at this point largely funded by the state of Bavaria and funds were urgently sought from elsewhere, including the state of Berlin, ‘Ergebnisprotokoll über die gemeinsame Sitzung von Kuratorium und Beirat des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte’, 4 December 1953, 2–3, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>277</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Hubatsch’, 13 March 1954, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>278</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 281–82.

realisation....either Jürgen Rohwer, who is to be Sodenstern's secretary, or I, will come to see you to elaborate on our plans."<sup>279</sup> The "key moment" of the new association, wrote Meier-Welcker to Hubatsch, a military historian and then professor at the University of Bonn, was to recruit the right academics.<sup>280</sup> This is not to dwell on the fact that Howell proved to be wrong about the AfW. Rather, the fact that it was difficult to be sure who founded what association or group or institute and on whose instruction with whose help, suggests something quite important about the networks of the former military elite in the early post-war years. They felt, ultimately, unaccountable to political decision makers, but accountable only to each other, and perhaps to the old hierarchies which they still upheld. The fact that it was difficult to trace the origins of the various networks and associations was not solely a result of lost documentation, but of design by informal networks, keen to exercise their influence below the radar.

This is where Howell's analysis is key, for she suggests that the AfW was dominated by those men who had worked alongside Halder at the Historical Division and were loyal to him.<sup>281</sup> The AfW, then, between these two analyses, can be understood as a key battleground where different conceptions of military history clashed. That of Halder, to whom the studies written by his men were the prime example of the right kind of military history, a military history that was written to be used, to be deployed, to serve as the basis of general staff training, but also future operations planning. And that of Meier-Welcker, who, as an academically trained historian, believed that military history must ask the same questions any other historical sub-discipline ought to ask. These did not have to do with some practical purpose, but, Meier-Welcker said in a 1957 speech to the Historical Division, "we must

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<sup>279</sup> 'Meier-Welcker to Hubatsch', 13 March 1954.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 294–95.

pursue our historical research without always thinking about its practical use.”<sup>282</sup> Rather, everything had to be done to prevent “the isolation of military history from history in general,”<sup>283</sup> though this statement appears at odds with the stated purposes of Meier-Welcker’s own office as noted by Foertsch, entailing as we have seen an isolation of the military archive from the federal archive. While Meier-Welcker’s sentiment, then, appears to be one which is easily endorsed by modern military historians, it is worth considering that he, too, took it for granted that to some extent the structure of the writing of military history, if not written military history itself, were to be separated, still, in the spirit of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This historiographical difference was to express itself also in the organisational structure of the new MGFA. By summer 1953, Meier-Welcker appears to have been inundated with proposed structures from all sides, although, “these thoughts appear to have been put to paper without knowledge of what our office is planning.”<sup>284</sup> One particular plan he had received apparently envisaged the continuation of significant parts of the work in the home of the relevant researcher, which had been the case for Halder’s Historical Division.<sup>285</sup> The fact that Meier-Welcker received a large number of such unsolicited proposals suggests that the above mentioned decentralised structures of the military public sphere had a number of drawbacks, including the fact that apparently many felt by their very membership of these networks qualified or called upon to weigh in, often with clearly insufficient proposals. Meier-Welcker rejected these proposals out of hand for a number of reasons. He appeared to have a desire to

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> ‘Meier-Welcker to Baudissin’, 27 July 1953, BW 2/1051, BArch-MA.

<sup>285</sup> Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*, 123–28, 271–74, 305, 322.

tightly control, at least administratively, the research conducted under the aegis of his new institutions. But he also wished to modernise the nature of military historical research.<sup>286</sup>

In Meier-Welcker's letters, there is also a glimpse of the ways he intended to use the networked nature of the military public sphere, and the rather serious ways in which official and unofficial structures were intertwined, to his advantage. Because beyond that work which would take place in his office, Meier-Welcker wrote that a second part would take place under the remit of the *Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde* (GfW).<sup>287</sup> The GfW therefore was located at a particular nexus which in this time period defined the military public sphere. On the one hand, as Tobias Schmitt has shown, the GfW functioned as a covert link between German defence interests and American and West German intelligence. On the other hand, it produced a journal and opportunities for former military elites to network and publish on contemporary defence and security issues.<sup>288</sup> These rather complicated structures, which are also defined by an overlap of personnel, with writers shifting between the Historical Division, the MGFA, and the GfW, then make clear the centrality of the idea of the military public sphere, as a means of connecting these various channels and ultimately viewing their focus on the public communication of historiographical and political ideas related to military, defence, and security issues.

## Conclusion

By the middle of the 1950s, the institutional landscape of the military public sphere had shifted significantly. While the OG and other informal networks remained crucial, particularly in the exercise of covert influence, more formal structures now predominated. In

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<sup>286</sup> 'Meier-Welcker to Baudissin', 27 July 1953.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Schmitt, 'GfW', 118–19.

part, this was the result of rearmament. Once the armed forces had been established, informal positioning mattered less, as relative clarity had been created. Speidel and Heusinger, among others, benefitted greatly from their new official position. No longer were they simply “the young people in Bonn,” but the official leaders of the new armed forces. Heusinger became the first chief of staff of the armed forces, Speidel a department head in the defence ministry who would soon acquire a leading post at NATO. Within the military public sphere, their high rank now bestowed upon them a kind of prestige which their relative youth had initially denied them. It was increasingly their favour that was sought, rather than that of Halder, Guderian, or Manstein. Informal networks began to decline in significance as old elites became integrated into the armed forces and reorganised some of the old power structures. These informal networks were, as we have seen, often concerned with covering up their own mistakes and inadequacies, trying to preserve what status and privileges they had left. But in spite of their lack of effectiveness, they were able to, as we will see, entrench a particular kind of conservative understanding of military identity and military service. This was in part a result of their custodianship of not just knowledge but, more concretely, documents and files to which civilian historians often lacked access and which they could only acquire due to favours from the old military elite. This remained the case after the establishment of the IfZ and MGFA, and the latter in particular can in its early days best be understood as a structure which was to safeguard exactly these kind of civilian dependencies upon old military elites.

With rearmament complete, the institutions of the military public sphere shifted towards focusing on other security issues, most notably the conduct of a future war with the Soviet Union which many officers expected in short order, as Chapter 2 will show. In this context, the potential use of nuclear weapons became a significant issue which provoked sustained conflict, as new battle lines were drawn right across the military public sphere. But beyond

the challenges which emerged in the wake of the nuclearisation of defence and security policy, it became increasingly difficult, once resources supplied by West German and American intelligence dried up, to continue to organise and mobilise older military elites, in particular as some increasingly felt excluded from the new armed forces and required careful management.

## **Chapter 2: Nuclear War and Fragmenting Elite Cohesion, 1956-1972**

This chapter focuses on the military public sphere's reaction to and engagement with two simultaneous and intertwined processes: the geopolitical realignment of the FRG, which was substantially complete by the late 1950s, and the emergence of questions relating to the nature and potential uses of nuclear weapons. Some within the military public sphere had advocated for a policy of neutrality in the emerging Cold War context in a hope to secure German reunification. And while those questions were settled in favour of the permanent integration into Western political and security architectures, the rise of nuclear warfare created a new rift which ran right through the military public sphere and which led to substantial disagreements which it was difficult to navigate. The analysis of the capabilities offered by nuclear weapons originated in a lack of detailed knowledge, which in the early 1950s was not readily available to the former military elite. To them, West Germany's physical location at the centre of a European conflict which might turn nuclear meant that engagement with the question of the potential deployment of nuclear weapons was a matter of urgency. But ill-informed assessments originating in a lack of knowledge about nuclear weapons were difficult to contain and resulted in the (re-)emergence of deep divisions as the military public sphere struggled to adjust to both the reality of the new armed forces and the new strategic implications of West Germany's geopolitical position.

The first section charts the way conflicts around the nuclearization of strategic thought in this period shaped the structures of the military public sphere and opened up new divides between various groups. The most important case was that of Bogislaw von Bonin, whose career was rather abruptly ended due to his political advocacy on behalf of West German neutrality in support of German reunification. The second section is dedicated to the inner workings of the military public sphere from the point of view of a rather marginal member, the publicist and

educator Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm. Schramm pursued the aims of the former military elite as a whole, and although he viewed this as his personal route to success, he remained a marginal figure, in part because he was manipulated by those with more influence within the military public sphere for their own ends. The final section traces the emergence of the first major new association inside the military public sphere since the late 1940s, the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, aimed at providing a forum in which old and new general staff officers could interact and socialise. But the foundation of the new society was not without its problems, in particular there was a fear among officers that it might endanger the united front they had maintained for so long. It was unclear what the new society might have to offer, and thus it struggled to recruit members.

In late June 1955, NATO forces from Canada, Denmark, Greece, France, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States carried out an exercise entitled *Carte Blanche*. An air maneuver, the exercise took place over the Low Countries, northeastern France, and the Federal Republic. Its aim was to explore aerial defence, using tactical nuclear weapons, against an attack by Soviet Forces across Northern West Germany. The United States had recently adopted the *New Look* strategy, focusing on massive retaliation and strategic nuclear capability delivered by air forces, and the primary strategic fear of the former military elite was that a massive Soviet armoured invasion would lead to the fall of West Germany.<sup>289</sup> Even within the American ground forces, there were concerns that a Soviet invasion would drastically reduce the capacity for a nuclear counterstrike. In West German strategic thought, too, there was a persistent idea of not only a Soviet armoured invasion, but the implacability of Soviet forces, even in the face of nuclear attack, which echoed the kinds of racial

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<sup>289</sup> The strategy was essentially a 'new look' at American defence expenditure. As such, nuclear retaliation took centre stage Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany during the Adenauer Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-1961* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996).

stereotypes deployed in Nazi propaganda during the Second World War. The imaginary of the military public sphere, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was fundamentally shaped by these older, racist ideas which came to inform their strategic thinking.<sup>290</sup> One high-ranking West German military officer told Catherine McArdle Kelleher in 1965 during an interview:

“They - the Americans - had no idea what a Russian tank assault was really like. It wouldn’t make any difference if you dropped atomic bombs behind them. If they were primed, they would roll to the Rhine and then to the Atlantic.”<sup>291</sup>

What was needed, in this view, were West German divisions, equipped not just with tactical nuclear capability, but with strong conventional weapons which could defend against, if not deter, a Soviet armoured assault on Northern Europe. A policy of “nuclearisation” was a result of a negotiation between the perceived threat of the Soviet Union, especially a view of its apparent conventional superiority and the willingness of NATO members to spend on defence.<sup>292</sup>

Reporting of utterly devastating casualty figures immediately followed the exercise’s conclusion. In the course of the exercise, 335 nuclear warheads were deployed in total, with 268 hitting over 100 targets across West Germany. Civilian fatalities exceeded 1.7 million, and civilian casualties exceeded 3.5 million, not including those who were yet to perish from

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<sup>290</sup> Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 296–355; Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 18–29; Christina Morina, *Legacies of Stalingrad: Remembering the Eastern Front in Germany since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 131–74.

<sup>291</sup> Catherine McArdle Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 77.

<sup>292</sup> Bruno Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung. Planung und Aufbau der Bundeswehr unter den Bedingungen einer massiven atomaren Vergeltungsstrategie 1952-1960* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 39–63.

nuclear fallout.<sup>293</sup> These figures led Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin, one of the most well-known soldiers advocating for West German neutrality,<sup>294</sup> to conclude that NATO offered no security at all, but rather that joining the alliance came with great risk to the integrity of the new West German state.<sup>295</sup> Adenauer and Heusinger, however, both believed that German rearmament would reduce NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons. In spring 1955, Adenauer argued that if Germany did not join NATO, it would become the European battlefield on which the war between the US and the USSR would be fought.<sup>296</sup> Following Carte Blanche, in July 1955, Heusinger declared that only strong conventional German forces as part of an alliance could help deter a Soviet attack and thus prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons,<sup>297</sup> although as Gerhard Groß has argued, the nuclearisation of NATO operational thinking in this period shifted the ground under Heusinger's feet.<sup>298</sup> The civilian public was shocked by the result of Carte Blanche,<sup>299</sup> given that support for rearmament had in part been premised on Adenauer's promise that by joining NATO, Germany would avoid becoming the battlefield in a future superpower conflict.<sup>300</sup>

The reaction in the military public sphere to Carte Blanche was largely cool, for what else did it reveal but the destructive power of new armaments. Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Embry,

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<sup>293</sup> Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 34–36; Georg Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger. Dienst eines deutschen Soldaten, 1915-1964* (Berlin: Mittler, 2001), 495; Simon J. Moody, *Imagining Nuclear War in the British Army, 1945-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 155–56.

<sup>294</sup> Adelbert Weinstein, 'Atomkrieg oder Bonin-Plan? Irgendeine Form der Neutralität', *Deutsche Volks-Zeitung*, 30 July 1955; Heinz Brill, *Bogislaw von Bonin im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wiederbewaffnung - Westintegration - Wiedervereinigung* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1987), 175–286; Groß, *Myth and Reality*, 269–70.

<sup>295</sup> Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 82; an approach which was inspired by Swiss strategic thought and planning, Bruno Thoß, 'Geostrategie und Neutralität. Die deutsch-schweizerischen Sicherheitsbeziehungen im Spannungsfeld von Neutralitätswahrung und NATO-Verteidigung', in *Die Schweiz und Deutschland 1945-1961*, ed. Antoine Fleury, Horst Möller, and Hans-Peter Schwarz (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2004), 181–98.

<sup>296</sup> Dieter H. Kollmer, *Rüstungsgüterbeschaffung in der Aufbauphase der Bundeswehr: der Schützenpanzer HS 30 als Fallbeispiel (1953-1961)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 122.

<sup>297</sup> Meyer, *Heusinger*, 496.

<sup>298</sup> Groß, *Myth and Reality*, 275–90.

<sup>299</sup> Though this shock resonated within the military public sphere, Adelbert Weinstein, 'Operation Carte Blanche, ein Alarmzeichen?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 June 1955.

<sup>300</sup> Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung*, 2–7.

who had commanded the exercise, meanwhile declared that it showed that a war might be decided within hours. Ideas of a decisive battle, towards which one might try and maneuver, he called, “outdated like a bow and arrow.”<sup>301</sup> Carte Blanche had coincided with the first examination of NATO documents and plans by the West German military and political leadership, which had hitherto only been accessible via indirect channels and perhaps Speidel’s French contacts at NATO.<sup>302</sup> The view taken among defence ministry officials, most of them former general staff officers, reflected their belief that the Americans lacked combat experience and had an unfounded predilection for airpower. In their view, the Third World War would commence with a massive Soviet armoured assault across the North German plain. Nuclear weapons would be secondary in such a conflict, primarily employed as strategic weapons of retaliation against Soviet population centres, not unlike strategic bombing during the Second World War, while tactical nuclear weapons might be used as area denial weapons.<sup>303</sup> But beyond such technical-military concerns, both West German military planners and defence intellectuals sought to comprehend the political challenges arising from the potential employment of nuclear weapons on the battlefield which the FRG might become in a future war.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> ‘Überholt wie Pfeil und Bogen’.

<sup>302</sup> Groß, *Myth and Reality*, 276.

<sup>303</sup> Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 36–41.

<sup>304</sup> It is worth emphasising that this chapter is not dedicated to NATO or Warsaw Pact strategy. On those subjects, Dieter Krüger, Volker Bausch, and D. R. Dorondo, eds., *Fulda Gap: Battlefield of the Cold War Alliances* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017); Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Krüger, eds., *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 2012); Heiner Bröckermann, ed., *Landesverteidigung und Militarisierung. Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der DDR in der Ära Honecker 1971–1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2011); Thorsten Diedrich and Walter Süß, eds., *Militär und Staatsicherheit im Sicherheitskonzept der Warschauer-Pakt-Staaten* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010); Oliver Bange and Bernd Lemke, eds., *Wege zur Wiedervereinigung, Die beiden deutschen Staaten in ihren Bündnissen 1970 bis 1990* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

That the military reconstruction of the FRG was fundamentally tied up with the history of American foreign policy was already evident in the previous chapter.<sup>305</sup> But this relationship acquired a new dimension in the wake of the nuclearisation of operational thinking, and it was clear that while the United States' aim was to create a strong strategic partner, there was no desire to see West Germany gain access to an independent nuclear capability. Should that have been the case, the evidence suggests the United States would have withdrawn support for West German rearmament.<sup>306</sup> The British government equally viewed the possibility of an independent West German nuclear capability as undesirable.<sup>307</sup> The French government, in the context of the failed ratification of the EDC treaty, had little sway, and while certain sections of the French military elite were sympathetic to West Germany's rearmament effort in principle, a nuclear armed West Germany was equally not a possibility either military or civilian elites, or indeed the French public, would entertain.<sup>308</sup> The Soviet Union opposed West German nuclear capability, though it was not in a strategic position to prevent it,

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<sup>305</sup> Recently Nicolas Guilhot and Daniel Bessner, eds., *The Decisionist Imagination: Sovereignty, Social Science and Democracy in the 20th Century* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2019); Detlef Junker, ed., *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Klaus A. Maier, 'The Federal Republic of Germany as a "Battlefield" in American Nuclear Strategy, 1953-1955', in *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955*, ed. Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, Axel Frohn, and Hermann-Josef Rupieper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 395-409; Thomas W. Jr Maulucci and Detlef Junker, *GIs in Germany: The Social, Economic, Cultural, and Political History of the American Military Presence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Reiner Pommerin, *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1995); Hubert Zimmermann, *Money and Security: Troops, Monetary Policy, and West Germany's Relation with the United States and Britain, 1950-1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>306</sup> Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, xx.

<sup>307</sup> See, for instance, Christoph Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Robert Evans, 'The British Army of the Rhine and Defense Plans for Germany, 1945-1955', in *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968*, ed. Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Krüger (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 203-15; *ibid.*; Dierk Walter, *Zwischen Dschungelkrieg und Atombombe. Britische Visionen vom Krieg der Zukunft 1945-1971* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

<sup>308</sup> Pierre Guillen, 'Die französische Generalität, die Aufrüstung der Bundesrepublik und die EVG, 1950-1954', in *Die Europäische Verteidigungsgemeinschaft. Stand und Probleme der Forschung*, ed. Hans-Erich Volkmann and Walter Schwengler (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1985), 125-57; Isabelle Miclot, 'Französische Kriegstheoretiker und die Entwicklung strategischer Konzepte für einen Atomkrieg 1945-1960', in *Den Kalten Krieg denken: Beiträge zur sozialen Ideengeschichte*, ed. Patrick Bernhard and Holger Nehring (Essen: Klartext, 2014), 161-83; Raymond Poidevin, 'Frankreich und das Problem der EVG. Nationale und internationale Einflüsse', in *Die Europäische Verteidigungsgemeinschaft. Stand und Probleme der Forschung*, ed. Hans-Erich Volkmann and Walter Schwengler (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1985), 101-24; Sarmant Thierry, 'La guerre qui n'a pas eu lieu: vision stratégique et plans d'opérations français dans l'hypothèse d'une invasion soviétique, 1945-1969', *Revue Historique des Armées* 227 (2002): 111-29.

barring pre-emptive military incursion. The Soviets were concerned the combination of American and British occupied zones could prove to be an early stage in the creation of a strong new German state, intent on reclaiming its eastern territories, supported by global monopoly capitalism.<sup>309</sup>

### Neutrality, Nuclearisation, and the Military Public Sphere

Any consideration of West German engagement with nuclear weapons must begin from an understanding that knowledge about such weapons, among West German political and military elites was, for a long time, severely limited. Initially, the West German government and its nascent military organisations also had no department which would have been capable of analysing American plans for the use of nuclear weapons. While NATO officially made clear a reliance on nuclear weapons in the conduct of future warfare, in West Germany, only the air force shared this position. The army and navy, although they, too, would be equipped with weapons systems capable of delivering American nuclear weapons, were more inclined to rely on their experiences gathered during the Second World War, which, they believed, could be adapted to any future conflict.<sup>310</sup> It was not until the end of July 1955, some weeks after *Carte Blanche* took place, that West German planners were finally allowed insight into

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<sup>309</sup> To a degree, this reflected doubt in the Soviets' own historical teleology, according to which the demise of capitalism was imminent and perhaps inevitable, Lawrence S. Kaplan, 'Strategic Problems and the Central Sector, 1948-1968: An Overview', in *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968*, ed. Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Krüger (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 6.

<sup>310</sup> Johannes Steinhoff and Reiner Pommerin, *Strategiewechsel. Bundesrepublik und Nuklearstrategie in der Ära Adenauer-Kennedy* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992), 9–25; Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung*, 9–38; for an assessment of the legacy of the Eastern Front in framing such thinking, including a sketch of the kind of men who entered the army in the early 1930s, Helmut R. Hammerich, 'Ostfronterfahrungen und Landesverteidigung im Kalten Krieg: Oberst Gerd Ruge und Oberst Josef Rettemeier', in *Militärische Aufbaugenerationen der Bundeswehr 1955-1970. Ausgewählte Biographien*, ed. Helmut R. Hammerich and Rudolf J. Schlaffer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 237–63; it is difficult to overstate the importance of the Eastern Front in framing the attitudes of West German soldiers in this period: 'German analysts, perhaps remembering their own ideologized commitment to the Russian Front, frequently criticized American soldiers in Korea as unmotivated, with no idea why they were there.' Hans-Jürgen Rautenberg, 'Zur Standortbestimmung für künftige deutsche Streitkräfte', in *Von der Kapitulation bis zum Plevan-Plan.*, ed. Roland G. Foerster et al., *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956*, 4 vols (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1982), 80.

NATO planning documents, as they took up their positions on the integrated NATO staffs,<sup>311</sup> which detailed how powerful these weapons really were, and, crucially for them, how they were supposed to be integrated into NATO strategy. In spite of NATO planning for a more flexible defensive, it remained clear to West German political and military leaders that defence had to be conducted in the East. Kurt Schumacher, leader of the SPD, for instance, argued that, following the outbreak of hostilities, a defensive line ought to be taken up on the Vistula. Once, this river had divided the province of West Prussia, running West from Warsaw, and then North from Thorn to Danzig. Now, it lay in Poland, running from Warsaw on to Toruń and Gdańsk.<sup>312</sup> But in spite of hopes by Adenauer, Heusinger, Schumacher, and others, NATO operational and strategic planning was understood to be the privilege of that organization itself. At Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) the planners were mainly American, although Speidel would rise to become Commander-in-Chief of Allied Land Forces Central (COMLANDCENT) in 1957.<sup>313</sup> Speidel and Heusinger, both, then realised in the middle of the 1950s how central nuclear weapons were to NATO planning in terms of the defence of Western Europe, where the two of them had maintained that a conventional defence, which relied strongly on West German divisions, was desirable.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Florian Reichenberger, *Der gedachte Krieg. Vom Wandel der Kriegsbilder in der Bundeswehr* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018), 179.

<sup>312</sup> Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung*, 18.

<sup>313</sup> Reiner Pommerin, 'Von der "Massive Retaliation" zur "Flexible Response". Zum Strategiewechsel der sechziger Jahre', in *Vom Kalten Krieg zur deutschen Einheit. Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1945-1995*, ed. Bruno Thoß (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1995), 527.

<sup>314</sup> Steinhoff and Pommerin, *Strategiewechsel*, 25–56; Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung*, 91–173, 199–245; Bruno Thoß, 'Aims and Realities: NATO'S Forward Defense and the Operational Planning Level at NORTHAG', in *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968*, ed. Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Krüger (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 23; In 1948, Heusinger had himself prepared a study for the US European Command, in which he had sketched the Cold War battlefield as spanning the area from the North Sea to the Alps, in other words, the entire length of the FRG. A defensive position would be taken up between Schleswig-Holstein and the Hessian mountains. There, the superior Soviet forces would be stopped by a threat to their flanks. A final defensive line was to be established on the Rhine. Meyer, *Heusinger*, 359–70.

That the West German military public sphere needed to be kept on side was clear, and as West Germany was nearing official rearmament, a delegation from the GfW led by Vice-Admiral Friedrich Ruge went to visit SHAPE at Fontainebleau in October 1955. Ruge had been Rommel's navy liaison and had in 1943, in the course of preparations for the defence of Normandy, served alongside Speidel, who was then Rommel's chief of staff. Their headquarters had been in Fontainebleau, in the very chateau in which SHAPE was now based.<sup>315</sup> They were welcomed by General Lord Ismay, the first Secretary General of NATO, signalling the importance of the visit, and Ismay emphasised the Soviet threat, while at the same time noting that the expertise of the GfW's members would be critical in this difficult period in NATO's short history.<sup>316</sup> The next day, the delegation was entertained by General Cortlandt Schuyler, chief of staff at SHAPE, before their trip ended with a cocktail reception, which included Colonel Johann Adolf Graf von Kielmansegg, who was then "the highest-ranking German officer" at SHAPE, although the new armed forces had not yet officially been constituted.<sup>317</sup> Privately, Ruge was less than impressed with what he had actually learned at NATO, which suggests the symbolism of the trip was far more important than the substance.<sup>318</sup> That members of the former military elite had been explicitly invited to Fontainebleau, and there were so entertained and indulged suggests that their liminal position remained in place. On the one hand they were to be the leadership cadre of the armed forces of NATO's newest member state. On the other, they needed to be convinced NATO was a workable alliance, one which would bring genuine security benefits to the Federal Republic, so that they might write and speak favourably of it, and so that politicians and the public might listen to them and endorse membership.

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<sup>315</sup> Ruge became the first chief of staff of the West German navy the following year.

<sup>316</sup> Friedrich Ruge, 'Besuch der GfW bei NATO und SHAPE' (October 1955), 1, N 379/141, BArch-MA.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>318</sup> Friedrich Ruge, 'Stichworte 12.10.1955' (12 October 1955), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

Early and privileged access to NATO was in part regarded as a reward to the GfW for services rendered to the Amt Blank. The association regularly altered its publication schedules in order to curb press attention or speculation on a given topic, which suggests a high degree of informal coordination, made possible by adherence to the old hierarchical structures as shown in the first chapter. And even when these articles were ultimately published,<sup>319</sup> as in the case of speculation regarding the structure of the leadership of the new armed forces, the GfW leadership demanded strong self-censorship.<sup>320</sup> But this behaviour, too, was rewarded, with regular tasks set for the association by various ministries,<sup>321</sup> including the chancellery itself, demanding research, for instance, into the configuration of the German arms industry before the First World War, in order to ascertain to what extent a free market approach to armaments production would be adequate for the equipment of armed forces going forward.<sup>322</sup> Once a task was set, the networks swung into action. The task was duly communicated to the wider association and the various regional branches,<sup>323</sup> and members were mobilised with an awareness that it was necessary to demonstrate that the GfW was “not just a narrow-minded commission, but aware how closely armed forces, economy, and technology are connected.”<sup>324</sup> Such tasks could serve to mobilise the old officer corps in service of the new state, but they could also serve to educate them, as in the case of another set of research questions revolving around the functioning of armed forces in a representative democracy.<sup>325</sup> This suggests that the Amt Blank and the civilian state

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<sup>319</sup> The only person who dared speak up was Ruge, who presumably felt able to do so due to his high rank and his personal connection to both Speidel and Heusinger, ‘Ruge to Hellermann’ (28 October 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

<sup>320</sup> ‘Hellermann to Speidel, Ruge, Nostitz’ (9 November 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA; the GfW even restructured its publications according to the wished of the Amt Blank, ‘Niederschrift. Vorstandssitzung der GfW’ (23 June 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

<sup>321</sup> ‘Reinhardt to Heusinger’ (25 January 1955), BW 9/768, BArch-MA.

<sup>322</sup> ‘Rentrop to Hellermann’ (6 December 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

<sup>323</sup> Hans-Georg Reinhardt, ‘Rundschreiben 13/54’ (15 December 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

<sup>324</sup> ‘Hellermann to Ruge’ (16 December 1954), N 379/141, BArch-MA; in order to assess such matters, Heusinger made available internal materials to the GfW, ‘Heusinger to Laegeler’ (30 October 1954), BW 9/767, BArch-MA.

<sup>325</sup> GfW Sektion Tübingen, ‘An unsere Mitglieder’ (20 December 1954), 1, N 379/141, BArch-MA.

administration in general were unsure how to engage the former officer corps. On the one hand, they needed to prevent them from troubling the nascent democracy. On the other, they wished to use them and to draw on their knowledge to solve some of the problems the new state was encountering. This process, too, helped moderate the former officer corps. It drew them in and helped to integrate them into emerging democratic structures, rather than leaving them to languish on the side lines where they might radicalise.<sup>326</sup>

To that effect, the Amt Blank polled the members of the GfW. About 70% of officers between the ages of 33 and 42 endorsed what officials called a “reformist line”. By this, they meant a set of questions which revolved around reforms aimed at better integration between armed forces and civilian society, including whether soldiers ought to be allowed to vote. But this support varied across age groups, with only around 60% of those between 43 and 68 supporting such a line. Most significant appears the fact that over two thirds of officers in all age groups said they would make their participation in the new armed forces dependent upon the question of how the “so-called ‘war criminals’” would be dealt with.<sup>327</sup> This suggests that opposition to the imprisonment of Wehrmacht generals for war crimes did not imply support for a straightforward military restoration. There rather appears to have existed an awareness that a reform of civil-military relations was needed but this was linked to a conviction that the relationship between military and civilian institutions could only be repaired if the “defamation” ended. It was in all likelihood a fear of what soldiers who felt abandoned and unable to integrate into civilian society due to a lack of qualifications might be capable of which spurred the reform of military education in the 1970s, which resulted in almost all

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<sup>326</sup> In 1954, the Bundespresseamt (BPA) financed the GfW and the AfW to the tune of 5,000 DM a month each with an additional 2,000 DM available as discretionary funds, dispensed only with permission of the BPA. See the contract in, ‘Marcks to Dienststelle Blank’ (2 April 1954), BW 9/768, BArch-MA.

<sup>327</sup> ‘Fragebogen’ (n.d.), BW 9/768, BArch-MA.

officers earning a university degree which they might use to help them in their post-military professions.<sup>328</sup>

The establishment of the new armed forces did not repair the relationship between the military public sphere and civilian institutions, nor did it do much to help clarify the relationship between the military public sphere and the new military structures. The GfW, for instance, shifted emphasis. Its leadership expected membership numbers to dwindle as soldiers returned to the ranks, which suggests that the GfW viewed itself as a way of keeping former military elites occupied until they could once again wear uniform. Once that had occurred, they expected to recruit new members, primarily reserve officers, and to set them tasks which would work in support of the new armed forces.<sup>329</sup> This relationship was not entirely symbiotic, not least because anxieties around social status sketched in the previous chapter lingered. Even when the GfW officially endorsed joining the new armed forces, opposition formed within the association, though largely by soldiers who believed they were being tricked by a political leadership they could not rely on, who had engaged in defamation themselves, and who had saddled the new army with what they called “foreign policy mortgages,” such as the Saar Question.<sup>330</sup> And while it is possible that such criticism was genuine, it is also possible that it was used by the GfW leadership in order to push for more concessions to the new armed forces on account of the suggestion that if more were not done, too few soldiers would return to the ranks, thus not only weakening the armed forces now, but discouraging future generations from serving.

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<sup>328</sup> Lukas Mengelkamp and Jan Hansen, ‘Soldaten gegen die Nachrüstung. Militär und Gesellschaft in den 1980er Jahren’, Forthcoming.

<sup>329</sup> ‘Niederschrift. Vorstandssitzung der GfW’.

<sup>330</sup> ‘Argumente gegen den Eintritt in die Streitkräfte’ (28 February 1955), N 379/141, BArch-MA.

Although the FRG was, as mentioned earlier, unable to process allied nuclear planning, let alone draw up any plans of its own for the use of nuclear weapons, which at any rate it did not possess, the perception of the possibility of West German nuclear capability prompted a crisis in civil society. Exercises such as *Carte Blanche* appeared to reveal that the state was fundamentally unable to protect its citizens in the event of war, especially nuclear war. The reliance on nuclear weapons, and alliances dominated by the United States, also became points of critique. Such developments became all the more acute given the palpable sense of danger and a turn towards grassroots democracy, both of which resulted in lower trust in institutions.<sup>331</sup> One early manifestation of such activism was the group *Kampf dem Atomtod*, which arose as a result of the *Göttinger Appell*, signed by a number of leading physicists, including some of those who had worked on the failed effort to develop the atomic bomb for the Wehrmacht. Holger Nehring has analysed debates surrounding this campaign as a negotiation between liberalism and those demanding more radical political solutions, at a moment where what liberals deemed acceptable, perhaps, given the context, even desirable, the bomb came to threaten the legitimacy of the new state itself. Some of those engaging in protest against the acquisition of the bomb, Nehring argued, viewed their campaigning as the final realisation of what had been missed in 1945, *Stunde Null*, namely a fresh start for the new state.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 116–43; Markus Gunkel, *Der Kampf gegen die Remilitarisierung. Friedensbewegung in Hamburg, 1950-1955* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009); Robert G. Moeller, 'Kämpfen für den Frieden. 08/15 und westdeutsche Erinnerungen an den Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 64, no. 2 (2005): 359–89; Klaus Naumann, 'Nachrüstung und Selbstanerkennung. Staatsfragen im politisch-intellektuellen Milieu der "Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik"', in *Streit um den Staat. Intellektuelle Debatten in der Bundesrepublik, 1960-1980*, ed. Dominik Geppert and Jens Hacke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 269–89; Holger Nehring, 'Die nachgeholte Stunde Null. Intellektuelle Debatten um die Atombewaffnung der Bundeswehr, 1958-1960', in *Streit um den Staat. Intellektuelle Debatten in der Bundesrepublik, 1960-1980*, ed. Dominik Geppert and Jens Hacke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 229–50; Holger Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Thoß, *NATO-Strategie und nationale Verteidigungsplanung*, 331–70.

<sup>332</sup> On the Göttinger Appell, see Ilona Stölken-Fitschen, *Atombombe und Geistesgeschichte: Eine Studie der fünfziger Jahre aus deutscher Sicht* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), 205–36; Nehring, 'Die nachgeholte Stunde Null'; More generally, see Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg, ed., '*Kampf dem Atomtod!*' *Die Protestbewegung 1957/58 in zeithistorischer und gegenwärtiger Perspektive* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz,

Though Nehring might be right to some extent, there is more at work in such campaigns than a hope at second chances, as Benjamin Ziemann argued. Angst, especially nuclear angst, had been an important motif in West German debates about a variety of security related issues, including rearmament in the 1950s.<sup>333</sup> The 1950s and the 1980s in particular were the decades during which such anxiety was most immediate, given the security context. During the 1980s, when anxieties around the deployment of cruise missiles reached their height, the 1950s' discussions had largely been forgotten and were not drawn upon for comparison. As we will see in Chapter 4 below, the 1980s were also marked by a much stronger military opposition, which only became possible given structural changes in the military public sphere. Ziemann argued that 1950s debates around a post-nuclear future in the FRG “were based on the fundamental insight that nuclear death was man-made, and not simply a teleological continuation or even fulfilment of history.”<sup>334</sup> But this, as is clear in the wake of *Carte Blanche*, was not an approach that resonated much within the military public sphere. There, such rather abstract sentiments faded away, at least in public, in favour of a more cool-headed analysis, although millenarian arguments did serve as foils against which writers in the military public sphere would lay out their apparently more rational analysis. A crucial point for civilian publics in particular, however, was that the perception of Germany as a potential battlefield was closely linked to memories of the bombing war. Allied nuclear

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2009); Especially, Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 72–115; Axel Schildt, ‘Atomzeitalter. Gründe und Hintergründe der Proteste gegen die atomare Bewaffnung der Bundeswehr Ende der fünfziger Jahre’, in *Kampf dem Atomtod! Die Protestbewegung 1957/58 in zeithistorischer und gegenwärtiger Perspektive*, ed. Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2009), 39–56; Michael Geyer, ‘Cold War Angst: The Case of West German Opposition to Rearmament and Nuclear Weapons’, in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 376–408; Benjamin Ziemann, ‘The Code of Protest: Images of Peace in the West German Peace Movements, 1945-1990’, *Central European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 237–61; Benjamin Ziemann, ‘German Angst? Debating Cold War Anxieties in West Germany, 1945-1990’, in *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought and Nuclear Conflict, 1945-1990*, ed. Matthew Grant and Benjamin Ziemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 123–26.

<sup>333</sup> On angst as a feature of the Cold War more generally, see Bernd Greiner, Christian Th. Müller, and Dierk Walter, eds., *Angst im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009); on fear in the history of emotions, Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2005), 193–290 for fear of military might.

<sup>334</sup> Ziemann, ‘German Angst?’, 117.

bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the other hand, did not play a role in West German perceptions. It is possible that the link to memories of the bombing war was a result of the lasting impacts of National Socialist propaganda,<sup>335</sup> which had vastly overstated the number of victims of the bombing of Dresden.<sup>336</sup>

In his appraisal of Allied plans to defend Western Europe, Christian Greiner argued that the early 1950s were a period of revolutionary change in terms of military strategy in the face of an opponent, the Soviet Union, conceived of as aggressive and possessing conventional superiority. This perception, Greiner argued, played a decisive role in the conception of nuclear and conventional deterrence. This was accompanied by the conception of alliances already integrated both in political and military terms, though to varying degrees, in peacetime, rather than ad-hoc wartime military alliances. As far as American politicians were concerned, Europeans had to bear a significant part of the cost of their own defence, leading to considerations of efforts at military and political integration to facilitate this. American planners would abandon Western Europe, should nuclear deterrence fail, and rather aim at the destruction of the USSR, and only then focus on reconquering the continent. European states, especially France and to some extent Great Britain, could not accept this and therefore planned to emphasise conventional deterrence, reflected in larger US contingents on the continent, alongside nuclear capability. In this view

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 117–19; on the bombing war's legacy, Jörg Arnold, *The Allied Air War and Urban Memory: The Legacy of Strategic Bombing in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Horst Boog, Detlef Vogel, and Gerhard Krebs, *Das deutsche Reich in der Defensive. Strategischer Lufkrieg in Europa, Krieg im Westen und in Ostasien 1943-1944/45* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2001); David F. Crew, *Bodies and Ruins: Imagining the Bombing of Germany, 1945 to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017); Lothar Kettenacker, ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern?: Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940-45*. (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003); on the idea of German victimhood during the Second World War see Christian Hartmann, 'Helden, Opfer, Täter? Eine Annäherung an die Soldaten der deutschen 6. Armee', *Militärgeschichte* 1, no. 2014 (2014): 4–9; Robert G. Moeller, 'Deutsche Opfer, Opfer der Deutschen. Kriegsgefangene, Vertriebene, NS-Verfolgte: Opferausgleich als Identitätspolitik', in *Nachkrieg in Deutschland*, ed. Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 29–58; Robert G. Moeller, 'Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of the Second World War's Legacies', *History & Memory* 17, no. 1–2 (2005): 147–94; Bill Niven, *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>336</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-45* (London: Bodley Head, 2015), 371–72.

NATO emerged as a compromise between different concepts of European defence. Though initially it was closer to the American view, the development of Soviet nuclear capability and the outbreak of the Korean War are said to have helped shift American perceptions.<sup>337</sup> In other words, NATO was always marked by strategic compromise. Europeans needed to defend their homelands, while American defence of Europe initially largely focused on strategic air war. Either case meant that West German territory might be devastated twice over: once by a defensive battle against Soviet forces, a second time by a conventional NATO offensive to retake it.<sup>338</sup> A resolution to this problem became all the more necessary, not least because after 1954, with the 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Army, tactical nuclear weapons were stationed on West German soil.

It is on this basis that a number of approaches were developed by West German military thinkers. Although not all of them were based on a realistic assessment of American strategy or nuclear capability, they provide insight into the idea of the next war, the *Kriegsbild*, which was prevalent in the FRG at the time. The distance between this West German idea of the next war and American and NATO strategy was perhaps best summarised by an anonymous interview partner of Speier's, who, when asked what they considered the best response should the Soviet Union, following a previous nuclear exchange, threaten Western Europe with annihilation, responded with "sarcasm at the hysterical American preoccupation with atomic war".<sup>339</sup> West German military thinkers at this moment believed that nuclear war would not define future conflict. Therefore, American industrial potential was viewed as a major reason the United States would win a Third World War, just as it had the Second. Such ideas were based on the assumption that

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<sup>337</sup> Christian Greiner, 'Die alliierten militärstrategischen Planungen zur Verteidigung Westeuropas, 1947-1950', in *Von der Kapitulation bis zum Plevan-Plan.*, ed. Roland G. Foerster et al., Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956, 4 vols (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1982), 119–323.

<sup>338</sup> Pommerin, 'Von der "massive retaliation" zur "flexible response"', 527–40 Pommerin, however, gets some details wrong. It was the 7th U.S. Army, not the 7th Division.

<sup>339</sup> Speier, *German Rearmament and Atomic War*, 108, 111–31; on Speier's reception in the circles here discussed, see Joachim Ruoff, 'Hans Speier. Soviet Atomic Blackmail and the North Atlantic Alliance', *Wehrkunde* 6, no. 7 (1957): 398–99; Joachim Ruoff, 'Hans Speier. German Rearmament and Atomic War', *Wehrkunde* 7, no. 3 (1958): 171–72.

Soviet military strategy had not changed since 1945, even though political strategy had done just that in the wake of Stalin's death. The Cold War, West German military thinkers viewed as only the most recent manifestation of an enduring East-West conflict, having decidedly shifted in favour of the East across the 20th century.

Control even of the nascent armed forces over the military public sphere was partial at best, and some individuals did better than others in maneuvering the treacherous waters of the various networks. Association with the wrong people, as Colonel General Hans-Georg Reinhardt found out in the spring of 1955, could easily lead to difficulties. Reinhardt had been invited to a meeting with Bonin, General of the Infantry Theodor Busse, Heinrich Eberbach, Manstein, and two others.<sup>340</sup> Aim of this meeting, according to Bonin, was to advocate for a change of the strategic concept guiding rearmament. Instead of mobilizing 12 divisions which might take part in a mobile defence of Western Europe, Bonin and his allies advocated for a larger army which could hold the entirety of the 800km border between East and West Germany against an assault by the Red Army. This army was to be a defensive one, with strong albeit limited capacity to counterattack if need be. This, they believed, would also help secure reunification.<sup>341</sup> General of the Infantry Georg von Sodenstern, who had supplied the room for the meeting at the GfW offices in Munich, was worried even holding the meeting would signal disloyalty to the Amt Blank, even suggesting that Reinhardt had had no knowledge of the subject of the meeting, which was blatantly untrue, in order to shield him. But it appears Sodenstern himself was in the dark as to the dynamics now unfolding.<sup>342</sup> Busse had already gone on to Bonn and reported back to Reinhardt that he had found Heusinger

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<sup>340</sup> Busse was an intimate of Manstein's, having been his chief of staff for most of the war, 'Busse to Reinhardt' (14 February 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>341</sup> 'Bonin to Reinhardt' (19 February 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>342</sup> 'Sodenstern to Nostitz' (25 February 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

receptive to their critique of the ideas presented by Bonin.<sup>343</sup> Reinhardt, in following correspondence, shifted the blame onto Bonin, suggesting that the latter had been out of line when setting up the meeting which he, Reinhardt, had been so keen to attend.<sup>344</sup> Heusinger, in turn, agreed with Reinhardt that Bonin had violated his trust by setting up the meeting, and thus sharing his idea with others.<sup>345</sup> Ironically, Reinhardt meanwhile wrote to Manstein suggesting that they may now be inducted into the "council of the aged" Heusinger had said to Speier he might establish in order to formalise the influence of more senior former generals and minimise meddling.<sup>346</sup> It is possible, though impossible now to verify, that Reinhardt, Manstein, and the others were engaged in ploy which would either see them support Bonin's plan or to play Bonin off against Heusinger and the Amt Blank in order to cement their own influence. Whatever the case, this illustrates the difficult landscape of the military public sphere, in its symbiosis with military institutions still in flux. The covert networks and gossip described by Speier, then, continued to exist, occasionally bursting into the public sphere in a fashion which could cause great embarrassment and end careers.

Due to Bonin's continued public activism in support of plans which went against official defence policy, he was ultimately forced out of the Amt Blank in the spring of 1955. Bonin's dismissal came publicly to stand for a victory of the reformers around Baudissin, de Maizière and Kielmansegg.<sup>347</sup> A *Spiegel* article documenting these developments the *Spiegel* article prompted Reinhardt to write to Blank to make sure the latter knew he did not stand "one

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<sup>343</sup> 'Busse to Reinhardt' (26 February 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA; Reinhardt wrote to Heusinger that he hoped the latter knew that by sending Busse immediately to Bonn, they had intended to express their support for the Amt Blank, 'Reinhardt to Heusinger' (1 March 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>344</sup> 'Reinhardt to Heusinger, 1.3.1955, N 245/62'.

<sup>345</sup> 'Heusinger to Reinhardt' (11 March 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA; Reinhardt agreed that the 'Bonin Case' had deeply touched him but, realising that Heusinger really did feel deeply for Bonin, shifted blame upon the *Spiegel*, wondering where they could have got their information, 'Reinhardt to Heusinger' (1 April 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>346</sup> 'Reinhardt to Manstein' (15 March 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>347</sup> 'Was sag' ich meinem Sohn?', *Spiegel*, 30 March 1955.

hundred percent behind Bonin” as the article had claimed.<sup>348</sup> Reinhardt also issued a statement to the GfW to that effect,<sup>349</sup> though whether Reinhardt was entirely truthful is unclear. Bonin certainly believed Reinhardt had intended to support him, though Reinhardt noted that he had spoken to Bonin on the phone to correct his perception. In a later letter, Bonin accused Reinhardt of “falling over” when he realised that he had endorsed a controversial position.<sup>350</sup>

But Bonin’s was only the most prominent case in which anxieties around the nuclearisation of strategic thinking provoked anxiety and discord in the military public sphere. His was the most egregious case, in particular because of his position inside the nascent military institutions. But over the coming years others, particularly those now on the outside, expressed similar anxieties. One example of such early West German strategic thought on nuclear weapons, entitled *Kampfmoral im Atomkrieg*, was published in the GfW journal *Wehrkunde* in 1958 under a pseudonym. The author argued that nuclear weapons would have a serious impact on the morale of soldiers against those who viewed nuclear weapons primarily as area denial weapons, creating territory which soldiers could not cross. Rather, “the introduction of nuclear weapons brings into play an entirely new factor: complete destruction in a particular space”.<sup>351</sup> This, the argument went, had profound implications for the morale of troops employed in nuclear war. If the purpose of high morale was to instill in the soldier a feeling of superiority, “he [the soldier] knows that, maybe, his comrades will fall, the one to the left and the one to the right, but he is convinced that he himself will make it through.”<sup>352</sup> Nuclear weapons changed such a calculus. Where they were detonated, all life

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<sup>348</sup> ‘Reinhardt to Blank’ (31 March 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>349</sup> Hans-Georg Reinhardt, ‘Rundschreiben 8/55’ (12 April 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>350</sup> ‘Bonin to Reinhardt’ (9 April 1955), N 245/62, BArch-MA.

<sup>351</sup> Agricola, ‘Kampfmoral im Atomkrieg’, *Wehrkunde* 7, no. 9 (1958): 483.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.

was extinguished. Even in the case that soldiers still followed orders, they would surely cease to do so once regular armies were decimated and raw recruits or draftees brought to the front line. A further blow to morale would be dealt by nuclear war at home. In the case of strategic bombing, it was possible for the soldier's loved ones to survive, even for extended periods of time.<sup>353</sup> In the case of nuclear war, such hope would quickly seem futile. The logical conclusion was that divisions ceased to be divisions, armies ceased to be armies.<sup>354</sup> They could neither attack nor take up a defensive position, for fear that any concentration of troops would provoke a nuclear attack.<sup>355</sup> Could it, under these circumstances, really be expected that soldiers would maintain morale and discipline, even as they must know that doing so amounted to collective suicide.

This section has charted the engagement with the nuclearisation of strategic thought by the West German military public sphere. In his recent study on changes in the *Kriegsbild* of West German military elites, Florian Reichenberger argued that they became more and more enthralled with the idea of a general nuclear war, which they presumed would begin with a massive Soviet attack. Reichenberger rejected Axel Gablik's thesis that there was so great a focus on a general war that seeing the potential for limited war became an intellectual impossibility. In line with Reichenberger, I argue that developments inside military institutions were reflected in the

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<sup>353</sup> For a military assessment of the bombing war, Boog, Vogel, and Krebs, *Das deutsche Reich in der Defensive*; for an assessment of the impact of strategic bombing on the German imagination, Crew, *Bodies and Ruins*.

<sup>354</sup> For a contrary position, see Herbert Golz, 'Abwehr von Kleinkriegs-Unternehmen', *Wehrkunde* 5, no. 10 (1956): 496–501; a critical response in, Wolfgang Pickert, 'Kritik und Aussprache. Zu "Kampfmoral im Atomkrieg" von Agricola', *Wehrkunde* 7, no. 10 (1958): 571–72.

<sup>355</sup> One NATO exercise, Lion Noir, saw over 100 nuclear warheads strike West German targets, such as Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Cologne, Bremen, and Hamburg. The bulk of NATO forces, too, was destroyed. Following this bombardment, a strong Soviet armoured assault proceeded on a broad front. Much of West Germany would be occupied by these forces, before SHAPE agreed to launch 108 nuclear warheads against the attackers, preventing them from crossing the Rhine near Mainz and Wiesbaden. By use of these weapons, in addition to strategic nuclear weapons and strong American reinforcements, the Soviet attack could be blocked and West German territory be reconquered. The exercise left open the possibility of a subsequent NATO counteroffensive, see Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 25; Pommerin, 'Von der "massive retaliation" zur "flexible response"', 530–31; Reichenberger, *Der gedachte Krieg*, 200–201. Huge swathes of West German territory would be devastated and uninhabitable for decades, while millions would die and many more be made refugees.

military public sphere at large.<sup>356</sup> In part, this might simply be because conflicts in the military public sphere did not need to be resolved, no compromises needed to be made, as no policy needed to be formulated. Although a united front was preferred, it was not a strict necessity. It is clear from the case of Bonin that critique of official policy had to be carefully articulated and could, if it entered the public sphere or was deemed to violate the old structures of authority, end a career, even if it was well-intentioned.<sup>357</sup> Most members of the military public sphere were not entrusted with military strategy and tactics, they did not bear the ultimate responsibility for the planning and conduct of nuclear war. As a result, they could think more freely, unbounded by political and logistical constraints. At least a few also took seriously their role as intellectual buoys for the *Bundeswehr*. Archival evidence suggests that they viewed themselves as able to express ideas or opinions too controversial for serving officers.<sup>358</sup> As such, it is possible that a few of the ideas here outlined might have served not just to elicit internal debate, but to probe wider intellectual and public circles as to their receptiveness with regards to particular strategic options.

### The Military Public Sphere on the Margins

One of the more prolific writers engaged in the military public sphere was Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm (1898-1983). Born just before the turn of the century to a Bavarian middle-class family, Schramm fought at Verdun and on the Somme, before being transferred to the Eastern Front in late 1916. There, during the Battle of Jugla, which took place near Riga in

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<sup>356</sup> Reichenberger, *Der gedachte Krieg*, 198–223.

<sup>357</sup> Bonin was well-connected, too, serving as BND liaison under the pseudonym ‘Bolav’ and meeting with Gehlen and the notorious double agent, then still undiscovered, Heinz Felfe in 1956, Hechelhammer, *Spion ohne Grenzen. Heinz Felfe. Agent in sieben Geheimdiensten*.

<sup>358</sup> Hans-Georg Reinhardt, ‘Aufzeichnung über eine Besprechung mit dem Verteidigungsminister und dem Generalinspekteur über Kernfragen der GfW’ (n.d.), N 245/72, BArch-MA; Hans-Georg Reinhardt, ‘Grundlegende Ansprache’ (5 February 1955), N 245/58, BArch-MA; ‘Vorschlag für eine Neufassung der Satzungen. Vorläufig gültig bis zur Mitgliederversammlung 1968’ (n.d.), 2, BW 54/15, BArch-MA.

early September 1917,<sup>359</sup> he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Military Order of Max Joseph, being thus elevated to personal nobility, and gaining the title *Ritter von*. After the war, Schramm studied history, gaining his doctorate with a study of the German romantic writer Jean Paul from the University of Munich in 1922. In the inter-war period, Schramm became a journalist and in 1930 he contributed an essay to Ernst Jünger's *Krieg und Krieger*, in which he vowed to make sense of the apparently meaningless destruction of the last war.<sup>360</sup> Between late 1939 and late 1940, Schramm served as a censorship officer with the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> armies, before becoming a "war correspondent" for the OKH in Ukraine until late 1941. He then served as an editor for the publication *Unser Heer*, until being reassigned as a correspondent to Army Group South, then under the command of Manstein. From April to August 1944, he held the same position under the Commander-in-Chief West, first Field Marshal Günther von Kluge and later Rundstedt. In August 1944 he was assigned as personal assistant to Lieutenant General Kurt Dittmar, aiding in the preparation of the *Wehrmachtsbericht*,<sup>361</sup> ending the war as a Major.<sup>362</sup>

Schramm will serve as a somewhat extended case study here, because of his relatively marginal position. Most of the other characters we have hitherto encountered were, to a degree, prominent and powerful men. Schramm was not a high-ranking officer, nor was he a general staff officer.

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<sup>359</sup> On the Eastern Front in the First World War, see Prit Buttar, *Russia's Last Gasp: The Eastern Front 1916–17* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); David R. Stone, *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (University Press of Kansas, 2015).

<sup>360</sup> In an essay drafted after 1980, Schramm wrote, 'Years ago, in a private conversation, Ernst Jünger described Clausewitz as the classical rationalist.' Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Die Verteidigung ist stärker - Clausewitz und die Sicherheitspolitik der Bundesrepublik und der NATO' (n.d.), 1, N 633/17, BArch-MA. It seems Jünger did not have a particularly favourable opinion of Schramm, see below.

<sup>361</sup> On the *Wehrmachtsbericht*, 'Dreck im Hirn', *Spiegel*, 2 May 1962; On military propaganda officers, Daniel Uziel, 'Propaganda, Kriegsberichterstattung und die Wehrmacht. Stellenwert und Funktion der Propagandatruppen im NS-Staat', in *Die Kamera als Waffe. Propagandabilder des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, ed. Rainer Rother and Judith Prokasky (München: edition text+kritik, 2010), 13–36.

<sup>362</sup> American military intelligence officers assessed Schramm's character as follows during an interrogation in September 1945: "Source tends to dramatise his views and statements and bitterly criticises Nazi political and military leadership. It is believed that his statements of facts are reliable. Source is quite intelligent, writes extremely well and is very cooperative," 'Interrogation Report Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm' (28 September 1945), ZS 2071, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

This section will show how someone like Schramm, a minor character in the military public sphere, worked, and how the military public sphere worked on him, how he could both further his own career and writing and still believe it to further the greater cause of the old military elite, a group to which he had barely belonged. He had not attained great rank, nor ever earned the distinction which came with command. He had slightly above average connections to prominent figures, but regularly created friction due to carelessness. He was managed, rather than being a man who managed others, like Gehlen, Halder, or Speidel. He is a man who is largely forgotten, left no legacy, and was thus an officer of, perhaps, the third, rather than the first or second rank. And so, this section traces Schramm post-war life and activity through his own work and letters, but also those of others, those who felt they needed to manage him, to show, to a degree, how the military public sphere acted upon one of its own.

After the war, Schramm began to teach military history in Munich and published numerous essays and books on historical, philosophical, and contemporary issues relating to military history and military thought. Yet, Schramm frequently suffered from financial instability, resorting to letters to friends and political allies to beg for money, advances, or an increased pension. In the early 1970s, Schramm implored Friedrich Beermann, an SPD politician and retired Bundeswehr general, to support his demand for a higher pension. Beerman did the bare minimum, forwarding the request to the BMVg, but pushing no further.<sup>363</sup> Later in life, Schramm even lobbied the defence minister, Georg Leber of the SPD, personally, though he received no response.<sup>364</sup> One issue Schramm mentioned in his letter to Leber, which he also

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<sup>363</sup> 'Schramm to Beermann' (14 March 1970), N 597/74, BArch-MA; 'Beermann to Schramm' (25 March 1970), N 597/74, BArch-MA; 'Brockmann to Beermann' (14 April 1970), N 597/74, BArch-MA; 'Beermann to Schramm' (21 April 1970), N 597/74, BArch-MA; 'Schramm to Beermann' (25 April 1970), N 597/74, BArch-MA; On Beermann and SPD defence policy, see Eckart Opitz, 'Friedrich Beermann und die Wehrpolitik der SPD von 1955 bis 1959', *Die Neue Gesellschaft* 24, no. 10 (1977): 869–72; More generally on the issue of military pensions, see above, and Manig, *Politik der Ehre*, 87–176; Georg Meyer, 'Soldaten ohne Armee. Berufssoldaten im Kampf um Standesehre und Versorgung', in *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland*, ed. Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Hans Woller (München: Oldenbourg, 1988), 683–750.

<sup>364</sup> 'Schramm to Leber' (24 June 1976), N 633/29, BArch-MA.

raised with Beermann, was one endured by struggling writers everywhere, that of how to cover one's expenses before the next book was published.<sup>365</sup> His need for an advance, nearly a quarter of a century after the end of the war, then, reflected a lack of professional success, which stemmed in part from the fact that Schramm was not able to draw on his connections in order to gain more stable, or profitable, employment. This reflected the fact that Schramm had set himself a goal which was rather out of tune with the wider intellectual currents of the military public sphere.

Schramm's travails as a writer, and his management by others, began shortly after the war, and was closely linked to the early history of the IfZ outlined in Chapter 1. In November 1951, Schramm had submitted a manuscript for a book on the history of the 20 July 1944 in Paris to be published via the IfZ, but Speidel recommended revisions and attempted to prevent its publication, due to its "journalistic style".<sup>366</sup> The *Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst* (later to become the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) endorsed publication of Schramm's book, and though Mau and Speidel opposed it, Schramm secured a contract for publication, suggesting that control, while difficult to elide, was not complete, especially when the author, as in Schramm's case, was not susceptible to political pressure due to more immediate financial needs. When Schramm pulled out of the deal and published a series of articles in the illustrated magazine *Quick* instead,<sup>367</sup> the covert network swung into action to provide cover, with Ernst Jünger, who had himself been present in Paris under the protection of Speidel, writing in a review that Schramm's account was "not half bad".<sup>368</sup> Speidel, in a

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<sup>365</sup> His letter to Beermann revealed Schramm to be a struggling writer in more ways than one, he also wrote he was unable to find a publisher for a book on 'Hitler and the French', 'Beermann to Schramm' (11 March 1971), N 597/74, BArch-MA.

<sup>366</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 195.

<sup>367</sup> Schramm ultimately did find a publisher for a longer account of the attempted coup in Paris, Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, *Der 20. Juli in Paris* (Bad Wörishofen: Kindler und Schiermeyer, 1953).

<sup>368</sup> Krüger, *Hans Speidel und Ernst Jünger*, 196.

meeting of the IfZ's scientific advisory board, ultimately conceded that while Schramm had now produced an interesting set of articles drawing on rich source material, he lacked the "intellectual clarity in the analysis."<sup>369</sup> While the publication itself is marginal, the reaction and navigation of the process is revealing. Although the publication could not be stopped due to the intransigence of Schramm himself, and while the venue was objected to, an illustrated magazine being deemed by Jünger and Speidel far too frivolous for the matter at issue, they appeared to ultimately see its value. That may have been because Schramm reached a wider readership than they had been able to. But they also knew that, once Schramm's account had been published, appearances of unity were important, and so Schramm's story had to be endorsed and promoted.

While Schramm's publication in an illustrated magazine was driven by the need for money, he did have a wider ambition to write history accessible to those who were not interested in academic debates. But this was not necessarily desirable to all within the military public sphere, as became clear in an extended exchange with Halder. Schramm wrote that he despised the fact that historians "barricaded themselves" in their "ivory tower". Halder responded that he thought this was not a result of disinterest in wider public opinion, but a reserve resulting from "a deep feeling of responsibility," arguing that careless analysis and superfluous conclusions had done "great harm" since 1945, pointing to the "campaign of defamation" as an example.<sup>370</sup> Schramm had suggested to Halder that while academic history was not of wider public interest, there might be a possibility to "organise and develop in a systematic fashion" coverage of military historical topics in illustrated magazines. Schramm's stunning suggestion, albeit in an understated fashion, was to create a system

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>370</sup> 'Halder to Schramm' (24 March 1955), 1, N 220/203, BArch-MA.

whereby former Wehrmacht officers would effectively embark upon a concerted propaganda campaign in illustrated magazines like *Quick*, the target of which would be the West German public. While Halder agreed that this would be useful, he believed this would be unrealistic, not due to political constraints, but rather because the free press was interested in competition, which would mean counterarguments were more likely to be promoted, as controversy rather than unity, would sell.<sup>371</sup> Schramm made clear he viewed himself explicitly not as a journalist, but as one who might mediate between those who had produced academic “truth” (his term) and the wider public.<sup>372</sup> He volunteered, in other words, for service in the military public sphere’s public relations department. But that service, while it was appreciated, was not necessarily Halder’s first priority, although it was clear that Schramm would pursue this ambition regardless.<sup>373</sup>

As part of his endeavour to educate a wider public, Schramm attempted to reconstruct what he called “classical war theory”. By means of this theory, Schramm believed he would be able to make the military thought of the Prussian military reform movement fit for the nuclear age. Principally, this meant reading the work of Carl von Clausewitz through the words and deeds of Ludwig Beck,<sup>374</sup> Halder’s predecessor as chief of the OKH.<sup>375</sup> Schramm believed

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>372</sup> ‘Schramm to Halder’ (20 March 1955), N 220/203, BArch-MA.

<sup>373</sup> Schramm summarised his endeavour as ‘Volksbildung’, ‘Schramm to Halder’ (13 March 1955), N 220/203, BArch-MA.

<sup>374</sup> His engagement with Clausewitz, Schramm wrote, dated back to 1916, and was the result of ‘tragically lived practice.’ The idea that German history from around 1870 onwards was essentially a tragic story of the decline of a particular version of the Prussian state and thus, in a way, the German nation, as it ought to have been is a strong theme within not just the thought of Schramm but a larger group of defence intellectuals, ‘Schramm to Hahlweg’ (9 May 1976), N 633/29, BArch-MA.

<sup>375</sup> A selection of published essays which chart this course is, Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Von der militärischen zur politischen Verantwortung: was Generaloberst Beck von Clausewitz gelernt hat’, *Zeitschrift für Politik* 5, no. 4 (1958): 317–28; Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Das politisch-militärische Testament des Generalobersten Beck’, *Wehrkunde* 8, no. 7 (1959): 346–51; Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Wege und Umwege der deutschen Kriegstheorie’, *Revue Militaire Générale* 8 October (1960); Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Generaloberst Beck und der Durchbruch zu einer neuen deutschen Wehrtheorie’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 8, no. 62 (1962): 65–74; Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Grundbegriffe der neuen deutschen Wehrauffassung’, *Wehrkunde* 11, no. 4 (1962): 188–93; Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, ‘Von der klassischen

that a turn towards the theory of total war had occasioned military catastrophe not once, but twice, holding Erich von Ludendorff principally responsible.<sup>376</sup> The turn towards total war, according to Schramm, belied Clausewitz's understanding of war as a continuation of politics by other means. Although Ludendorff, and Hitler, too, had thus perverted this fundamental insight, there was yet hope. Schramm argued that the old view of war had remained alive, thanks to Beck. Beck had been a leading conspirator of the 20 July 1944 attempted coup and would have become Germany's new head of state should it have succeeded. According to Schramm, Beck was Clausewitz's "right-wing prodigy".<sup>377</sup>

The post-war settlement, Schramm believed had been squandered by the United States.<sup>378</sup> The reason was that the Americans had simply demanded the unconditional surrender of Germany, or had, in his words, pursued "total military victory",<sup>379</sup> without giving thought to the political settlement such a victory would give rise to. Instead of the Pax Americana, Europe was divided and marked by a permanent state of conflict. The Soviets, meanwhile, had inverted Clausewitz's understanding of the instrumental relationship between politics and war. Lenin's notes and marginalia on Clausewitz were published in 1957 by the GDR's

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Kriegsphilosophie zur zeitgerechten Wehrverfassung. Eine Studie über Krieg und Frieden', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 9 (1965).

<sup>376</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Gegen den totalen Krieg' (1956), 2, N 633/17, BArch-MA; On the life and myth of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, Anna von der Goltz, *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lockenour, *Dragonslayer: The Legend of Erich Ludendorff in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich*; On the influence of Ludendorff and his relationship to Clausewitz's thought, Klaus-Jürgen Müller, 'Clausewitz, Ludendorff and Beck: Some Remarks on Clausewitz' Influence on German Military Thinking in the 1930s and 1940s', in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, ed. Michael I. Handel (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 240–66; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 'Absoluter und Totaler Krieg: Clausewitz zu Ludendorff', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 10, no. 2/3 (1969): 220–48; Critical of Ludendorff's influence is, Roger Chickering, 'Sore Loser: Ludendorff's Total War', in *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919–1939*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151–78.

<sup>377</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Der "rechte" Clausewitz-Schüler' (3 January 1964), N 633/16, BArch-MA; See also, Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Das soldatische Gewissen des Generalobersten Ludwig Beck. Neue Forschungsergebnisse über seinen Versuch, den 2. Weltkrieg zu beenden', *Wehrkunde* 13, no. 9 (1964): 466–72.

<sup>378</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Die Atlantische Gemeinschaft als Ziel der abendländischen Entwicklung - Eine weltpolitische Lagenanalyse in 14 Thesen' (n.d.), 2, N 633/17, BArch-MA.

<sup>379</sup> Schramm, 'Gegen den totalen Krieg, N 633/17', 7.

defence ministry, after all.<sup>380</sup> Socialist analyses of Clausewitz were one-sided, Schramm wrote, but they were far better developed than those in the West.<sup>381</sup> This, too, was not simply an intellectual enterprise for Schramm. If Germany had lost the Second World War due to a mismatch between its political ambitions and its military objectives - Hitler's misunderstanding of Clausewitz, in other words - it was equally possible for the Soviets to win the war due to a "proper" understanding of Clausewitz. Schramm argued that by declaring politics to be the continuation of class war by other means, Lenin had not simply inverted Clausewitz, but eliminated peace as such. Class war was, therefore, the natural state of the world unless and until "Marxism-Leninism" dominated the globe. Though Schramm believed this understanding to be partial and problematic, he did attribute to it the success of the Soviets not just during the war - "Clausewitz won at Stalingrad," he wrote - but in shaping the post-war settlement.<sup>382</sup>

It was crucial that Beck had kept alive Clausewitz's ideas in the West, argued Schramm, so that they might be transmitted to the new, democratic armed forces. It was only through his study of Clausewitz's ideas that Beck was able to "recognise the great global political connections, which were to shape the coming war."<sup>383</sup> Schramm went one step further still, arguing that the roots of the 20 July 1944 attempted coup lay in Beck's reading of

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<sup>380</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Clausewitz' Werk 'Vom Kriege.' Auszüge und Randglossen* (East Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, 1957); yet, it was not Lenin, but Engels who, according to Schramm, had discovered Clausewitz for the "Marxist-Leninist" tradition. On the purported influence of Clausewitz on 'Marxist-Leninist' thought on war, see Clemente Ancona, 'Der Einfluss von Clausewitz' Vom Kriege auf das marxistische Denken von Marx bis Lenin', in *Clausewitz in Perspektive. Materialien zu Carl von Clausewitz 'Von Kriege'*, ed. Günther Dill (München: Ullstein, 1980); Werner Hahlweg, 'Lenin und Clausewitz. Ein Beitrag zur politischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 36, no. 1 (1954): 357-87.

<sup>381</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Wie sieht die Forschung Clausewitz heute?', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 8, no. 11 (1958): 655.

<sup>382</sup> Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, 'Von der klassischen Kriegsphilosophie zur zeitgerechten Wehrauffassung', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 15, no. 9 (1965): 506, 510-12.

<sup>383</sup> Schramm, 'Der "rechte" Clausewitz-Schüler, N 633/16', 1; Klaus-Jürgen Müller, ed., *General Ludwig Beck, Studien und Dokumente zur politisch-militärischen Vorstellungswelt und Tätigkeit des Generalstabschefs des deutschen Heeres, 1933-1938* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1980).

Clausewitz.<sup>384</sup> There is no evidence to support these claims. There *is* evidence to support Beck's engagement with Clausewitz, Gneisenau, and Scharnhorst following his resignation, which principally took the form of a number of presentations to the Berlin *Mittwochsgesellschaft*.<sup>385</sup> It was through these presentations that Beck had, Schramm wrote, developed the beginnings of a theory of war and strategy which could be mobilized for the new armed forces. In Schramm's mind, Beck's study of Clausewitz allowed him, as early as 1938, to see that a war which could not be won was coming.<sup>386</sup> Schramm clearly was less interested in Clausewitz, and more interested in developing a clear line which led from 1806 through the reign of the Nazi Regime, to the post-war period. In so doing, he attempted to free Clausewitz, and more widely strategic theory, from the problematic associations it had acquired. But Schramm fell short, and the influence he hoped for never materialised.

Even Schramm's engagement with Beck had already been shaped by forces more powerful than he. Speidel's publication of Beck's studies had been authorised by Beck's daughter, who had left him her father's papers for publication. In 1950, while still at the IfZ, General of the Infantry Hermann Foertsch had advised Speidel against publication, arguing that Beck's studies may do more harm than good. In particular, he wrote to Speidel that "history needs to represent the truth, not whitewash it," but that to square this with the publication of Beck's papers "in an interesting fashion which is not incriminating will not be an easy task." In his introduction, Foertsch added, Speidel would have to walk the line "between a certain apology

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<sup>384</sup> Schramm, 'Der "rechte" Clausewitz-Schüler, N 633/16', 1; As Schramm links reading Clausewitz to opposition to Hitler, he argues that those who kept supporting Hitler had obviously not read Clausewitz: 'None of the leading generals...had been through the intellectual school of Clausewitz, which stood for an extraordinary expansion of the point of view towards political matters.' Schramm, 'Durchbruch', 66.

<sup>385</sup> For the genesis of Speidel's edition of Beck's writings, see Chapter 1 above, Ludwig Beck, *Studien*, ed. Hans Speidel (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler, 1955); a more recent annotated edition of the same presentations in Müller, *Studien und Dokumente*; on the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, Paul Fechter, *Menschen und Zeiten* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1948); Klaus Scholder, *Die Mittwochsgesellschaft. Protokolle aus dem geistigen Deutschland 1932-1944* (Berlin: Siedler, 1982).

<sup>386</sup> Schramm, 'Durchbruch', 65-66.

and an indication to a possible future in which these questions may be relevant again.”<sup>387</sup> It was in this future that Schramm located himself. Whether he knew of Speidel’s role in shaping Beck’s legacy or not, we do not know. What is clear, is that once again, Schramm was working in a context defined for him by others. Perhaps, as a former military propaganda officer, this mattered little to Schramm, who had in any case dedicated himself to an endeavour which he believed would accomplish much the same as Speidel and Foertsch had hoped to, as hinted at in his exchange with Halder. What this further example shows is just how difficult it was for someone like Schramm to escape the forcefields of more powerful men in the military public sphere, and how important an accommodation with their interests was.

In late 1963, Schramm made his biggest move. He was then teaching at the *Heeresoffizierschule III* in Munich, and hoped to realise an institute, led by himself, for the study of Clausewitz and his legacy. According to Schramm, things were already underway, with rooms set aside and the foundation of the institute imminent, once defence minister Franz-Josef Strauss gave word, probably by the spring of 1965.<sup>388</sup> Lieutenant General Kurt Weckmann, founding president of the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, on which more below, supported Schramm’s endeavour, although, he said, the society should “attempt to make this its institute.”<sup>389</sup> In the event, Schramm never received the go-ahead, for reasons that remain unclear. What is considerably more important than whether the institute did go ahead or not is again the fact that someone like Schramm had to be extremely careful in managing projects such as this. They were liable to capture by formerly higher-ranking and more authoritative former officers who were in a better position to take advantage of the existing power

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<sup>387</sup> Henke, *Geheime Dienste*, 572–73.

<sup>388</sup> ‘Schramm to Weckmann’ (23 December 1963), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>389</sup> Original emphasis, ‘Weckmann to Klemm and Schellmann’ (27 December 1963), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

structures, particularly within the military public sphere. Schramm's letter to Weckmann suggested a fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation, and given his lines to Halder, may well have been keen on working in this mutually reinforcing capacity. Still, the waters of the military public sphere could prove treacherous, even to those who had much experience navigating them and, perhaps, ought to know better.

### From Schlieffen to the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft

In 1962, a number of former general staff officers founded the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft (CG).<sup>390</sup> The foundation of this society was the first significant one of its kind since the emergence of the AfW and the GfW in the early 1950s. Its aims were, in principle, similar to those of these other societies. The CG immediately engaged in a concerted effort to recruit members and raise funds. This campaign revealed important connections and rifts within the military public sphere. It also shows that moves like the one suggested by Schramm, ones which would deploy the expertise of those within the military public sphere in order to influence public opinion, were alive and well. In fact, as we saw in the first chapter, they constituted a major part of the activity of the military public sphere, even if they could not always be located in illustrated magazines. The section, then, charts the initial staging of the CG, as well as its integration into an already crowded military public sphere, including its maneuvering once it became more established and the troubles it and other organisations within the military public sphere faced. It shows that while some soldiers remained open to the possibility of new organisations, others believed they would simply create more and more visible fractures among the old military elite, and thus needed to be approached with caution.

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<sup>390</sup> Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, *Chronik der Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V., 1961-2011* (Hamburg: Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V., 2011).

And in any case, any new organisation would draw some attention to itself and thus needed to be careful in navigating its public relations.

The CG's first recruitment drive was rather unimpressive, and so Weckmann and his men began writing letters to individual officers they deemed in some fashion outstanding in order to shore up their numbers. Weckmann, like Schramm, had been born to a middle class family before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He, too, served as a junior officer in the First World War, although as a staff officer from 1915, mainly coordinating logistics for various military railway directorates on the Eastern Front. Unlike Schramm, Weckmann stayed on with the Reichswehr, and then the Wehrmacht, becoming director of the general staff course in 1942/43, gaining command of the *Kriegsakademie* as a whole in 1943, and eventually commanding the 274<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Norway in late 1944. There, Weckmann was taken captive by the British in June 1945, spending about three years as a Prisoner of War in Britain, most of it at Island Farm in South Wales.<sup>391</sup> The AfW and the GfW had benefitted from the need to organise former general staff officers in order to support rearmament as well as, as detailed in Chapter 1, West German and American intelligence interests and, in the case of the AfW, organised military history. Weckmann's CG had a more difficult start, suggesting that once support by the Halder, Gehlen, or others had subsided, interest in such organisations remained low and mobilisation was not easily achieved. This was clear to their audience, some of whom responded by asking why yet another society for former officers was necessary.<sup>392</sup> Not a few said they were already members of one or another such group and were uninterested in joining yet one more.

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<sup>391</sup> 'Weckmann, Kurt Johann Friedrich, geb. 18.11.1895' (n.d.), PERS 6/988, BArch-MA; 'Weckmann, Kurt, geb. 18.11.1895' (n.d.), PERS 6/301262, BArch-MA.

<sup>392</sup> 'Hörst to Clausewitz Gesellschaft' (1 September 1962), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

The CG's recruiters failed to convince Philipp von Bismarck, grandson to Otto von Bismarck's brother and sometime supporter of the resistance network around Henning von Tresckow. The primary objection of Bismarck and others was simply that they did not yet know what to make of the society and that they would like to see it develop before they joined. Bismarck was not the only one who added that he was already a member of an organisation not unlike the CG and that he wished to first hear how the CG proposed to relate to other, similar organisations.<sup>393</sup> This was a point also raised by general staff officers of the new armed forces who were not always sure they wished to enter into such a society with their military forebears.<sup>394</sup> Generational difference increasingly became an acute point of distinction. The younger officers in larger numbers had no or very little war experience and had their own formative experiences in the aftermath of the war. The CG's primary aim was to connect retired Wehrmacht general staff officers with those of the new Bundeswehr, a purpose which neither the AfW nor the GfW fulfilled, both of whom, according to Weckmann and others, risked drifting into obscurity as their members aged and no new recruits were forthcoming. The CG's foundation in the early 1960s was fortuitous as it was able to provide much needed continuity at exactly the moment where increasingly the older generations among the former general staff officers who had in large numbers joined the AfW and GfW began to move towards retirement.

The CG's purposes differed from the AfW and the GfW in the sense that its mission was explicitly to connect the old with the new elite, which required boundaries as to who did and did not belong. Were officers who had only undergone an abridged wartime version of general staff training to be accepted into the ranks of the CG, or not? What about those who

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<sup>393</sup> 'Bismarck to Clausewitz Gesellschaft' (15 August 1962), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>394</sup> 'Busfe to Clausewitz Gesellschaft' (16 April 1962), BW 54/2, BArch-MA; 'Geitner to Clausewitz Gesellschaft' (18 April 1964), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

had not been through general staff training, but had nonetheless served as general staff officers?<sup>395</sup> Ulrich de Maizière, chief of staff of the Bundeswehr between 1966 and 1972, and a crucial intellectual lodestar for the military public sphere given his reputation as a true intellectual and natural soldier, suggested that officers who had served in higher command functions, without any general staff experience, and even civilians with certain qualifications, be included.<sup>396</sup> Active duty officers would be subject to a vote by the board. Former officers wishing to join would be announced as potential members in a circular to existing members and objections could then be submitted, following which the board would take a vote.<sup>397</sup> And although the CG did eventually open its membership up to men who had not served in the general staff, it still perceived itself as an elite group and maintained a degree of exclusivity. Women, for example, remained excluded and attempts to recruit a first female member faced stringent opposition in the early 1980s.<sup>398</sup> Debates around the boundaries of this self-perceived elite society reflected a more general sense of the relationship between military and civilian elites. However, they also reflected the reality that the general staff had, by and large, remained a bastion of the upper and upper-middle classes. Limiting membership of the CG in the ways described above eliminated many who had benefitted from what Bernhard Kroener terms the “defeudalisation” of the officer corps in Nazi Germany.<sup>399</sup> Efforts at preserving a

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<sup>395</sup> ‘Weckmann to Speidel’ (4 June 1967), BW 54/15, BArch-MA.

<sup>396</sup> Such suggestions were to spark significant and controversial debates in later years, Kurt Weckmann, ‘Vortragsnotiz’ (n.d.), BW 54/15, BArch-MA; on de Maizière, John Zimmermann, ‘Der Prototyp: General Ulrich de Maizière’, in *Militärische Aufbaugenerationen der Bundeswehr 1955-1970. Ausgewählte Biographien*, ed. Helmut R. Hammerich and Rudolf J. Schlaffner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 409–36; Zimmermann, *de Maizière*.

<sup>397</sup> ‘Vorschlag für eine Neufassung der Satzungen, BW 54/15’, 3; From the start, the society was careful to make sure its potential members lived up to a particular code of conduct. On a letter received from one potential member, for instance, it was noted that he had ‘conducted himself impeccably in Russian imprisonment’, ‘Lindenau to Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, 21.4.1964’ (21 April 1962), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>398</sup> ‘Gericke to Clausewitz-Gesellschaft’ (31 July 1984), BW 54/75, BArch-MA.

<sup>399</sup> Kroener, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer “nationalsozialistischen Volksarmee”’, 682; Georg Meyer, ‘Drei deutsche Generale. Dienst in der Diktatur und im Spannungsfeld des Kalten Krieges’, in *Vom Kalten Krieg zur deutschen Einheit. Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1945-1995*, ed. Bruno Thoß (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1995), 51–62 De Maizière, for instance, came from a notable family of Huguenots, which has, to this day, a distinguished history of service to various German states, including the FRG and GDR, with de Maizière’s nephew, for instance, serving as the last Prime Minister of the GDR, while one of his sons served as Interior Minister of Germany from 2009-2011 and 2013-2018.

particularly limited vision of elite military identity, in other words, also limited the class base of the proposed society. In the face of preserving elite sociability at the expense of their own relevance, the board of the CG chose to open the society, allowing lower-ranking officers as well as well-educated and connected civilians to join, although in choosing its members it continued to maintain a degree of exclusivity.<sup>400</sup>

Part of this desire for elite cohesion and continuity originated no doubt with Weckmann himself, given he had been the last wartime director of the Prussian War Academy from March 1943. But even he had to accept that elite self-perception was changing, and one nod to this was the name of the new society itself. The old society had been named for Alfred Graf von Schlieffen, Chief of the Imperial German General Staff from 1891 to 1906. It was Schlieffen who had conceived of the infamous German plan to invade neutral Belgium and Luxembourg to inflict a devastating blow on French forces. The turn away from Schlieffen's name occasioned criticism, too, given that at least one officer believed this to be an accommodation to on-going criticism of Schlieffen.<sup>401</sup> At work here was the perception of a change of tradition. The Schlieffen Plan had, by the early 1960s, become notorious and subject of a number of critical historiographical debates. A turn towards Clausewitz and away from Schlieffen was thus understood by a number of officers to signal a shift in the public historical self-fashioning of West Germany's military elite.<sup>402</sup> There was an attempt to shift the traditional reference points from those apparently implicated in two defeats and at least two genocides in the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century towards an older one, which,

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<sup>400</sup> Sanctioned by a vote of members, but highly controversial, 'Protokoll der 12. Mitgliederversammlung' (23 August 1975), BW 54/10, BArch-MA.

<sup>401</sup> 'Gersdorff to Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, 16.4.1962' (16 April 1962), BW 54/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>402</sup> The most recent historiographical dispute, chiefly between Terence Holmes and Zuber, does not need to be recounted here, but see the debate in, Terence Zuber, 'The Schlieffen Plan Reconsidered', *War in History* 6, no. 3 (1999): 262–305; Terence Holmes, 'A Reluctant March on Paris', *War in History* 8, no. 2 (2001): 208–32; Terence Zuber, 'Terence Holmes Reinvents the Schlieffen Plan', *War in History* 8, no. 4 (2001): 468–76; Terence Holmes, 'The Real Thing', *War in History* 9, no. 1 (2002): 111–20, etc.

though it was occasionally located within the very same historical trajectory, had now become the standard reference point for military tradition within the Bundeswehr. This shift was, perhaps, supposed to provide common ground for older and younger generations of general staff officers, both within and outside the new armed forces, who increasingly diverged in terms of their socialisation and formative experiences.

Schlieffen's name served not just to delimit the boundaries of military tradition, but the boundaries of military historical expertise and authority. In 1957, Wolfgang Foerster reviewed Gerhard Ritter's book on the Schlieffen Plan in *Wehrkunde*. Foerster, born well before the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had been discharged as a Lieutenant Colonel from the Reichswehr in 1920, becoming an archivist in the *Reichsarchiv* and eventually full professor and director of the *Kriegsgeschichtliche Forschungsanstalt des Heeres* in 1944.<sup>403</sup> In his review, Foerster fundamentally questioned the right of a civilian like Ritter to engage a subject such as the Schlieffen Plan at all, a right Ritter had vehemently asserted in a letter to Foerster.<sup>404</sup> Foerster had himself received a letter from Colonel General Hans-Georg Reinhardt, current president of the GfW and convicted war criminal, in which Reinhardt had argued that he did not understand why Ritter had dedicated himself to the subject. "He is a historian, not a soldier, he should better leave judgment of the Schlieffen Plan... to the soldiers," Reinhardt wrote.<sup>405</sup> Yet Ritter had, as Reinhardt must have known, been a soldier once. During the First World War he had fought in the East and been awarded the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> Class for service on the Somme.<sup>406</sup> At issue here, then, was not primarily Ritter's lack of

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<sup>403</sup> Wolfgang Foerster, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu Gerhard Ritters Buch "Der Schlieffenplan"', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 7, no. 1 (1957): 37–44; Gerhard Ritter, *Der Schlieffenplan. Kritik eines Mythos* (München: Oldenbourg, 1957).

<sup>404</sup> 'Ritter to Foerster' (7 February 1957), N 121/10, BArch-MA.

<sup>405</sup> 'Reinhardt to Foerster' (7 February 1957), N 121/10, BArch-MA; A short biographical overview in, Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer*, 654–55.

<sup>406</sup> Christoph Cornelißen, *Gerhard Ritter. Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), 65–105, on the Somme 77–78.

military experience. Reinhardt and Foerster felt able to dismiss Ritter's analysis because he had not been a career soldier and thus did not need to be taken seriously on military matters. But whether that was the source or the consequence of their disagreement with him is not clear. They may well have felt that here was a man who had only served as a junior officer and who thus lacked military experience and expertise of a kind which only those who had served in the general staff possessed. In spite of all pretensions to a civil-military ethos more suitable to a modern liberal democratic state, therefore, members of the military public sphere jealously guarded their subject matter, imposing strict boundaries which they held against civilians and even other former soldiers who they regarded as lacking the necessary qualifications.

While the CG initially defined itself as a forum for the elite of the military public sphere, it also perceived itself as an integral part of this intellectual landscape.<sup>407</sup> The CG's founders hoped that the former general staff officers, who had by now scattered into all walks of life, would bring to the analysis and debates of contemporary defence and security issues their newfound expertise in business, combined with their old sense of membership of an elite group of soldiers.<sup>408</sup> Schramm, who became an *Ehrenmitglied* of the CG in 1973, embraced this task, as we have seen, in spite of a lack of experience in business. Yet, the CG, though its statutes endorsed the "intellectual connection" between "soldierly virtues" and the new democratic state, clearly also reflected an older elite mentality, which harkened back to the socialisation of Reinhardt, Foerster, Weckmann, and others in the Imperial German Army.<sup>409</sup> But in the long-term, this elite sociability had limited appeal, and the CG was forced to take

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<sup>407</sup> Reichherzer, *Alles ist Front!*

<sup>408</sup> 'Vorschlag für eine Neufassung der Satzungen, BW 54/15', 2.

<sup>409</sup> An exemplary CV of this kind analysed in, Klaus Naumann, 'Ein konservativer Offizier der reichswehrgeprägten Führungsgeneration: Generalleutnant Anton Detlef von Plato', in *Militärische Aufbaugenerationen der Bundeswehr 1955-1970. Ausgewählte Biographien*, ed. Helmut R. Hammerich and Rudolf J. Schlaffer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 267–88.

its place alongside other institutions of the military public sphere. From 1973, the CG presented a united front with the GfW and the AfW, as they had agreed to pursue a common set of aims.<sup>410</sup> Elite distinctiveness was, then, ultimately subordinated to a united front in pursuit of greater influence and more respectability for all former soldiers.<sup>411</sup>

## Conclusion

By the late 1960s, the West German military public sphere largely concerned itself with the consequences of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Although this was not the exclusive concern of West German military writers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the urgency of the matter for both tactical and strategic questions meant it touched on potentially all other military and political issues. The first section of this chapter showed how this concern emerged, and how disagreements over it were handled, in a potentially career ending fashion. It also showed how support for a West German integration into NATO was mobilised inside the military public sphere, and how the various groups and networks worked together to cement a kind of military-strategic consensus in face of the new nuclear status quo. The second section provided a case study, using Wilhelm Ritter von Schramm, of the way the military public sphere operated. Schramm's precarious position resulted in an inability to benefit directly and substantially from membership in the military public sphere. His apparent naivete left him open to use by others, though he himself was also keen to be used in order to promote the interests of the old and new general staff. The final section chronicled the rise of the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft as a new forum in which the old and new military elite might mix, but also showed how difficult even seasoned officers found it to navigate the military

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<sup>410</sup> 'Ansprache des Präsidenten der Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, General a.D. Ulrich de Maizière, anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrenmedaille General von Clausewitz am 23.9.1976 in der Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Hamburg' (23 September 1976), BW 54/1, BArch-MA.

<sup>411</sup> The CG was to set the issues which the GfW would then give officers a chance to discuss in its publications, 'Protokoll der 13. Mitgliederversammlung' (27 August 1976), BW 54/10, BArch-MA.

public sphere. The society negotiated questions of membership, including limits of class and gender, and ultimately was integrated into the existing military public sphere, becoming another avenue for discussion and intellectual exchange.

Ultimately, the first decade after the establishment of the new armed forces, then, was one in which institutionally the military public sphere stabilised even though it was confronted with the nuclearisation of strategic thought which provoked significant conflict and resulted in a wide range of opinions. Still, there were no major splits, in part because it was understood by members of the military public sphere how critical a united front was. But beyond that the older hierarchical structures which had now long lost their meaning in civilian society were still fundamentally important ordering principles within the military public sphere, as the foundation of the CG and its exclusive membership shows. Those who broke ranks, like Bonin, were liable to exclusion on account of their perceived disobedience and, in his case, indiscretion. But aside from the concrete debates in which the military public sphere was engaged, something else loomed in the background, namely an increasingly aging constituency. By the late 1970s, the CG was clearly in trouble, failing to recruit new members.<sup>412</sup> And this was in spite of the fact that it was already open to new Bundeswehr officers. But these seemed not to see the benefit of joining the organisation. Younger officers apparently did not in large number wish to participate in the military public sphere, which undermined not just elite cohesion, but, to a degree, the self-image of the old military elite. It disrupted, at least partially, their self-perception as wise old men who were able to share their hard-won insights into war and military service with younger generations. If younger officers and politicians were uninterested in their opinions, then, in the end, they were, like they had

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<sup>412</sup> 'Protokoll der 23. Mitgliederversammlung' (22 August 1986), 2, BW 54/11, BArch-MA.

feared in the early post-war period, simply old men whose views had once counted for something.

### **Chapter 3: Higher Education and Military History, 1968-1979**

By the second half of the 1960s the structures of the military public sphere had diversified. While new structures, such as the CG, hinted at a partial restoration of the power of the old military elites, it was difficult for them to retain these structures and recruit new members. The argument of this chapter is that the late 1960s and the early 1970s marked the beginnings of a sea-change in the military public sphere, which was not immune from the more radical social change which emerged across Europe and the United States. Though the ripples which reached it were much less impactful than elsewhere. The focus of this chapter is on elements of the military public sphere which were in close contact with universities and academic institutions, particularly the MGFA. These institutions now moved in earnest to cement the historiography of the Second World War and the rearmament of the Federal Republic with some major research projects. At the same time, Werner Hahlweg's chair at Münster, the only one in military history in the entire FRG, provided him with a platform to engage critically with students on topics of military history and contemporary issues including the Vietnam War and racial inequality in the United States. While through his teaching Hahlweg encouraged students to take more critical perspectives, his own research, too, was shaped by these perspectives, which were not generally accepted by older generations within the military public sphere but which, due to his unique institutional position, they could not readily ignore.

The classic narrative of 1967 and 1968 suggests that the radical movements which emerged in this period were primarily aimed at a what was perceived to be an establishment fundamentally resistant to change and partially ossified, reflecting older attitudes which

ought no longer to be relevant the modern, liberal democratic Federal Republic.<sup>413</sup> If that was the case, then it stands to reason that the centrifugal forces might have been even stronger in the military public sphere where, as I have argued, these structures were even more entrenched. But it is clear that 1968 did not reach into the armed forces directly, in part because of resistance from the structures of authority and command into which even the youngest soldiers were socialised. Conscript soldiers tended to be extremely young, entering into service straight after school, at 18 or 19, meaning they had no personal experience of the war or the Nazi regime. This lack of war experience was the one sense in which these younger soldiers did signify an important generational shift. Those who strongly objected politically to the armed forces or military service in principle were likely to have become *Zivis* instead, though those numbers were small.<sup>414</sup> Nor had those who hailed from classic bourgeois milieus yet experienced the institution which we overwhelmingly associate with their intellectual and social radicalisation in this period, the university. They were also often isolated from larger cities on military bases, though it is possible that groups of young soldiers who were sympathetic to the movement may have joined protests, making the trip together, for instance, from Pfullendorf or Stetten am kalten Markt to Freiburg or to Stuttgart for a weekend demonstration. I follow Christina von Hodenberg in arguing that, given the age of the participants and their wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, though the conscripts were exclusively male, the classic narratives of 1968, driven as they are overwhelmingly by a focus on well-educated, male, middle class students, can be

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<sup>413</sup> Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 79–115; Timothy Scott Brown, *Sixties Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 102–88.

<sup>414</sup> For an overview, including reform efforts in this period, Patrick Bernhard, 'Kriegsdienstverweigerung per Postkarte. Ein gescheitertes Reformprojekt der sozialliberalen Koalition 1969-1978', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 53, no. 1 (2005): 109–39.

misleading.<sup>415</sup> In the course of the chapter we will encounter some of these students, but primarily in Hahlweg's seminar room, rather than on the streets at protests.

The fourth chapter below will show how, in the late 1970s, some of these attitudes did filter through into the ranks producing a kind of "Military 1968", delayed by about a decade. In the present chapter, 1968 works primarily to delineate the context within which some of the debates in the military public sphere occurred as well as the reception which members of the military public sphere or their ideas received upon interaction with civilians. The crucial point here, however, is that this was not necessarily negative as Hahlweg's experience below shows. A productive engagement of students with military-political and military-historical work did take place at Münster, and this was not due to its appeal to a more conservative, or overwhelmingly male, group of students, as Hahlweg's teaching materials show.<sup>416</sup> Rather, his courses were popular with a wide range of students, including a substantial group of young women, who wrote papers endorsing black liberation in the United States and anti-imperialist guerrilla wars in the global South. At Freiburg meanwhile, Andreas Hillgruber was far less warmly received by students and was unable to dispel fears that his arrival might mark the integration of the university into military-intellectual structures.<sup>417</sup> This suggests, then, that the issues discussed in the military public sphere could find wider support, but a delicate balance was required. The election of the first post-war SPD government in 1969, led by Willy Brandt, did little to change matters. Although in principle it did give some more left-leaning soldiers, like Baudissin, the opportunity to influence the highest echelons of the

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<sup>415</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, *Das andere Achtundsechzig. Gesellschaftsgeschichte einer Revolte* (München: C.H. Beck, 2018), 9–10.

<sup>416</sup> On conservative students in 1968, Anna von der Goltz, *The Other '68ers. Student Protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>417</sup> This is interesting given that Hahlweg, over a decade older than Hillgruber, was far more seriously implicated in the Nazi regime than Hillgruber had been. Hahlweg was, then, exactly a member of that older generation and social class against whom the 1968ers are normally understood to have rebelled Hodenberg, *Das andere Achtundsechzig. Gesellschaftsgeschichte einer Revolte*, 45–76.

state, they accomplished little. As a result, the relationship between the military public sphere and the wider political-military leadership did not change substantially in this period. Helmut Schmidt's efforts as defence minister at improving officer education and structuring it in the familiar framework of the university were crucial, although they did not bear significant fruit in the early years, they did signal an important shift. Officers now received educational credentials, which they might deploy in their search for a new career once they left the ranks,<sup>418</sup> a problem which Schmidt was keenly aware of and the aftereffects of which we have seen play out in Chapter 1 above.

The chapter consists of three sections, the first two of which engage the twin tasks of the MGFA: the production of a history of the Second World War, initially led by Hillgruber, and the writing of a set of histories of rearmament. In the late 1960s, Martin Rink argued, the MGFA entered its "consolidation phase," in which the institute attained "academic renown of an international scope".<sup>419</sup> The chapter draws into question Rink's argument by sketching the hiring and, shortly thereafter, departure of Hillgruber as head historian of the institute. Hillgruber, who would later acquire notoriety for his role in the *Historikerstreit*, helped launch the semi-official history of the Second World War at the MGFA. But even beyond his short tenure, it was apparent that the institute suffered greatly from structural deficits, as well as internal discord, provoked, not least, by the continuing presence of Manfred Messerschmidt and his critical approach to the study of German military history. Further, while by the mid-1970s there was now increasingly academic historical expertise present in

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<sup>418</sup> Schmidt's reforms also brought with them new problems, and the question of academic freedom at the Bundeswehr universities remains an important one, see Chapter 4 below and, Andrea von Schroeders, *Student und Soldat. Das Studium zwischen Dienstpflicht und akademischer Freiheit an den Universitäten der Bundeswehr* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007).

<sup>419</sup> Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 3; see also the account of military historical developments in the FRG in, Wilhelm Deist, 'Bemerkungen zur Entwicklung der Militärgeschichte in Deutschland', in *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, ed. Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), esp. 319-322.

the MGFA, the political implications of the histories which were produced were often difficult to navigate. The second section argues that in the case of the histories of rearmament, political concerns helped drive scholarship, which has resulted in a historiographical gap which it is now difficult to bridge, given the death of key witnesses as well as limited access to archival material. The section will focus on that gap and trace just how exactly it came to emerge, focusing on the political and social concerns which drove those who opened it. The third section engages with the activities of Hahlweg and his chair as a kind of central node connecting the military public sphere to the wider university system and will pay particular attention to the didactic elements of his work there. Hahlweg was in the unique position of having a post designated as one in military history which had no formal connection to any of the military historical structures of the Bundeswehr, making it independent of the networks of current and former general staff officers. Yet, little has been written on Hahlweg, who became known to wider audiences in his capacity as the editor of Carl von Clausewitz's work *On War*.<sup>420</sup> Hahlweg, on the one hand, mingled with former general staff officers and edited Clausewitz,<sup>421</sup> donating his papers to the armed forces and his estate to help fund a prize for military history.<sup>422</sup> On the other, his teaching in particular

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<sup>420</sup> Hahlweg was chiefly known as an early modernist and participant in the military revolution debate. For a brief summary, Olaf von Nimwegen, 'The Dutch Army and the Military Revolutions, 1588-1688', *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit* 10, no. 1 (2006): 56–58; in addition to his editorship of Clausewitz, Hahlweg produced magisterial bibliographies of Clausewitz scholarship, in particular chronicling the multiple theoretical and political uses this work was put towards, the final version written by Hahlweg, who died in 1989, can be found in Werner Hahlweg, 'Das Clausewitzbild einst und jetzt', in *Carl von Clausewitz. Vom Kriege*, ed. Werner Hahlweg, 19th ed. (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1980), 1–172.

<sup>421</sup> Hahlweg acquired parts of the Clausewitz Nachlass personally, often at significant cost, paying nearly 10,000 DM for one draft manuscript of Book 1 Chapter 1 of *On War* in 1963, 'J.A. Stargardt Auktionsrechnung', n.d., Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0029, WTS; in the same year Hahlweg acquired at least one further manuscript at the cost of 3,000 DM, 'Bescheinigung', 13 November 1961, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0031, WTS; Hahlweg also pursued further papers which had found their way into private collections, 'Hahlweg to Erdmann', 5 July 1963, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0087, WTS; Hahlweg later facilitated the sale of a significant part of Clausewitz's papers to the university library at Münster, paid for in part by the state of Northrhine Westfalia. As a result, Hahlweg had to deliver annual reports on the research he had carried out using the Clausewitz papers, 'Hahlweg to Schütz', 31 December 1958, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg M 0137, WTS; it appears the state of NRW contributed about half the funds needed to acquire the Clausewitz papers, 'Hahlweg to Pfeiffer', 27 July 1955, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg M 0137, WTS.

<sup>422</sup> 'Anlage 1 zum Bericht BAAINBw Z3/Z3.2 - 01-54-00' (28 February 2013), 4, document obtained by the author via a request as per §1 Informationsfreiheitsgesetz.

was led by the desire of his students to understand the upheavals of the 1960s.<sup>423</sup> In spite of the endowment of the Werner-Hahlweg-Prize, funded by the sale of his house in Baden-Baden which he had left explicitly for that purpose, Hahlweg has left no institutional legacy. His chair no longer exists, and even the prize once named for him now has been renamed due to Hahlweg's membership of the SS and the NSDAP.<sup>424</sup> This section argues that he was nonetheless an important node connecting the military public sphere with more respectable and ordinary academic institutions, and that the minimal legacy he left can be read to suggest that efforts to transcend the military public sphere remained fraught.

The chapter argues that in this period parts of the military public sphere became increasingly intertwined with civilian society and thereby became more relevant to wider structures of education and knowledge production. Hahlweg and Hillgruber attest to this development, though in different ways. The former by means of his education of hundreds of students, who he helped grapple with the origins and conduct of small and guerrilla wars, offering a remarkable degree of sympathy for the causes of rebels across the global South. Hillgruber meanwhile had initially helped tie the MGFA to the university at Freiburg, though that endeavour quickly crumbled in the face of unrealistic workloads and student protests. In that sense they offer insight into different ways communication outside the military public sphere might be navigated. Taken together with a focus on the early historiography of rearmament produced by the MGFA, these examples show how questions around identity and knowledge production, and, increasingly, a lack of control over the interpretation of the history of war were assessed within the military public sphere. The opening of the military public sphere

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<sup>423</sup> A desire to which Hahlweg was not immune. A photograph of Che Guevara hung prominently displayed in his bedroom.

<sup>424</sup> 'Interview mit Prof. Dr. Sönke Neitzel zur Umbenennung des Werner-Hahlweg-Preises in „Förderpreis für Militärgeschichte und Militärtechnikgeschichte“, Arbeitskreis für Militärgeschichte, 5 December 2016, [http://portal-militaergeschichte.de/neitzel\\_foerderpreis](http://portal-militaergeschichte.de/neitzel_foerderpreis).

resulted both in renewed conflicts regarding the power over knowledge production about war and in new interpretations of existing, and in some cases past, struggles. This suggests that, while older generations still retained some of their former sway, the diversification of the fora in which military issues and military identity were discussed, combined with a wider set of voices which might speak with some authority about war and military issues, led to more numerous and more open conversations. The increasing prominence of universities in public life in the FRG, too, played a role, suggesting several simultaneous and perhaps interconnected transformations occurred at the same time.

### Andreas Hillgruber and the Military Public Sphere

Hillgruber is perhaps most notorious for his role as a protagonist in the so-called *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s, a dispute which revolved around the politics of the Holocaust in West German public debates.<sup>425</sup> Yet over a decade before that dispute broke out, Hillgruber enjoyed a brief tenure as historian-in-chief of the MGFA, which has received little attention in studies of his life and work, as they primarily focus on the last decade and a half of his life while he was professor at Cologne.<sup>426</sup> Yet at the MGFA, Hillgruber experienced first-hand the difficult compromise reached on military history in the FRG. When Hillgruber was named to the position of leading civilian historian of the MGFA in June 1968, the structure of military historical work in the FRG had just been clarified by the abolition of the in-house archive of the MGFA, the so-called *Dokumentenzentrale*, in a compromise which had seen

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<sup>425</sup> There is no need here to revisit the dispute, given the extensive literature. For a recent summary, see Philipp Stelzel, *History after Hitler: A Transatlantic Enterprise* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2018), Chapter 5; for wider reflections, Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997).

<sup>426</sup> Klaus-Peter Friedrich has pushed for a recognition of the young Hillgruber's accomplishments, including his coining of the term 'War of Annihilation', writing that, 'in the 1960s, as an avowed conservative, he did not minimise the crimes of National Socialism.' Friedrich, too, however, omits Hillgruber's MGFA tenure, 'Der junge Andreas Hillgruber und die Last der (aller)jüngsten deutschen Vergangenheit', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 67, no. 9 (2018): 719.

the Federal Military Archive move from Koblenz to Freiburg. From now on, all military historical files were to be kept under the auspices of the Federal Archives, while now being housed next door to the MGFA, at the location in which the military archives still stand (though the MGFA has since itself been abolished following a move to Potsdam in 1994).<sup>427</sup> Reiner Pommerin suggested that the MGFA tried to fill this post from 1961, unsuccessfully interviewing eight historians, and that Hillgruber was only selected after the originally preferred candidate, the Austrian historian Ludwig Jedlicka, declined to take up the post.<sup>428</sup> The post appears to have been vacant in part due to a pay cut a full professor could expect to take, as well as accepting formal subordination to a military superior, though on paper the two were equal.<sup>429</sup> While the division of labour between the MGFA and the IfZ may have provided some stability to the writing of German military history, the double structure which emerged inside the MGFA resulted in conflict between civilian historians, including Hillgruber, and those from within the ranks.

Upon the hiring of Hillgruber, a compromise created expressly for him saw the creation of a new chair of modern and contemporary history at Freiburg (*Neuere und Neueste Geschichte*) which he would hold on conjunction with his MGFA post, with the costs of the chair borne ultimately by the Federal Republic.<sup>430</sup> The new position was therefore equal in rank and paygrade to that of the military chief of the MGFA, with Hillgruber acting as the scientific representative of the *Amt*. To those responsible in the BMVg, this signalled the first time academic research produced on military historical issues inside the Bundeswehr had been

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<sup>427</sup> Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 33–35.

<sup>428</sup> Reiner Pommerin, 'Der erste leitende Historiker des MGFA. Zur Erinnerung an Andreas Hillgruber', *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 64, no. 1 (2005): 210–11.

<sup>429</sup> 'Aushändigung der Ernennungs-Urkunde zum Leitenden Regierungsdirektor an Prof. Dr. Hillgruber', 28 June 1968, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

institutionally connected to a university.<sup>431</sup> While there appears to have been desire to celebrate this fact publicly, the “1968” student protests rocked Freiburg, too, and there was hesitation to announce what may to protesters have appeared to be an integration of the university into a wider military-intellectual complex.<sup>432</sup> And indeed Hillgruber was, as he himself wrote, “illegally hindered by a terroristic group” from carrying out his last lecture before the holidays, the reason given by the students being the “special nature” of his chair as a hybrid between the university and the armed forces.<sup>433</sup> Hillgruber himself objected to that characterisation, arguing that the reason he was employed by the state of Baden-Württemberg was in fact academic independence.<sup>434</sup> But the files suggest that this was a compromise solution only arrived at after Hillgruber himself had pushed for this solution in the wake of student protest.<sup>435</sup> He had clearly, then, underestimated the backlash he might face and now attempted to use the subtle but arcane changes in his employment status in order to deflect the accusations the students hurled at him. The students were, unsurprisingly, not swayed by such legal details and perhaps were only more enraged as a result, launching vicious campaigns against him.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>432</sup> Cf. Chapter 1, *ibid.*; on the idea of a military-intellectual complex, though with a focus on the United States, see most famously, Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); arguably the German roots lie in what Frank Reichherzer has described as the ‘bellification’ of the academic landscape in the interwar period, Reichherzer, *Alles ist Front!*; Daniel Bessner has described what we might understand as the globalisation of the military-intellectual complex by German émigrés, Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*; Dexter Fergie, in chronicling the rise of the national security imagination has provided perhaps the missing link in this process, Dexter Fergie, ‘Geopolitics Turned Inwards: The Princeton Military Studies Group and the National Security Imagination\*’, *Diplomatic History* 43, no. 4 (2019): 644–70.

<sup>433</sup> Andreas Hillgruber, ‘Erklärung’, 21 January 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA; this dispute escalated, with Hillgruber being referred to as an ‘academic of annihilation’ (Vernichtungswissenschaftler) by the student organisations and taking legal steps as a result, ‘Hillgruber to Heidegger’, 1 August 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>434</sup> Should a conflict between himself and the MGFA arise, he was not bound as a federal civil servant (Bundesbeamter) or as a member of the armed forces, and thus free to follow his own judgment, he declared, Hillgruber, ‘Erklärung’, 21 January 1969, 1.

<sup>435</sup> ‘Inhalt des Gesprächs mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber am 10.6.1969’, 12 June 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>436</sup> Stelzel, *History after Hitler*, 161.

In his declaration in the face of student criticism, Hillgruber had claimed to have received the chair as the result of a normal process.<sup>437</sup> But his interlocutors at the BMVg argued that he owed it to the Federal Republic, and that he, now that he felt secure in the chair, rejected the terms of a previously made deal in order to gain additional payment for his work at the MGFA.<sup>438</sup> This is supported by a document, put together in June 1969, which contains a timeline of Hillgruber's negotiations with and time at the MGFA. The documents suggest that Hillgruber was offered the job at the MGFA and then suggested that a chair at the university of Freiburg be created, which, conveniently, he would hold, but which would in principle cement the MGFA's relationship to academia.<sup>439</sup> One sticking point in the on-going negotiations about his departure was the impression that Hillgruber ought to be grateful, having received the chair only with help from the BMVg.<sup>440</sup> The picture he had given in response to the accusation by the student radicals, then, was at best partial, and at worst misconstrued the existing arrangement, though it does appear to reflect his own preferred solution. It is clear that he used the students' arguments against his negotiating partners at the BMVg. He rejected the notion that the ministry ought to have any kind of "political *Weisungsrecht*" over him,<sup>441</sup> arguing that he was not an academic "in the fourth of fifth *Reich*."<sup>442</sup> But in cases other than his own, Hillgruber felt able to accept political interference. After an officer was assigned to the MGFA because he had expressed politically questionable sentiments in his previous job at an officer training academy, Hillgruber objected. But he objected not because the man had been transferred due to his political beliefs, but because he

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<sup>437</sup> Hillgruber, 'Erklärung', 21 January 1969, 1.

<sup>438</sup> This impression was strengthened by the fact that although Hillgruber apparently had initially been talked down from resigning from the MGFA altogether in favour of splitting his time between the university and the MGFA, he appeared to favour control over his own resources over honouring the letter or spirit of the deal he had initially struck, 'Forstmeier to Schröder', 4 June 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>439</sup> 'Zeitlicher Ablauf bis zum Übertritt des Prof. Hillgruber in den Bundesdienst', 2 June 1969, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>440</sup> 'Weitere Mitarbeit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber', 18 July 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>441</sup> 'Kurzbericht über die Besprechung mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber in Freiburg am 4.7.1969', 11 July 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>442</sup> 'Besprechung 4. Juli 1969 mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber', 10 July 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

appeared to lack the historical expertise which might qualify him for work at the MGFA.<sup>443</sup>

This suggests that his argument that interference in academic research profoundly troubled him had limits. Whether this was due to the specific political circumstances of that interference, whether he viewed it as troubling only insofar as it directly affected him, or whether it was only one reason he gave now having realised his own personal career goals, is unclear.

Hillgruber's demands disrupted the foundational compromise at the heart of the MGFA. It was, as Colonel Hans Meier-Welcker, who had meanwhile retired, remarked in response, to have been a research institute led by a military officer who was a trained historian and a well-qualified (*habilitiert*) civilian historian. The former was to guarantee an institutional connection between the armed forces and the MGFA and the latter between the MGFA and West German academia.<sup>444</sup> It is ironic that Hillgruber disrupted the delicate compromise by continuing the campaign begun by Meier-Welcker himself years earlier, in favour of a broad-based military history as part of a wider academic discipline of history, against those, still present within the ranks of the MGFA, who viewed it as a means of deriving lessons applicable to future military practice. But Hillgruber, unlike Meier-Welcker, held all the cards, given his departure shortly after his appointment would be a great embarrassment to the armed forces and they sought to retain him, apparently at nearly any cost. It appears Hillgruber had threatened to resign shortly after his appointment due to what he perceived to be a lack of support from the armed forces for his project of an extensive history of the Second World War, to be directed by himself.<sup>445</sup> Hillgruber had demanded complete

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<sup>443</sup> 'Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 12. Januar 1970', 23 February 1970, 1, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>444</sup> 'Gespräch mit Oberst i.G. a.D. Dr. Meier-Welcker', 12 June 1969, 2, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>445</sup> Karl-Günther von Hase, 'Vermerk', 13 June 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA; see also Hillgruber's demand for six PhD students to help him write a history of the Second World War which would rival that currently being written in the GDR, 'Besprechung mit Professor Dr. Hillgruber am 13.6.1969 im BMVtdg', 16 June 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA; the GDR equivalent of the MGFA, the 'Military Historical Institute of the GDR',

independence, and responsibility, for military historical research into the Second World War.<sup>446</sup> But it must have been apparent to all sides that his overseeing such a vast area of research while simultaneously holding a major chair at a West German university might even be beyond Hillgruber though he deemed himself to be “at the height of his powers.”<sup>447</sup> In the minds of those he was negotiating with at the ministry, Hillgruber’s preferred solution threatened to “tear apart the existing structure of the MGFA.”<sup>448</sup>

Hillgruber had suggested that the solution to all these problems might be the division of the MGFA into an armed forces research institute and a military historical office. The latter was to be led by himself, the former by an army officer.<sup>449</sup> And although a number of compromises were discussed, none bore fruit and from 1 July 1969, Hillgruber no longer carried out his duties at the MGFA, his resignation effective from 31 December 1969, with Rainer Wohlfeil designated as his temporary replacement.<sup>450</sup> It appears as of early July 1969, there was still hope that negotiations around Hillgruber’s future engagement might bear fruit.<sup>451</sup> Hillgruber himself phrased his criticism as one not of individual officers or of the institution as such, but of their training. Most of the officers working at the MGFA were, he wrote, out of their depth, due to their limited historical expertise.<sup>452</sup> His own suggestion, which would conveniently have granted him immense personal control over an independent research institute, he argued, was merely intended to limit the fluctuation of qualified

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had been founded in 1972 and immediately went to work on its history of the Second World War, Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 14.

<sup>446</sup> Something which Hillgruber would later claim Heidegger had assured him he would receive before he took up his post, ‘Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 12. Januar 1970’, 23 February 1970, 1.

<sup>447</sup> ‘Inhalt des Gesprächs mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber am 10.6.1969’, 12 June 1969, 1–2.

<sup>448</sup> ‘Kurzbericht über die Besprechung mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber in Freiburg am 4.7.1969’, 11 July 1969, 2.

<sup>449</sup> ‘Prof. Dr. Hillgruber; Entlassungsgesuch vom 1.6.1969’, 16 June 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, 4; Rink argues that Hillgruber’s expansive version of military history risked drawing criticism from those who might argue that the MGFA now went beyond its supposed remit, and that the ensuing controversy prompted Hillgruber’s resignation though that is inaccurate, Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 42.

<sup>451</sup> ‘Böttcher to Hillgruber’, 4 July 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>452</sup> ‘Hillgruber to Hase’, 25 June 1969, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

researchers. Officers who served at the MGFA ought to only be promoted based on their historical work. That the MGFA did not operate in this fashion, to Hillgruber, was “one of the causes of the lack of efficiency of the MGFA.”<sup>453</sup> It does appear the case, as was subsequently admitted to by Colonel Herbert Schottelius, that two factors long drove the lack of reliable academic expertise in the MGFA. The first is that in its early days its ranks were filled by older officers who had an interest in, but were rarely trained in, military history. In addition, there were cases of “*Wiedergutmachung*” in which soldiers were given posts at the MGFA in order to allow them to continue serving until certain pension levels had been reached, although this practice had been largely abandoned by the time Hillgruber was hired.<sup>454</sup> Hillgruber’s suggestion that officers be promoted based on the quality of their historical work amounted to, in the eyes of the ministry, the call for a new career path inside the armed forces. This could not be accepted, not least because those who now served at the MGFA were loath to give up their secure posts.

Hillgruber was correct that the principle elaborated by the political leadership of the BMVg that the MGFA ought to be “free from political direction of any kind,” conflicted with a declaration made to him that in any scholarship produced by the MGFA, the BMVg must have the last word.<sup>455</sup> But Chapters 1 and 2 have shown that this was not always understood as a contradiction in the military public sphere. Rather, direction from the military side of the

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<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 1–2; as elaborated by Hillgruber in an appendix to his letter, Andreas Hillgruber, ‘Das Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt. Gründe seines Scheiterns als wissenschaftliche Institution’, n.d., BW 2/16975, BArch-MA; a suggestion that was later picked up by Rainer Wohlfeil, when he became Hillgruber’s successor, ‘Wohlfeil to Schottelius’, 6 July 1970, 1, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>454</sup> ‘Wohlfeil to Schottelius’, 3 March 1970, 1–2, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA; though Hillgruber claimed there were more ‘historical aficionados’ than trained historians, ‘Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 12. Januar 1970’, 23 February 1970, 1.

<sup>455</sup> Hillgruber, ‘Das Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsamt. Gründe seines Scheiterns als wissenschaftliche Institution’, n.d., 2; it is not clear that this was an uncontroversial point, for one of his interlocutors at the ministry noted that, yes, soldiers were not always good historians, but, he wrote, ‘civilians [the civilian historians currently at the MGFA], are worse,’ ‘Besprechung 4. Juli 1969 mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber’, 10 July 1969, 1.

ministry may have been viewed as the exact opposite of political interference. This is perhaps close to the kind of paradigm Speier so harshly criticised in the early 1950s. Speier had inferred from his observations of the networks among former general staff officers that even the possibility of interference or control did all that was necessary to maintain discipline.<sup>456</sup> Rarely did such control actually need to be exercised in a highly structured, self-disciplining environment. Meier-Welcker had felt these pressures first-hand after he assumed his role at the helm of the MGFA and had been unable to resist. Hillgruber, though a veteran of the Second World War who had served in the West and been captured by the Americans in the Ruhr Pocket before being transferred to French captivity,<sup>457</sup> had a different sensibility and more power to resist directly. This was perhaps not just a result of Hillgruber feeling emboldened by the fact that he had gotten the job, but because he was well networked within the German historical profession and the military public sphere. He had studied under Percy-Ernst Schramm at Göttingen,<sup>458</sup> and helped him to edit the war diary of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), which Schramm had kept during the war.<sup>459</sup> Hillgruber's doctorate on German-Romanian relations completed in 1952,<sup>460</sup> two years before Jacobsen,<sup>461</sup> also under Schramm, had put him in close contact with a number of formerly high-ranking Wehrmacht officers whose recollections he relied on. His habilitation, on Hitler's strategy in

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<sup>456</sup> Reference to Chapter 1 of the thesis here.

<sup>457</sup> Christina Morina, 'Of Triumph and Defeat. World War II and Its Historians in Germany after 1945', in *Narratives of War. Remembering and Chronicling Battle in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Michael Wintle, Nanci Adler, and Remco Ensel (London: Routledge, 2019), 70.

<sup>458</sup> In his post-war work, Schramm attempted to rehabilitate his war-time boss, Colonel General Alfred Jodl, who had been sentenced to death at Nuremberg, aiding thereby, in part through the edition of the war diary which Hillgruber helped prepare, the creation of a 'clean Wehrmacht' myth. Jens Brüggemann has produced remarkable evidence which suggests Schramm helped Jodl's defence by suggesting that evidence against Jodl had been falsified by American interrogators, Brüggemann, *Männer von Ehre? Die Wehrmachtgeneralität im Nürnberger Prozess 1945/46: Zur Entstehung einer Legende*, 340–59.

<sup>459</sup> Percy-Ernst Schramm, ed., *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, 4 vols (Bernard & Graefe, 1961–1969); Schramm's edition was not without its critics, in particular Eberhard Jäckel viewed it in a review as a 'chaotic collection which in spite of all its riches for academic research must be described as misguided,' 'Der Generaloberst', 26, n3.

<sup>460</sup> Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu. Die deutsch-rumänischen Beziehungen, 1938–1944* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1954).

<sup>461</sup> Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Fall Gelb. Der Kampf um den deutschen Operationsplan zur Westoffensive 1940* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1957).

1940-41 cemented some of these connections. The former generals continued to extend favours and protection in exchange for historical work which did not judge them too harshly.<sup>462</sup>

Despite the limitations he felt were imposed upon him, Hillgruber had achieved two things at the MGFA. First, he had pointed out, perhaps inadvertently, the contradiction a civilian historian was bound to feel given the structure of the MGFA. Second, he had laid the foundations for a broad-based research project into the history of the Second World War.<sup>463</sup> Presenting this research project as the primary reason for his appointment, and as the most important task facing the MGFA, Hillgruber wrote to the head of the MGFA, then Colonel Wolfgang von Groote, that he had to have the support, for the foreseeable future, of the vast majority of the MGFA's researchers.<sup>464</sup> As Christina Morina has argued, Hillgruber sought to explain "the costliest military conflict in human history as the result of a contingent decision-making process among human beings."<sup>465</sup> Morina is right that

"historical accounts of World War II written after 1945 in divided Germany...reveal not only the pervasive Cold War logic...They can also be read as autobiographical texts that manifest a personal reckoning, an effort to make sense of [the] war by men who had participated in it in various ways."<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Hillgruber had been called by Eckart Conze to teach at Heidelberg and later by Peter Scheibert to teach at Marburg, where he finished his habilitation, while also becoming the youngest head teacher at a German gymnasium for girls, Pommerin, 'Andreas Hillgruber', 211; cf. Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie: Politik und Kriegsführung, 1940–1941* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1965); to the continuing relevance of Hillgruber's study attests, Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin, 2006), 740, n4.

<sup>463</sup> The final structure of the Second World War project would only be reached in early 1974, 'Protokoll über das Gespräch GenInspBw mit dem Amtschef der LtHist MGFA', 19 April 1974, 2, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>464</sup> 'Hillgruber to Groote', 11 October 1968, 1, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>465</sup> Morina, 'Triumph and Defeat', 64.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

But for an effort as significant as that which was now undertaken by the MGFA and not finished until 2008, almost 20 years after Hillgruber's death and nearly 40 years after his resignation from the MGFA, this approach is not sufficient. The thirteen volumes produced over thirty years do not all function as autobiographical texts, for many were written by men who had not experienced the war first-hand, but they collectively constitute a testament to the evolution of German military history over four decades.<sup>467</sup>

### *The Official History of the Second World War*

The idea of a comprehensive history of the Second World War predated Hillgruber's appointment, being one of the two principal tasks which had been set for the MGFA.<sup>468</sup>

Although early conceptions took inspiration from the official history of the First World War which had been compiled by the *Reichsarchiv*, it was clear even then that the resources available would not be adequate in order to trace the operations and the various actions in the kind of detail which had been the case in earlier official histories.<sup>469</sup> But beyond the logistical effort required, Meier-Welcker argued that any extended work which took into account only military operations without an eye towards their intersection with "political, economic, and

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<sup>467</sup> A wider critical appreciation is still a desideratum, though for a preliminary, if internal, assessment, Rolf-Dieter Müller, "Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg". Konzeptionen und Erfahrungen eines wissenschaftlichen Großprojektes', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 56, no. 4 (2008): 301–26; while the conception of such a project dates to a set of instruction issued by Heusinger himself in 1959, the project did not gain momentum until Hillgruber was hired and proposed that six volumes be produced, one for each year of the war, and each was to be authored by one senior historian and an assistant, Jürgen Förster, 'History to Order? Writing the German Official History of the Second World War' (n.d.), manuscript made available to the author.

<sup>468</sup> In an early meeting, Messerschmidt indicated that Meier-Welcker had been instructed to prepare such a project by General Ernst Schäfer, though further disfunction at the MGFA and is indicated by the fact that Messerschmidt said it was unclear whether that order still stood, and no one at the ministry could either confirm, given that no written record existed. An earlier project for histories of the Second World War had simply 'run out of steam,' Messerschmidt said, 'though I don't know why,' 'Sitzungsprotokoll der wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiter des MGFA über die Konzeption "Zweiter Weltkrieg" am 3. November 1970', 3 November 1970, 1–2, BW 7/1401, BArch-MA.

<sup>469</sup> Karl Demeter, *Das Reichsarchiv. Tatsachen und Personen* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1969); Walter Vogel, *Der Kampf um das geistige Erbe. Zur Geschichte der Reichsarchividee und des Reichsarchivs als 'geistiger Tempel deutscher Einheit'* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1994); 'Meier-Welcker to Friedrich Foertsch', 30 July 1963, BW 7/1454, BArch-MA.

ideological factors,” would fall short of what was required.<sup>470</sup> The fact that the resulting concept was far too unwieldy for the MGFA,<sup>471</sup> Messerschmidt argued was the result of some degree of ambition, but it would also allow the MGFA to seek out particular specialists and hire more systematically, which had hitherto not been the case, helping thus to increase the expertise available and to allow for some additional bargaining power in future determinations of funding and personnel strength on behalf of the ministry.<sup>472</sup>

From the beginning, it was clear that this was to be a modern military historical work which was to take “operations not as its subject, but as ordering elements,”<sup>473</sup> suggesting that instead of telling the story of the Second World War, operations would serve as elements which helped break up the war and ground the framework of historical analysis.

Messerschmidt himself in a lecture given in 1972 made clear that there would be integration of the study into the wider landscape of the historiography of the Second World War and Fascism which had sprung in the last few decades. In particular recent studies of fascism which understood it not just as a “political-organisational form of rule but as an expression of socio-economic tendencies,” inspired Messerschmidt, arguing that an emphasis of the relationship between party, armed forces, and economic actors must have consequences for

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<sup>470</sup> This is consistent with Meier-Welcker’s more modern view of military history which was explored in Chapter 1, ‘Meier-Welcker to Friedrich Foertsch’, 30 July 1963, 2.

<sup>471</sup> As opposed to the British and American histories, the West German one would provide a more holistic analysis, ‘Kurze Zusammenfassung der Dittrich’schen Konzeption einer Darstellung des Zweiten Weltkrieges’, 10 November 1971, BW 7/1006, BArch-MA.

<sup>472</sup> These determinations, known as StAN, are critical for determining required personnel and funding, ‘Sitzungsprotokoll der wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiter des MGFA über die Konzeption “Zweiter Weltkrieg” am 3. November 1970’, 3 November 1970, 8.

<sup>473</sup> The operations Meier-Welcker imagined would structure the work were the Invasion of Poland (1939), the Invasion of France (1940), Naval War (1939-45), the ‘Air War Against England (1939-45)’, Mediterranean Operations (1940-43), the Balkan Campaign (1941), ‘Barbarossa’ and the Eastern Operations (1941-45), the Allied invasion of Italy and Normandy, the ‘Final Battles’, and the ‘Bombing War’, ‘Anlage zu Meier-Welcker to Friedrich Foertsch’, 30 July 1963, BW 7/1454, BArch-MA; over time, it became clear that there needed to be broader coverage of operations on the Eastern Front, and a more nuanced approach to the defensive operations in the final phase of the war, ‘Gliederung des Themenkreises Operationen in einer Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges’, 10 November 1971, BW 7/1006, BArch-MA.

any future study of the war as such.<sup>474</sup> In part, this appears to have been the result of calls by Hillgruber to “de-demonise” Hitler by taking seriously “his theoretical work, speeches, and remarks.”<sup>475</sup>

The emphasis of the project, Hillgruber argued, was to be on the German side, and here in particular on the highest echelons of state, with a special focus on Hitler and the turning points of the war. The six volumes were to be organised chronologically, with the shortest covering the period from the invasion of the Soviet Union to the end of 1941, and the longest the one to follow, from December 1941 to May 1943.<sup>476</sup> The key documents to be relied upon for this project were not just the war diaries of the OKW which Hillgruber had helped Schramm edit, but Halder’s own war diaries, the war diaries of the various army groups and maritime commands, but also the studies which had been produced by former members of the general staff under Halder’s supervision at the U.S. Army Historical Division.<sup>477</sup> As such it appeared to present the military public sphere with the perfect opportunity to provide a united front and project their understanding of the war into civilian society, the frame of the given source material potentially acting as a means of constraining the critics which would no doubt be found within and outside the ranks of the MGFA. Hillgruber envisaged that those

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<sup>474</sup> Manfred Messerschmidt, ‘Überlegungen im MGFA zu einer Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges’, 1972, 5–6, BW 7/1006, BArch-MA; Messerschmidt’s citation here is unclear, but the reference is probably to Otto Bauer, Herbert Marcuse, and Arthur Rosenberg, eds., *Faschismus und Kapitalismus. Theorien über die sozialen Ursprünge und die Funktion des Faschismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1967); Reinhard Kühnl, ed., *Deutschland zwischen Demokratie und Faschismus. Zur Problematik der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (München: Carl Hanser, 1971).

<sup>475</sup> Messerschmidt, ‘Überlegungen im MGFA zu einer Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges’, 1972; while in theory fruitful, this kind of approach clearly has wider resonance, inspiring a contested turn in the historiography towards an emphasis of Hitler’s obsession with the United States, as for instance in Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, 1–33; most recently, and controversially, Brendan Simms, *Hitler: A Global Biography* (London: Allen Lane, 2019); anticipating this trend was, Gerhard L. Weinberg, ‘Hitler’s Image of the United States’, *The American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (1964): 1006–21; Weinberg was instrumental in publishing Hitler’s so-called ‘Second Book’ on which this argument is based, Gerhard L. Weinberg, ed., *Hitler’s Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf* (New York: Enigma, 2003).

<sup>476</sup> ‘Hillgruber to Groote’, 11 October 1968, 3.

<sup>477</sup> See Chapter 1, as well as, Howell, *Von den Besiegten lernen?*; Fröhlich, ‘Der Generaloberst’.

members of the MGFA who were not directly involved in the production of these studies would focus on filling gaps in the existing literature on the Second World War. This would by his own admission mean that over half of those working at the MGA would for the next eight to ten years, according to his schedule, be working directly under his supervision on this project.<sup>478</sup> This was neither compatible with the plans which the political leadership in the BMVg had for the MGFA, nor with the self-conception of the institute, as we have seen.

It is clear there was increasing frustration with Hillgruber's ambitions.<sup>479</sup> Hillgruber appeared to be threatening to disrupt the delicate compromise at the heart of the MGFA and shifting its centre of gravity away from military history, towards a political-historical approach.<sup>480</sup> The critique here amounted less to a dispute over the nature of military history, which Meier-Welcker and Hillgruber argued it was, but rather to the question as to whether this project, and Hillgruber's personal ambition, was to be subsidised by the Federal Republic,<sup>481</sup> especially in light of the fact that Hillgruber would be unable to dedicate his attention to this project entirely, given he intended to remain concurrently in post at Freiburg.<sup>482</sup> It was this apparent desire to have it all which provoked the greatest ire at the MGFA, given that Hillgruber intended to focus on the chair at the university, and coordinate the Second World War project on the side.<sup>483</sup> Hillgruber himself argued he would help provide stability by

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<sup>478</sup> 'Hillgruber to Groote', 11 October 1968, 5; a major role in this process was played by Colonel Hermann Heidegger, the adopted son and executor of Martin Heidegger, 'Hillgruber to Heidegger', 31 August 1969, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>479</sup> 'Kurzbericht über die Besprechung mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber in Freiburg am 4.7.1969', 7 July 1969, Multi-hour meetings on the same questions with little apparent progress may have added to that building frustration, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA; also, 'Weitere Mitarbeit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber', 18 July 1969.

<sup>480</sup> 'Gedankenskizze I zum Sts-Vermerk vom 13.6.1969', 4 June 1969, 1–2, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>481</sup> Though there was some suggestion that exactly this kind of political history of the Second World War, produced independently of the BMVg, was needed to counter the study of the war being produced in the GDR, 'Weitere Mitarbeit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber', 18 July 1969, 2; a sentiment that was echoed by Messerschmidt in the course of the development of a new concept, 'Sitzungsprotokoll der wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiter des MGFA über die Konzeption "Zweiter Weltkrieg" am 3. November 1970', 3 November 1970, 6.

<sup>482</sup> 'Gedankenskizze I zum Sts-Vermerk vom 13.6.1969', 4 June 1969, 3.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*; a detailed engagement with Hillgruber's proposition made the point that under his supervision, more historians would appear to be doing less work than under the current MGFA arrangements. Whether that would

making sure soldiers would stay posted to the MGFA for longer to help form them into more accomplished historians.<sup>484</sup> He was particularly aggrieved by the case of Lieutenant Colonel Hermann, an officer-historian of the kind he viewed crucial to the success of the MGFA, but who was transferred to the ministry while in the middle of a study on the Battle of Stalingrad.<sup>485</sup> In addition, Hillgruber argued that civilian historians needed a general permission to “travel East,” though for what concrete purpose and under what circumstances remains unclear, although it is probable this was intended on the one hand to create academic links and on the other perhaps allow for access to archival materials.<sup>486</sup>

But all these efforts came to naught, and an eventual settlement on Hillgruber’s departure was reached, with the BMVg withdrawing its funding for the chair at Freiburg from the end of 1969, and a new chief historian for the MGFA to start in January 1970.<sup>487</sup> Hillgruber was still under the impression that he would lead a commission which would produce a political history of the Second World War in late summer of 1969.<sup>488</sup> Internally, doubts were raised whether the BMVg felt it needed to endorse the kind of multi-volume history of the Second World War Hillgruber envisioned at all.<sup>489</sup> Hillgruber’s idea was seen as “profoundly unrealistic” and driven by “commercial objectives”.<sup>490</sup> Colonel Herbert Schottelius, who had

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in reality have been true is unclear, though it is certainly the case that their remit would have been more limited, see ‘Gedankenskizze II zum Sts-Vermerk vom 13.6.1969’, 4 June 1969, 3, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>484</sup> A suggestion extensively discussed in July 1969, with Heusinger suggesting a solution nicknamed ‘sour dough’, presumably relying on the idea that well-trained and academically excellent officers would function as ‘starters’ for academic excellence and better civil-military relations, ‘Besprechung 4. Juli 1969 mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber’, 10 July 1969.

<sup>485</sup> See marginalia, ‘Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 12. Januar 1970’, 23 February 1970, 2, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>486</sup> ‘Besprechung mit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber’, 4 July 1969, 3, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>487</sup> ‘Weitere Mitarbeit Prof. Dr. Hillgruber’, 18 July 1969, 3.

<sup>488</sup> ‘Hillgruber to Heidegger’, 31 August 1969, 3.

<sup>489</sup> This in spite of the fact that Rink, in his 50-year retrospective of the MGFA, claimed that Hillgruber was hereby signalling a fundamental shift in approach of the MGFA which worked towards a changing conception of military history. Rink’s suggestion only makes clear the extent to which the historiography of the MGFA occasionally minimises the institute’s own efforts to work towards a conservative historiography and to erase the severe conflicts which marked its internal workings, Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 41–42.

<sup>490</sup> ‘Rottmann to Heidegger’, 7 October 1969, 2, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA, while Heidegger worked on the staff of the Generalinspekteur, Rottmann worked in the administrative and legal department of the ministry.

taken over as head of the MGFA from Groote in 1969, summarised the disappointment with the entirety of the Hillgruber episode in September 1970 by stating that he felt frustrated that most of the important decisions had been made without consultation with the MGFA, by which he meant not Hillgruber but those historians who made careers at the institute, including himself and Messerschmidt. Hillgruber's Second World War project far outstretched the resources available to the MGFA, Schottelius claimed. But most importantly, neither he nor anyone else in the *Amt* had been consulted about the changes which were being negotiated with Hillgruber further up the ministry's hierarchy.<sup>491</sup>

Schottelius' suggestion that any future chief historian either be a full professor who was to be given an adequate salary to move to the MGFA, or that they be a senior academic working in the area of the armed forces, were basically ignored.<sup>492</sup> The chosen successor, Manfred Messerschmidt, though he was already working at the MGFA, had neither the seniority nor the experience Schottelius had hoped for, leading him to launch a formal protest against the decision.<sup>493</sup> Messerschmidt lacked, he argued, the ability to reconcile the various civilian and military historians, and in any case was years behind on his work already, suggesting a lack of reliability.<sup>494</sup> But when Schottelius raised the question whether Messerschmidt and "his circle" really were compatible with academic leadership of the MGFA, it is worth considering what exactly was meant by this. Messerschmidt was long viewed as a troublemaker by West German conservatives, in particular due to his scholarship which clearly and unequivocally identified crimes against humanity committed by German soldiers

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<sup>491</sup> 'Schottelius to Schmidt', 15 September 1970, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA.

<sup>492</sup> Wohlfeil left after less than a year in post, Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 42.

<sup>493</sup> 'Schottelius to Hermann', 10 September 1970, BW 2/16975, BArch-MA, Wohlfeil himself had preferred Wilhelm Deist, who was a few years younger than Messerschmidt but had joined the MGFA earlier and both were among the most senior historians of the MGFA.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

during the Second World War.<sup>495</sup> The language deployed by Schottelius recalls what Fabian Virchow has described as a campaign against the “red cell within the MGFA,” notably the group around Messerschmidt and Wolfram Wette, waged by far-right activists in the 1980s, leading to Messerschmidt’s retirement three years early in 1988.<sup>496</sup> Veterans’ organisations in particular continuously mobilised to end his tenure by arguing that he and those like him both within and beyond the MGFA were engaged in a campaign of defamation of German soldiers. They argued that decades after the end of the war and with millions of veterans now in retirement, a new attack was being launched against their respectability, in spite of the fact that many had in the meantime made successful lives for themselves in the new liberal-democratic West Germany. Despite that their very protestations revealed a fundamental inability to come to terms with their own past, to reconcile their post-war selves with the crimes many had been complicit in as young men. The most intensive phase of the campaign against Messerschmidt coincided with the rise of the far-right under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who promoted a more assertive German nationalism. The most notable example is Kohl's invitation to U.S. President Ronald Reagan to visit the German military cemetery at Bitburg.<sup>497</sup>

This is not to suggest that Schottelius viewed the MGFA as a vehicle for a conservative or even far-right historiography. In a 1971 letter to Helmut Schmidt, who was by then minister of defence, he argued that the position of the MGFA at the interface of the armed forces and civilian society left it uniquely exposed. One poorly phrased publication, one wrong

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<sup>495</sup> One interviewer said Messerschmidt had ‘written many inconvenient truths’ into the ‘Stammbuch’ of German soldiers, ‘Prof. Dr. Manfred Messerschmidt, Militärhistoriker im Gespräch mit Jürgen Martin Möller’, *alpha-Forum* (Bayerischer Rundfunk, 29 November 2000), 3; Hackl diagnosed Messerschmidt with a ‘one-sided historical fixation aimed against “the Wehrmacht”’, Othmar Hackl, ‘Stellungnahme zum Schreiben des Dr. Messerschmidt an StvGenInspBw vom 27.7.1983’, n.d., 3, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>496</sup> Fabian Virchow, *Gegen den Zivilismus. Internationale Beziehungen und Militär in den politischen Konzeptionen der extremen Rechten* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 416.

<sup>497</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), a connection developed in the thesis’ conclusion below.

assignment to a conservative historian, he said, “would have unimaginable consequences.” He quotes a conversation with Karl Wilhelm Berkhan, a state secretary in the BMVg,<sup>498</sup> who was surprised when Schottelius explained the MGFA’s mission to him, saying that, he thought “you write black-red-white tracts.”<sup>499</sup> This is surprising as it was Berkhan himself who, in the course of negotiations over the status of the MGFA in 1970s, pushed for the independence of the leading historian with regards to the ministerial hierarchy and for joint civilian-military leadership of the institute as a whole.<sup>500</sup> And though Berkhan’s more fundamental doubts around the political content of the work produced by the MGFA may have been unwarranted, it is clear, as it was put in a later memo, that “it is in the interest of the armed forces that the academic influence of the armed forces on this, the only military historical institute of the Bundeswehr and the FRG, remains intact.”<sup>501</sup> It was this influence which both Hillgruber and Messerschmidt ultimately threatened. Both were keen to reduce it, though for different reasons. Hillgruber intended to maximise his own influence at the cost of that of the ministry. Messerschmidt meanwhile intended to reduce the influence of the ministry to allow for the emergence of a historiography more critical of the armed forces and their conduct during the Second World War.

The selection of Messerschmidt as Wohlfeil’s successor only deepened the existing divisions between civilian and military historians at the MGFA.<sup>502</sup> This was in part due to the fact that Messerschmidt published on continuities in the German officer corps and, a little later,

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<sup>498</sup> We will return to Berkhan in his capacity as *Wehrbeauftragter* in the next chapter.

<sup>499</sup> Referencing the colours of imperial Germany, which have come to stand in for conservatism and authoritarianism (and more recently, thinly veiled references to National Socialism), ‘Schottelius to Schmidt’, 5 February 1971, 4, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>500</sup> See note ‘Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 16. März 1970’, 20 March 1970, 2, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>501</sup> ‘Vermerk für Herrn Stellvertreter des Generalinspektors der Bundeswehr’, 5 April 1978, 1, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>502</sup> Hahlweg, too, was considered as historian-in-chief, but in the end Messerschmidt was selected instead due to Hahlweg’s existing commitments at Münster, given he apparently intended to hold on to his chair there, an arrangement which had already failed to work when Hillgruber held a chair in the same city, rather than one hundreds of kilometres away, ‘Stangl to Hahlweg’, 11 January 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

critically on military justice.<sup>503</sup> Colonel Othmar Hackl, who had by the late 1970s taken over as head of the MGFA, believed that Messerschmidt was in the process of establishing a “duumvirate” and thereby undermining his authority.<sup>504</sup> But the conflicts extended not just to Messerschmidt himself, but to other civilian historians, in particular Wilhelm Deist, who openly and publicly contradicted Hackl when it came to the plan for the Second World War project, leading to disciplinary measures and intervention from up the ministerial chain of command to calm the waters.<sup>505</sup> The fact that these problems recurred suggested to some that they may be the result of the MGFA’s structure. But whether that meant it was either not fit for purpose, or indeed that these conflicts resulted from the strong engagement by civilian historians to minimise military influence on their work, was a major topic of contention.<sup>506</sup> The conflicts would continue, with Messerschmidt and Hackl in particular accusing each other of unprofessional behaviour. While the former argued that Hackl attempted to turn the MGFA into a “military staff”,<sup>507</sup> the latter responded by stating that Messerschmidt was an “disloyal, undisciplined, and superficial subordinate.”<sup>508</sup> These squabbles, which threatened seriously the production of historical scholarship within the MGFA, suggest, just like the Hillgruber case, an extended issue which was left unresolved. The compromise solution at the heart of institutionalised military history in the FRG relied upon effective communication between civilian and military historians. This was clearly not the case, and while personal animosities did play a role in these renewed conflicts, the fact that similar issues emerged

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<sup>503</sup> Manfred Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Zeit der Indoktrination* (Hamburg: Decker, 1969); Manfred Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz. 1933-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005); a field which opened up significantly around this time in part due to Christian Streit’s intervention on the Wehrmacht’s treatment of Soviet POWs, which effectively ended his academic career before it even began, Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941 - 1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1978).

<sup>504</sup> ‘Vermerk für Herrn Stellvertreter des Generalinspektors der Bundeswehr’, 5 April 1978, 3.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 3–4, Deist would himself become chief historian of the MGFA in 1989.

<sup>506</sup> ‘Leiter OrgStab to Bülow’, 4 December 1978, 1, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>507</sup> ‘Messerschmidt to Windisch’, 27 July 1983, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>508</sup> ‘Hackl to Windisch’, 3 August 1983, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA; Hackl further diagnosed an ‘antimilitary frame of mind,’ while also accusing him of carrying the title ‘Prof.Dr.’ illegally, Hackl, ‘Stellungnahme zum Schreiben des Dr. Messerschmidt an StvGenInspBw vom 27.7.1983’, n.d., 3.

time and again over an extended period of time suggests that the institution tended towards the reproduction of such conflicts.<sup>509</sup> A lack of clear hierarchies did play a role, but the lack of hierarchies itself resulted in part from the lack of a clear intellectual and political framework for military historical work now in production at the MGFA. And the conflict between Hackl and Messerschmidt is ultimately an expression of the wider questions circulating since the end of the Second World War in the military public sphere: who would get to speak with authority about the old armed forces and military elite, and what might they be allowed to say? Messerschmidt, clearly, proved a long-term thorn in the side of the military elites who wished to control the narrative without critical interference.

By the early 1970s, with Messerschmidt the MGFA's historian-in-chief, the debate now revolved less around the concept of the project, which appears to have been clearly settled by 1971, with the determination made that the project was not to revolve around a "complete narrative" of the Second World War, but the "German contribution to the military history of the Second World War."<sup>510</sup> Another significant point of debate, which revealed once again the entrenched positions between military and civilian leadership, was whether future chiefs of the MGFA ought to be bound by the concept which was now agreed upon. Messerschmidt, likely to no one's surprise, agreed with this sentiment, while Schottelius, then still head of the MGFA, rejected the idea.<sup>511</sup> Hillgruber's enduring and perhaps unexpected legacy, then, was structural change of the MGFA. By the spring of 1970, it was clear that change would come,

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<sup>509</sup> Generational issues appear not to have been at stake, given that Hackl (\*1930) was a few years younger than Messerschmidt (\*1926), who was born the year after Hillgruber (\*1925).

<sup>510</sup> The fact that the minutes were sent to members of the commission so that they might register their disagreement suggests that the atmosphere was one of deep mistrust, Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, 'Protokoll der 2. Sitzung der Kommission "Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges" am 11. Februar 1971', 12 February 1971, 2, BW 7/1401, BArch-MA.

<sup>511</sup> A question which would create disagreement from the start of the project and endure throughout its existence, though Messerschmidt's longevity helped provide stability, Jürgen Förster, 'Konstituierende Sitzung vom 21.1.1971', 21 January 1971, BW 7/1401, BArch-MA; Meier-Dörnberg, 'Protokoll der 2. Sitzung der Kommission "Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges" am 11. Februar 1971', 12 February 1971, 2.

although resistance inside the MGFA was great.<sup>512</sup> It appears that the coming changes were driven by the political leadership inside the BMVg, rather than the military leadership, suggested by the fact that de Maizière's office, he was then still chief of staff of the armed forces, had to make sure that Schottelius was consulted at all.<sup>513</sup> What appears to have been raised by Hillgruber's criticisms was doubt at the highest levels of the political leadership that the MGFA was living up to the tasks it had been set. Even greater was doubt in the leadership of the institute,<sup>514</sup> though questions around a lack of funds and adequate facilities continued to be raised.<sup>515</sup>

The atmosphere inside the MGFA continued to be poor long after Hillgruber left. Projects regularly ran over time, consumed far more resources than had been allocated for them, and often were of poor quality.<sup>516</sup> The landmark first volume in the MGFA's history of rearmament was delayed by over a year for reasons which its authors were unable to explain.<sup>517</sup> Wohlfeil, it appears, stood accused of having tried to push out an officer who had been "racially persecuted" by the Nazi regime, and another who suffered disability as a result of his service during the Second World War.<sup>518</sup> By the early 1980s, the mood inside the MGFA had deteriorated so gravely that Hillgruber got involved once again, trying to help defend Messerschmidt and to object to the planned dismissal of civilian historians from the both the book series *Militärgeschichtliche Studien* and the journal *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, which he, no doubt correctly, deemed would prove fatal to the reputation of the

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<sup>512</sup> 'de Maizière to Hermann', 24 March 1970, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>513</sup> 'Niederschrift des Gesprächs vom 16. März 1970', 24 March 1970, 1, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 5; in his annual report, Schottelius wrote that the main problems were of 'personal, organisational, and psychological nature,' Herbert Schottelius, 'Jahresbericht MGFA 1969', 5 February 1970, 4, BW 2/14185, BArch-MA.

<sup>516</sup> 'Schottelius to Schmidt', 5 February 1971, 5.

<sup>517</sup> 'An den Amtschef des Militärgeschichtlichen Forschungsamtes Herrn Oberst i.G. Dr Hackl', 14 December 1977, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>518</sup> 'Wohlfeil to Schottelius', 3 March 1970, 1.

MGFA as an academic institution.<sup>519</sup> In 1994, the MGFA was moved from Freiburg to Potsdam, where it resided in the Villa Ingenheim, the old home of the GDR's military historical research institute (and previously home to Wilhelm II's second son Eitel Friedrich). As of 1 January 2013, the MGFA merged with the *Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr* (SWInstBw) to form the *Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr* (ZMSBw). The move to Potsdam greatly diminished archival access, but equally signalled a shift in emphasis given the new centre has increasingly focused on the military history of the GDR,<sup>520</sup> while at the same time more critical scholarship on the FRG's armed forces has continued to emerge.<sup>521</sup>

The conflict at the heart of the MGFA appeared to participants mired in their own rivalries the result of the actions of their opponents, but, as we have seen, the conflicts emerged out of the configuration of the military historical landscape in the Federal Republic. It was distinctly not set up to accommodate the desires either of Hillgruber or of Messerschmidt, both of whom wished to push past the confines set by Meier-Welcker and others in the early 1950s which defined both the scope and the conditions of possibility of military historical scholarship. Hillgruber's attempt to bring a wider political dimension to the scholarship of the MGFA failed in part because his own ambitions had won him few allies and fewer friends. Messerschmidt meanwhile attempted to use the military historical focus of the MGFA in order to help push forward scholarship on the many ways the armed forces had supported the war of annihilation, but this too was beyond the scope of military historical

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<sup>519</sup> 'Hillgruber to Wörner', 23 November 1983, BW 2/18467, BArch-MA.

<sup>520</sup> Since the early 2000s focus of a book series published by Ch. Links, see for instance, Daniel Niemietz, *Das feldgraue Erbe. Die Wehrmachtseinflüsse im Militär der SBZ/DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006).

<sup>521</sup> Some notable examples include, Detlef Bald, Johannes Klotz, and Wolfram Wette, *Mythos Wehrmacht. Nachkriegsdebatten und Traditionspflege* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2001); Klaus Naumann, ed., *Nachkrieg in Deutschland* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001); Manfred Hettling and Jörg Echternkamp, eds., *Bedingt erinnerungsbereit. Soldatengedenken in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Echternkamp, *Soldaten im Nachkrieg*.

scholarship allowed for in a military public sphere still dominated by an older military elite who themselves might be implicated by it.<sup>522</sup> As we will see next, even in the context of rearmament, where no criminal behaviour was at play, the military elite worked hard to obscure the manoeuvring which had taken place, though to what end we still do not fully understand.

### Writing the History of Rearmament

Even as Hillgruber was pushing for a project on the history of the Second World War, the second major avenue of research of the MGFA was finally moving forward. When he had been hired in 1952 by de Maizière, Meier-Welcker had noted that it would be his “task to record the coming developments and create an overview of events in this area [meaning rearmament] since 1945.”<sup>523</sup> But the development of the MGFA and military historical education in the Bundeswehr had taken a front seat, and in any case it was not clear that a complete history of rearmament was necessarily in the interest of the actors who had been involved. At the end of October 1970, de Maizière had ordered that the MGFA begin collecting documents which would allow it to write the early history of rearmament.<sup>524</sup> In summer 1972, the MGFA received the final directive that publications on rearmament were now to be prepared by 1977 at full speed, and if need be existing projects were to be put on hold.<sup>525</sup> Brigadier General Eberhard Graf von Nostitz, an armoured officer who had finished the war in the East fighting a losing offensive on the Balaton and who had quickly joined

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<sup>522</sup> In 1983 Messerschmidt had accepted an article by Christopher Browning for publication in an MGFA-run journal, on Wehrmacht reprisals in Serbia, which Hackl deemed a grave offense causing ‘conflict’ in the ranks of the MGFA, Klaus A. Maier, ‘Persönliche Erinnerungen an eine 20-jährige Redaktionstätigkeit für die »Militär-geschichtlichen Mitteilungen«’, *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 76, no. 1 (2017): 65–67; the relevant article by is Christopher R. Browning, ‘Wehrmacht Reprisal Policy and the Mass Murder of Jews in Serbia’, *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 33, no. 1 (1983): 31–47.

<sup>523</sup> See Chapter 1 above and, ‘Meier-Welcker to Hermann Foertsch’, 25 April 1952.

<sup>524</sup> Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 63–64.

<sup>525</sup> ‘Freitag to Schottelius’, 18 July 1972, BW 2/11922, BArch-MA.

Gehlen's organisation in the post-war period, was not contacted for interview by the MGFA historians tasked with the writing of the early history of rearmament until 1976. This delay suggests that the project did not proceed at the desired speed, though that is unsurprising given that practically all MGFA projects ran far behind schedule, in part due to the organisational difficulties described above. In this context, it is important to note that the purpose of this section is not to take part in the on-going revision of the historiography of West German rearmament. Rather, it is to document some of the trouble faced by those who undertook the task of writing its history.

In his overview of the 50-year history of the MGFA, Rink argued that the MGFA needed to find a compromise solution: it needed to avoid charges that its history was being militarised by increasingly influential soldiers, all the while internally, there were fears of the institute losing touch with the Bundeswehr. But this appears, to a certain extent, to miss the point.<sup>526</sup> The history of the MGFA as an institution cannot be reduced to abstract debates about the purposes of military history or academic conception of the discipline. Considering closely the actual writing of military history, as in the case of the early historiography of rearmament, something else emerges. Work which considers primarily changing concepts of military history, as in the case of Rink, misses the practice of military history. That is because Rink appears uninterested in the process by means of which scholarship was produced, and therefore has no way of accounting for the power over knowledge production at play, and the interests which might have been at work in shaping said scholarship. As this section argues, by drawing on the early historiography of rearmament, there is a need for further investigation into the relations of power, and the investiture in particular kinds of historical narratives, which shaped the writing of military history in the Federal Republic.

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<sup>526</sup> Rink, *50 Jahre MGFA*, 37–56.

When contacted in 1976, Nostitz responded that even then, his “duty to remain silent” remained intact, even though he was no longer a soldier on active duty, now being in the employ of the BND.<sup>527</sup> The permission of his boss, Gerhard Wessel, who had replaced Gehlen as head of the intelligence service in 1968,<sup>528</sup> was granted only reluctantly, it appears, and by no means in a blanket fashion. Rather, Nostitz wrote to his contact at the MGFA that before permission to speak was granted, he would have to know what questions would be asked.<sup>529</sup> Although Nostitz had agreed in principle that the conversation be recorded, it may be necessary to turn the recorder off to discuss certain matters “in the rough”, before an official version would be committed to tape.<sup>530</sup> This is characteristic of the approach taken both by those who played leading roles in early rearmament processes and those whose job it was to document them. Shortly after publication of the *Himmeroder Denkschrift*, long understood to be the programmatic document setting out key tenets of West German rearmament,<sup>531</sup> Nostitz wrote to his MGFA contact Lieutenant Colonel Johannes Fischer, criticising the publication.<sup>532</sup> The “knowledgeable reader”, by which he meant those involved in the processes described, would either have to conclude that the publication failed to

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<sup>527</sup> According to Thomas Wolf, Nostitz had been working for Gehlen since late 1946 under the cover name ‘Keller’. At the time of the Himmerod Conference, Nostitz was one of five members of the OG, alongside Speidel, Heusinger, Foertsch, and Schulze-Hinrichs to attend. From mid-1959, Nostitz was in charge of one operational department of the BND, Wolf, *Entstehung*, 55, 277, 451–52.

<sup>528</sup> In 1948 Wessel had been chief of staff to Heusinger, who was then heading up the analysis section of the OG, and later rose through the ranks of the BND, *ibid.*, 51.

<sup>529</sup> ‘Nostitz to Fischer’, 7 April 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>530</sup> ‘Nostitz to Fischer’, 27 March 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA; in the event, Fischer was satisfied with this, as there appeared to be a need to evaluate the answers in light of those given by Gehlen himself, ‘Fischer to Nostitz’, 23 April 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>531</sup> The original publication of the memorandum in Rautenberg and Wiggershaus, ‘Himmeroder Denkschrift’; Keßelring and Loch concluded in this context that the emphasis on Wildermuth and earlier networks means that the memorandum loses its status as the ‘Magna Charta’ of West German rearmament Keßelring and Loch, ‘Himmerod’, 94; remarkably, it appears Fischer was made aware of the fact that the memorandum stood at the end, rather than the beginning of a process, ‘Fischer to Nostitz’, 22 April 1977, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>532</sup> Nostitz wrote to Fischer that the material he had supplied to the MGFA should, beyond the shadow of a doubt, prove that rearmament was neither a process led by a particular individual, nor of a small ‘brain trust’, though that is exactly the version which was endorsed by the MGFA’s eventual publication, ‘Nostitz to Fischer’, 12 November 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

adequately reflect the contemporary difficulties, or that “for whatever reasons” the editors of the document had been given strict instructions to omit these conflicts.<sup>533</sup> Fischer responded to say that historical arguments may have to be made with “caution” (*Behutsamkeit*) due to “political reasons”,<sup>534</sup> though what exactly these reasons may have been remains unclear. Most notably, Fischer wrote that, because the MGFA belonged to the remit of the defence ministry, “extraordinary restraint” was required in judgment on such matters.<sup>535</sup> This suggests above all that even though nearly a decade earlier the ministry had attempted to convince Hillgruber that he would be free to research and write as he desired, there were if not explicit then at least suggestive measures in place which limited the freedom of research, if not on the Second World War, then certainly on any developments which took place after the German surrender on 8 May 1945.

The approach taken by Fischer and his team, which was distinctly shaped by interests high above their pay grades, defined not just the parameters of the project, but in doing so also limited the scope of the production of knowledge about rearmament. It resulted in significant omissions which are only being corrected decades later. One grave oversight of the early historiography of rearmament appears to be the role played by Captain Heinz Eugen Eberbach, a naval officer whose cover name, appropriate given his function in rearmament circles, was “Courier”. In the spring of 1974, Eberbach had been invited to a conference at the MGFA, and most of his documents from his time as self-described “traveller in the name of rearmament” had been handed over. But he felt disappointed that his role was being

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<sup>533</sup> ‘Nostitz to Fischer’, 15 April 1977, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>534</sup> ‘Fischer to Nostitz’, 22 April 1977.

<sup>535</sup> Fischer also suggested that in some cases, secrecy was still to be maintained, *ibid.*; in spite of these clear limitations, Fischer wrote that he hoped the publication would serve to ‘correct’ existing accounts of rearmament, ‘Fischer to Nostitz’, 5 April 1977, N 3/4, BArch-MA; in an earlier letter, Fischer had stated that one additional reason for which omissions may have to be made were ‘reasons of personal privacy’, ‘Fischer to Nostitz’, 20 May 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

neglected.<sup>536</sup> Already clear to him, too, appeared the tendency, both by those who had taken part in rearmament efforts at the time and those now writing their history, to downplay the role of Colonel Eberhard Wildermuth. Eberbach was proven right, given that Wildermuth's role has only in recent years been acknowledged properly. Wildermuth had served in the First and Second World War and had been connected to the resistance group around Jünger and Speidel in Paris, becoming minister for reconstruction and housing in the first Adenauer cabinet. As Keßelring and Loch make clear in their reassessment of Wildermuth's role, it was a lack of sources which appears to have led to his relative absence from rearmament accounts,<sup>537</sup> though it is unclear why that should have been the case, given that Eberbach told Nostitz he had made all his documents available to the MGFA. That question remains unanswered, even by Keßelring and Loch, who only suggest that Eberbach and Nostitz reconnected in part because they feared exactly that minimisation of Wildermuth's role.<sup>538</sup>

This is strange, however, given that Nostitz's MGFA contact, Fischer, explicitly referenced Wildermuth's organisation in an early letter. Fischer had even suggested that, while his team had identified the OG and the group around Wildermuth, Speidel, Foertsch, and Heusinger, "these two groups may present themselves to you [Nostitz] as *one*," implying that he appeared to suspect connections between these groups which the historians were simply not yet able to show clearly.<sup>539</sup> Fischer was correct, as it has in recent years become clear, and as I showed in Chapter 1 above, that Speidel, Foertsch, and Heusinger all were members of

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<sup>536</sup> 'Eberbach to Nostitz', 19 March 1976, 1, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>537</sup> Keßelring and Loch, 'Himmerod', 60–65.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 76 n94; results of this renewed connection in Eberhard Graf von Nostitz, 'Gedächtnisnotiz betr. Ergebnis einer am 18.11.1976 durch Kurier über die Frühphase der Wiederbewaffnung erfolgten Unterrichtung', 19 November 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA; strangely, though, Keßelring and Loch do not explain why an earlier letter by Nostitz to Eberbach appears to show little knowledge of the involvement in the processes of rearmament of the latter by the former, 'Nostitz to Eberbach', 16 March 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>539</sup> 'Fischer to Nostitz', 9 March 1976, 1, N 3/4, BArch-MA; when Fischer and his team did go to see Gehlen, Nostitz was clearly pleased by this, given that, he said, living in the North of Germany he had not been privy to much of what was organised in the South, a sentiment supported by Speier's perception of the informal and personality driven networks as per Chapter 1, 'Nostitz to Fischer', 26 April 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

Gehlen's network. Fischer's suspicion was based on the fact that he already had in hand a list of those who had worked with Wildermuth, and it was obvious to him that Nostitz was close to the centre of that group. Why, then, Nostitz and Eberbach were worried this group was to be minimised in the coming histories is not known.<sup>540</sup> What is clear, is that they were proven right, in spite of the fact that Fischer appeared to have everything he needed to properly assess its critical importance for rearmament.<sup>541</sup> An act of erasure took place here, but who by and to what end, we are unlikely to be able to say for certain. It does however suggest that both old general staff officers and the younger generation of academically trained officer-historians adhered to old chains of command which had long since become obsolete. And yet, they continued to shape the image of the armed forces which was allowed to be transmitted beyond the narrow confines of those already privy to certain kinds of knowledge about the rearmament of the FRG. Tight control appeared to be exercised over the knowledge around the true involvement of certain persons and the limited, or marginal, role of others.

From Fischer's contact to Eberbach and Nostitz, it is clear that formerly high-ranking officers, though most were now retired, still continued to be relied upon for the kind of "written oral history" which Fröhlich emphasised as critical for the early historiography of the Second World War.<sup>542</sup> Ruge and Speidel, for instance, were in close contact with David

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<sup>540</sup> Fischer and his team did speak to Eberbach at least once, though apparently some years earlier. It appears they did not quite know how to assess Eberbach's statements, as additional interviews were delayed until they had collected more material and could better comprehend his contribution, though perhaps this delay was the reason Nostitz and Eberbach believed their accounts were being sidelined in favour of another version of events, 'Fischer to Nostitz', 6 December 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA; 'Meyer to Nostitz', 30 November 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA; 'Nostitz to Fischer', 20 November 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>541</sup> Nostitz's misgivings may in part be due to the fact that he had supplied Fischer with documents to help illuminate early rearmament processes, 'Nostitz to Fischer', 14 December 1976, N 3/4, BArch-MA; the fact that the documents initially could not be located suggests a certain lack of organisation within the MGFA, 'Fischer to Nostitz', 6 December 1976.

<sup>542</sup> See Chapter 1, as well as the discussion of Hillgruber's early work in this chapter, Fröhlich, 'Der Generaloberst'.

Irving.<sup>543</sup> In spite of the view of professional historians, Ruge wrote that Irving, though “no easy man” was “obviously striving to write correctly,”<sup>544</sup> that is to represent the view of the war which came close to that of the former German general staff officers. Perhaps what Keßelring and Loch describe as the new consensus around the historiography of the early FRG needs to be viewed in this light: that it was founded on an “undemocratic conservative” consensus, which only very gradually was modernised and democratised.<sup>545</sup> Applied to the history of the armed forces, perhaps openness about the undemocratic consensus at the heart of the foundation of the new military institutions was thought to provide occasion for a debate which was rather undesired. That debate got at the heart of the supposed liberal-democratic consensus of the new state, which only became cemented in the historiography in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the years in which the MGFA was supposed to document the foundation of the armed forces. But perhaps, it was believed that the challenge to that emerging consensus from the heart of the armed forces may prove fatal.

### Werner Hahlweg and the Military Public Sphere

The historian Werner Hahlweg found himself in a unique position. Following some years of uncertainty, he had been named extraordinary professor with a special emphasis on Dutch history at Münster in 1957, before finally achieving a full “ordinary” professorship with an emphasis in military history in 1969. He now held the only chair dedicated to military history in post-war West Germany until Bernhard Kroener, formerly an assistant to Messerschmidt,

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<sup>543</sup> Though Irving was not yet widely known as a Holocaust denier, robust criticism of his work suggested that he was well on his way to that position, Martin Broszat, ‘Hitler und die Genesis der “Endlösung”’. Aus Anlaß der Thesen von David Irving’, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25, no. 4 (1977): 739–75; Eberhard Jäckel, *David Irving’s Hitler: A Faulty History Dissected*, trans. H. David Kirk (Brentwood Bay: Ben-Simon, 1993).

<sup>544</sup> ‘Ruge to Speidel’, 7 August 1975, N 379/261, BArch-MA.

<sup>545</sup> Keßelring and Loch, ‘Himmerod’, 95; in this, Keßelring and Loch follow Jens Hacke, Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit. Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik*; this is opposed to an older historiographical consensus which viewed the history of the early FRG as one in which both ‘restorative’ and ‘modernising’ tendencies were present and which for a long time also defined the historiography of the early armed forces, Ziegler, ‘Deutsch-deutsche Militärgeschichte?’

was named to a similar chair at Potsdam in 1997.<sup>546</sup> This section focuses on Hahlweg's chair as a kind of node around which debates on military and security issues could coalesce. This was in part due to the fact that Hahlweg had some natural appeal and authority relative to the former military elites which dominated the military public sphere, signalling his position at the interface of military institutions and civilian society. But Hahlweg also engaged in large amounts of teaching which, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following the emergence of the student protest movement, proves insightful. For he was able, unlike Hillgruber, to effectively navigate the teaching of military historical topics, often teaching on current revolts and guerrilla wars alongside historical ones, without being accused, it appears, of militarism. This draws into question the claim that military history was long neglected in West Germany, suggesting instead that teaching relevant to student interests and attuned to contemporary political debates could and did take place and was well received.

Hahlweg was born in 1912, had studied history and philosophy at Tübingen and Vienna, and completed his PhD under Werner Elze, who himself had studied under Hans Delbrück, in 1936.<sup>547</sup> He served in the Wehrmacht between 1939 and 1945, both in France and on the Eastern Front. He completed his habilitation, which was examined by Willy Hoppe and the Egyptologist Hermann Grapow, in December 1940.<sup>548</sup> From 1943, he served at the *Heereswaffenamt*, where he worked in arms development. In 1944, he served briefly in Thessaloniki, from where he was charged with returning eight train carriages full of captured weapons to Germany. Should this not be possible, he had orders to destroy whatever he might

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<sup>546</sup> Kroener, unlike Hahlweg, was a product of the collaboration between the MGFA and the university at Freiburg, where he obtained his doctorate and habilitation, while working at the institute. Bernd Wegener, a longtime MGFA historian, obtained a chair at the University of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg the same year.

<sup>547</sup> Dermot Bradley, 'Professor Dr. Werner Hahlweg. Eine Würdigung zur Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres am 29. April 1977', in *Militärgeschichte, Militärwissenschaft und Konfliktforschung. Eine Festschrift für Werner Hahlweg, Professor für Militärgeschichte und Wehrwissenschaft an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, zur Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres am 29. April 1977*, ed. Dermot Bradley and Ulrich Marwedel (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1977), 1–8.

<sup>548</sup> 'Diplom', 17 December 1940, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

have to leave behind. As he did not do so, Hahlweg stood accused of disobedience in the face of a clear order, as well as aiding the enemy, in spite of the fact that the carriages were later retrieved intact by German soldiers.<sup>549</sup> Hahlweg was initially cleared, but this verdict was overturned by Heinrich Himmler, with Hahlweg's attorney attempting to have the charges dropped given Hahlweg had "proven himself in the face of the enemy."<sup>550</sup> His attorney, it appears, believed the case to have been on razor's edge, and deemed it pure luck that after the decision to drop the case in March 1945,<sup>551</sup> there had been no opportunity for military justice to change its mind and convict Hahlweg anew.<sup>552</sup> The case was cleverly used by Hahlweg's attorney to certify to Hahlweg some degree of opposition, or at least lack of clear ideological conviction, towards National Socialism.<sup>553</sup> In this way, Hahlweg's attorney produced, from a draft written by Hahlweg himself,<sup>554</sup> a remarkable document which walked a fine line. Hahlweg was portrayed as a serious and conscientious soldier, while at the same time having expressed opposition to the regime. This is important, because in principle his conviction for disobedience, ostensibly a military-disciplinary rather than an ideological failing, though the two were often conflated in practice, stood. If he was perceived as a poor and unreliable soldier, his character would remain damaged. The charges therefore had to receive, from the

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<sup>549</sup> 'Anklageverfügung gegen den Leutnant Werner Hahlweg', 6 November 1944, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

<sup>550</sup> Though it is unclear, and perhaps unlikely, whether this meant that Hahlweg had seen combat, 'Bunge to Hahlweg', 29 March 1945, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

<sup>551</sup> 'Bunge to Hahlweg', 21 March 1947, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

<sup>552</sup> His attorney confirmed that the prosecution in Hahlweg's case had sought a sentence of five months imprisonment and demotion, but that no wrongdoing on the part of Hahlweg could be found, stressing the fact that the case had been taken up again for political reasons, as Himmler had taken control of the highest echelons of military justice in the Reich after the 20 July 1944 attempted coup. As part of the defence, Bunge said, he was able to view assessments made by Hahlweg's superiors of his personality and political attitudes, which confirmed to him that they viewed Hahlweg not as a convicted National Socialist, Wolraf Bunge, 'Bestätigung', 15 September 1947, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS; on Himmler's role within military justice, Matthias Uhl et al., eds., *Die Organisation des Terrors. Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1943-1945* (München: Piper, 2020), 911, n27; Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz. 1933-1945*, 47, 68, 82.

<sup>553</sup> Bunge cites a case in which Hahlweg is said to have been given a stern talking to by his superior on account of his belief that Germany had lost the war from late 1943 onwards. Likewise, he implies that the disciplinary case brought against Hahlweg was based on actions which would never have been criminalised on the part of an officer more committed to National Socialism, Bunge, 'Bestätigung', 15 September 1947.

<sup>554</sup> 'Bunge to Hahlweg', 21 March 1947.

point of view of denazification, an ideological dimension, so that they might work in his favour, rather than against him. The document achieved the desired effect, and Hahlweg was granted his denazification certificate on 11 April 1950.<sup>555</sup>

Hahlweg's courses enjoyed great popularity at Münster.<sup>556</sup> As one colleague wrote, this was good news, for "how is one supposed to analyse things, when one has no knowledge of the subject matter,"<sup>557</sup> suggesting that, more knowledgeable students aside, the result might in the long term be an improvement of debate and analysis of military and security issues. But until he received his appointment as professor of military history in 1969, the prestige which came with an *Ordinariat* eluded Hahlweg, something which greatly bothered him.<sup>558</sup> But nevertheless Hahlweg pressed on, and his teaching was remarkable in the way it bound together historical analysis and contemporary concerns. He offered, in the spring of 1964, a seminar on "contemporary guerrilla warfare," in which he took seriously the writing of Marx

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<sup>555</sup> 'Säuberungsbescheinigung', 11 April 1950, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS; Julia Wambach has suggested that the purges carried out by the French occupying forces were shaped by the rather negligent purges carried out in France itself in the wake of liberation, Julia Wambach, 'Vichy in Baden-Baden – The Personnel of the French Occupation in Germany after 1945', *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 3 (2019): 333, n75; more generally, and also cited by Hambach, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, *Politische Säuberung Unter Französischer Besatzung. Die Entnazifizierung in Württemberg-Hohenzollern* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981); Rainer Möhler, 'Politische Säuberung im Südwesten unter Französischer Besatzung', in *Kriegsende und Neubeginn. Westdeutschland und Luxemburg zwischen 1944 und 1947*, ed. Kurt Düwell and Michael Matheus (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1997), 175–92; Reinhard Grohnert, *Die Entnazifizierung in Baden, 1945-1949. Konzeptionen und Praxis der 'Eparation' am Beispiel eines Landes der französischen Besatzungszone* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991).

<sup>556</sup> Over his thirty-year career at Münster, Hahlweg held 64 lecture courses and 100 seminar-based courses on subjects ranging from courses on the late medieval Hussite Wars, to courses on modern imperial rule, guerrilla wars, and the Berlin Wall, 'Lehrtätigkeit Dr Werner Hahlwegs an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster (Sommersemester 1951 bis Wintersemester 1982/83)', n.d., Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0046, WTS.

<sup>557</sup> 'Will to Hahlweg', 25 June 1968, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0014, WTS.

<sup>558</sup> His doctoral supervisor, Walter Elze, wrote that he did not share Hahlweg's view that his failure to obtain an ordinary chair reflected negatively on his academic career (Hahlweg had complained to him for over a decade). Rather, Elze wrote, that Hahlweg's work, particularly on Clausewitz, was in no way invalidated or less valuable simply because he had failed to obtain a chair, 'Elze to Hahlweg', 25 November 1963, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0046, WTS; Elze had long counselled Hahlweg to be careful in his professional positionality, cautioning him against appearing either too much of a military specialist or too much of a historian of the Netherlands, in order to gain broader appeal, 'Elze to Hahlweg', 3 January 1952, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0046, WTS.

and Engels on war,<sup>559</sup> and in particular their influence on Mao and Che Guevara.<sup>560</sup> Their writings ultimately served as a point of connection between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, allowing Hahlweg to focus on a set of case studies drawn not just from China or from Cuba, but from Algeria, Cyprus, and Vietnam.<sup>561</sup> The seminars were popular, regularly drawing over forty students from across the humanities and social sciences and from across the semesters, too.<sup>562</sup> This suggests that the students may have agreed with Hahlweg's colleague, that their analysis of contemporary conflicts in the Global South required not just engagement with contemporary political philosophy, but with those whose texts inspired these anti-imperialist struggles, and whose strategies were being adapted and deployed to great effect.

Most remarkable are the repeated working groups and seminars papers compiled for Hahlweg's courses on the Black Panther Party (BPP). It appears that Hahlweg assigned multiple groups of students to studying the BPP, focusing on its ideology, but also on its theory and praxis of armed struggle.<sup>563</sup> The students endorsed not just an end to white supremacy in the United States, but rooted the oppression of African Americans in the capitalist system, suggesting that

“liberation of black people cannot be achieved by appeals to the humanity of the ruling class, not by demands for political and legal equality, not by conceptions of a black

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<sup>559</sup> The next year he also offered a course specifically on Marx and Engels' military thought, Werner Hahlweg, 'Mittelseminar: Soziale Revolution und Militärwesen bei Marx und Engels', 15 May 1966, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0122, WTS.

<sup>560</sup> The seminar was offered again the next year, 'Semesterplan', 16 July 1965, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0122, WTS.

<sup>561</sup> 'Notiz. Universitätsseminar über den neuzeitlichen Partisanenkrieg (mit praktischen Waffenvorfürungen)', 2 February 1964, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0122, WTS; Hahlweg's courses on imperialism likewise drew on eclectic examples, including revolutionary war in Indonesia, the Congo, Burma, the Philippines, Malaya, and elsewhere, Werner Hahlweg, 'Mittelseminar: Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus im Spiegel seiner Kriegsformen', 18 July 1966, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0122, WTS.

<sup>562</sup> A sample suggests that of 51 students in one 1964 seminar, there were 13 women, 'Mittelseminar Prof. Dr. Hahlweg, Teilnehmerliste Do 5.11.1964', n.d., Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0122, WTS; Hahlweg wrote that he had almost 80 students in the same course a year later 'Hahlweg to CS', 22 May 1966, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0161, WTS.

<sup>563</sup> 'Arbeitsgruppe II: Guerillatheorie und Praxis der "Black Panther Party"', n.d., Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0127, WTS.

capitalism or nationalism, which all only accept the current system, but only by revolutionary change of the system.”<sup>564</sup>

And while the students criticised the Black Panthers because “they are not able to articulate a comprehensive social analysis,” they concluded, “the Black Panther Party...strengthens the front against capitalism and imperialism and does its part in the international class struggle.

THEREFORE, IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES: SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK

PANTHERS.”<sup>565</sup> This declaration of solidarity, which is very much in keeping with the politics of the student movement in the late 1960s,<sup>566</sup> suggests if not an endorsement of this kind of politics by Hahlweg, then at the very least a suggestion that the students’ political engagement with these issues could be appropriately linked to their academic work.<sup>567</sup> As Maria Höhn has noted,<sup>568</sup> West German students sought to engage in solidarity with Black Panther GIs in particular, who often rotated through the Federal Republic on their way to service in Vietnam.<sup>569</sup> Hahlweg’s course, then, perhaps offered a venue in which students who were sympathetic to these campaigns might acquire the conceptual tools to link the struggles in Vietnam and the United States and to understand the role armed conflict played in connecting them. It is clear from the courses offered and the work assigned by Hahlweg,

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<sup>564</sup> ‘Arbeitsgruppe III: Thesen’, n.d., 1, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0127, WTS.

<sup>565</sup> Capitalisation in the original, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>566</sup> On solidarity between West German students and the Black Panthers, Martin Klimke, ‘Black Power, die Black-Panther-Solidaritätskomitees und der bewaffnete Kampf’, in *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006), 562–82; Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *Ein Hauch von Freiheit? Afroamerikanische Soldaten, die US-Bürgerrechtsbewegung und Deutschland* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 205–10.

<sup>567</sup> Hahlweg maintained long and friendly relationships with a number of students, who wrote regularly, updating him on their academic progress, ‘CS to Hahlweg’, 18 May 1966, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0161, WTS.

<sup>568</sup> Maria Höhn, ‘The Black Panther Solidarity Committees and the Voice of the Lumpen’, *German Studies Review* 31, no. 1 (2008): 133–54.

<sup>569</sup> Höhn and Klimke, *Freiheit*, 211–15.

that he was at least sympathetic to the idea that violent uprisings and revolts might be rooted in socio-economic grievances, rather than simply extremist ideology.<sup>570</sup>

In his overview of images of war in the Federal Republic, Florian Reichenberger argued that between the late 1960s and the end of the following decade, images of war as reflected in Bundeswehr planning moved towards an attitude critical of nuclear warfare and towards a recognition of the primacy of the political decision makers.<sup>571</sup> The military leadership, then, did little to plan for the conduct of small wars. Hahlweg himself took the opportunity of teaching on small wars across the centuries in order to develop arguments for his book on guerrilla wars, which was finally under contract in 1964.<sup>572</sup> But small and guerrilla wars continued to define the syllabi of his courses, with questions revolving around the role of guerrilla warfare in the creation of a more just society.<sup>573</sup> The regularity with which these topics recurred suggests that Hahlweg took seriously the arguments put forward by the guerrillas themselves,<sup>574</sup> that the wars they were engaged in were in pursuit of more equitable, more just societies, free from racism and imperialism.<sup>575</sup> But besides the more normal scholarly output produced by Hahlweg during this period, he continued to engage

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<sup>570</sup> 'Arbeitsgruppe IV: "Entwicklungen und Erscheinungsformen des revolutionären Kampfes in Lateinamerika, besonders der Stadtguerilla (Brasilien und Uruguay)"', 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0127, WTS.

<sup>571</sup> Reichenberger, *Der gedachte Krieg*, 368.

<sup>572</sup> The BPP was not specifically mentioned as a case study in Hahlweg's pitch to his publisher, but China, Algeria, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cuba, all examples from previous courses, were, Werner Hahlweg, 'Exposé für das von mir vorbereitete Buch: Der Kleine krieg als politische und sozialrevolutionäre Antriebskraft in Europa, Asien, und in Übersee, 1793 bis 1965.', 7 June 1964, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0157, WTS; the book was finally published in 1968, Werner Hahlweg, *Guerilla. Krieg ohne Fronten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968).

<sup>573</sup> M I and H Fr-W, 'Die Bedeutung der Guerilla zur Erreichung einer gerechten Gesellschaftsordnung', 8 July 1970, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0171, WTS.

<sup>574</sup> Later versions of his guerrilla course included a focus on Asian movements, in particular analysis of Mao and Lin Biao, Nasution, Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap, with Che Guevara and Régis Debray consolidated into one week, Werner Hahlweg, 'Politisch-strategische Denker der Gegenwart (Strategie der Guerilla)', 2 July 1969, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0179, WTS; a few years later, Hahlweg had begun to focus on Arab guerrilla movements, Werner Hahlweg, 'Die arabische Guerillabewegung', 20 January 1972, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0181, WTS.

<sup>575</sup> On Che Guevara, for instance, 'Guevara was intentionally murdered by the other side, before he could complete his work. Still, his living work, as a martyr, has entered the history books...' Werner Hahlweg, 'Seminarvortrag: Die Lehren Che Guevaras.', 25 November 1968, 12, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0179, WTS.

with the military public sphere, presenting ideas on the applicability of lessons learned during the war in Vietnam to European theatres of war to the AfW which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, sat adjacent to the MGFA having been founded upon an initiative of Meier-Welcker and others.<sup>576</sup>

Hahlweg knew his audiences and he was comfortable speaking to the military public sphere as well as left-wing groups, whether they came in the form of student organisations or unions. He lectured and led seminars on small wars, or wars of liberation as he sometimes called them, in a set of wide-ranging contexts. But it was not just the breadth of his examples which enabled his reach across these varied contexts. He took seriously, for instance, as in one seminar course entitled *Der Kampf deutscher Studenten gegen Faschismus und Krieg*, which he offered in summer 1974, the student movement and its articulation of a political cause which necessitated, occasionally violent, resistance against existing and apparently oppressive structures.<sup>577</sup> As a result of this engagement with contemporary issues, Hahlweg was referred to as an expert not just by the military public sphere,<sup>578</sup> but by the security services who in the early 1970s were engaged in a bitter and brutal struggle against the *Rote Armee Fraktion* and other left-wing terrorist groups who deemed themselves to be in a guerrilla struggle against the Federal Republic, which in turn they saw as an imperialist and militarist state on the path towards a new fascist dictatorship.<sup>579</sup> While on the one hand Hahlweg was sympathetic, then, to the ideas and causes of those who would overthrow

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<sup>576</sup> Werner Hahlweg, 'Kriegserfahrungen in Vietnam und deren Anwendbarkeit auf Europa', 10 July 1967, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0177, WTS.

<sup>577</sup> Werner Hahlweg, 'Voraussichtliche Seminarthemen (Arbeitstitel)', n.d., Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0190, WTS.

<sup>578</sup> But also the financial authorities, who occasionally drew on Hahlweg's experience with historical firearms to help them estimate taxes to be levied, 'Schrieber to Hahlweg', Summer 1976, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0111, WTS.

<sup>579</sup> In one case the BKA apparently hoped to gain insight into the RAF from Hahlweg, 'Egler to Hahlweg', 29 March 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0155, WTS; the BKA was interested in a talk Hahlweg had given in Zurich, which in turn was based on a previous publication, suggesting sustained engagement, 'Schaufelberger to Hahlweg', 31 August 1972, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0127, WTS.

various states in order to erect more just and equitable ones, cooperation with the security services and the military public sphere suggests concrete limits to his solidarity. It is likely that while Hahlweg was broadly sympathetic to the desire to create such new societies, he ultimately viewed this as a problem to be handled by politicians and the security services, rather than the student revolutionaries.

The prestige of Hahlweg's chair led to a number of requests from the MGFA and publishers to be involved in the publication of series on military history, whether it be short essays on the military history of the Second World War,<sup>580</sup> or "Battles of World Historical Significance".<sup>581</sup> Hahlweg had been in contact with the historian Peter Paret at Princeton since the latter had been a doctoral student at Oxford, and their lasting friendship appears to have greatly influenced them both. Paret offered Hahlweg an international conduit and connection to Michael Howard, Paret's supervisor, and to Liddell Hart, whom Paret knew well, as well as the International Institute for Strategic Studies, which Howard had recently founded.<sup>582</sup> Paret and Howard are perhaps the closest Anglophone analogues to someone like Hahlweg. They were both veterans of the Second World War who had transitioned into academic history, while remaining well-integrated into the military-intellectual nexus in Britain and the United States. Howard was the most successful of them all,<sup>583</sup> helping found both IISS, first directed by Alistair Buchan,<sup>584</sup> and the Department of War Studies at King's College London,<sup>585</sup> thereby creating, in the image of the United States, a modern military-

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<sup>580</sup> 'Gersdorff to Hahlweg', 20 January 1969, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0014, WTS.

<sup>581</sup> 'Wien to Hahlweg', 20 November 1961, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0014, WTS.

<sup>582</sup> 'Paret to Hahlweg', 26 October 1959, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0046, WTS.

<sup>583</sup> Brian Holden-Reid, 'Michael Howard and the Evolution of Modern War Studies', *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 3 (2009): 869–904.

<sup>584</sup> Michael Howard, 'Obituary: Alastair Francis Buchan, 1918–1976', *The Round Table* 66, no. 262 (1976): 197–98.

<sup>585</sup> Howard was a student of Liddell Hart, whom he called a 'Sage' Michael Howard, *Captain Professor: A Life in War and Peace* (London: Continuum, 2006); Lawrence Freedman, 'Michael Howard: A Reminiscence', *War on the Rocks*, 17 December 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/michael-howard-a-reminiscence/>.

intellectual complex in his own home country. Hahlweg was never as successful, nor as ambitious. He felt himself languishing on the edge of academic respectability, given his uncommonly late appointment to a chair. He never held the kind of position close to power Howard enjoyed. This was perhaps in part because Howard had moved apparently seamlessly through the social structures of the British establishment: Wellington College, Oxford, the Coldstream Guards. Hahlweg, meanwhile, had not, and the connections he had, could not easily be mobilised in support of his career. But Howard sought out policy engagement and was lauded in the United States, while Hahlweg was involved with an eclectic group of people, some of whom were attempting to make military history more academically and socially respectable.<sup>586</sup>

While he did not create a think tank or an academic department, Hahlweg aided the creation of other military historical structures, in particular the *Wehrgeschichtliches Museum* in Rastatt, which he helped equip and establish. The museum was finally taken over by the Bundeswehr in 1969, following intense negotiations in which Schottelius and Hahlweg pushed the defence ministry to support the museum under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Karl-Hermann Freiherr von Brand.<sup>587</sup> Brand had argued that the museum was best understood as a successor to the Berlin *Zeughaus*,<sup>588</sup> which Hahlweg had helped reorganise

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<sup>586</sup> These included Dermot Bradley, a former Irish Army officer who became a doctoral student of Hahlweg's and seriously involved with the GfW's successor organisation, the Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik, and Hans Bleckwenn, a medical doctor specialising in the treatment of Tuberculosis and former NVA officer who fled the GDR shortly before the wall was built and dedicated his life in West Germany to the study of the Prussian army in the 18th century, Dermot Bradley and Ulrich Marwedel, eds., *Militärsgeschichte, Militärwissenschaft und Konfliktforschung. Eine Festschrift für Werner Hahlweg, Professor für Militärsgeschichte und Wehrwissenschaft an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, zur Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres am 29. April 1977* (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1977); Joachim Niemeyer, 'Nachruf Dr. med. Hans Bleckwenn', *Zeitschrift für Heereskunde* 350/351 (1990): 129.

<sup>587</sup> Hahlweg had written a statement which made clear that the kind of museum Brand envisaged was still in keeping with modern military history, 'Schottelius to Brand', 2 July 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>588</sup> Thomas Weißbrich, 'Die Weltkriege im Museum. Das Berliner Zeughaus 1934–1945', in *Museen im Nationalsozialismus: Akteure – Orte – Politik*, ed. Tanja Baensch, Kristina Kratz-Kessemeier, and Dorothee Wimmer (Köln: Böhlau, 2016), 277–91.

after 1936. In that sense, Brand could only acknowledge that the stature of the institution had been much diminished. He now held a post which, in the days of the Zeughaus, would have been held by an Admiral.<sup>589</sup> Perhaps more acute in communicating a sense of diminished importance, however, was that Brand had, for the past eight years, lived inside the museum, acting as a nightwatchman for his own collections, which had been burgled multiple times during his tenure, though, he was quick to add, only twice while he had been present.<sup>590</sup> Suggested by this rather troubling anecdote is that even with the nominal success of bringing the museum into the fold of the Bundeswehr, the administrative and logistical issues were far from resolved.<sup>591</sup> These oversights suggested that the Bundeswehr either did not wish to present military history to the public, or did not appreciate the public relations opportunities this might have presented. In these respects, military historical knowledge was still not valued highly by the Bundeswehr.<sup>592</sup> This produced an interesting tension when viewed together with the student protests Hillgruber endured, given that the accusation there was one of funding and associated influence helping to militarise the universities. This appeared not only not to be the case with Hillgruber. Rather, the case of the museum at Rastatt suggests that while there may have been a desire to exert such influence, logistics and planning were not of a standard to actually support it.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Brand also argued that it was Hermann Heidegger to whom much credit was due in organising support for the whole affair inside the ministry, in particular helping to attach the museum to the MGFA in order to help it survive, 'Brand to Schottelius', 6 July 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>590</sup> This also meant that his newly raised salary as director of the museum under the new StAN agreement effectively diminished his pay, as the state of Baden-Württemberg, which had previously paid his salary, had paid him also to guard the collections, which, Brand cynically remarked, was still cheaper than installing a modern security system, *ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> Brand further pointed to the fact that he had not been promoted to Oberst as a sign of neglect of the museum, given multiple such posts now existed in the MGFA proper, *ibid.*

<sup>592</sup> Both Brand and Hahlweg took this assessment public, 'Für "fürstliche Baracke" fehlen fünfzehn Millionen', *Badisches Tagblatt*, 8 September 1971; a letter by Brand suggests that this article was part of a wider campaign to publicise the issue, 'Brand to Hahlweg', 30 November 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>593</sup> Brand himself suggested that the museum could 'strengthen the Wehrwille of the people', but bemoaned a 'lack of interest in the relevant places,' 'Brand to Schottelius', 6 July 1971, 3.

Brand and Hahlweg's campaign to save the museum received a near fatal blow due to an assessment produced by the director of the *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn*. While he endorsed in principle the concept of a military history museum, he raised basic points which apparently had not been considered by Brand or others in the process on its design, including the lack of a café ("no modern museum lacks a café"), no lifts for the elderly or wheelchair users, and too few toilets.<sup>594</sup> While the report in general endorsed the idea of a military historical museum, it was highly critical of the current iteration. But beyond its role as a specialised museum, the report asserted the need for a military historical museum given "some now raise the question as to the necessity of maintaining armed forces at all,"<sup>595</sup> though this argument appears decidedly weak in the face of more fundamental criticisms to do not with the concept for the museum itself, but the plans for its execution.<sup>596</sup> When Brand was finally forced to retire in 1974, he thanked Hahlweg for his "tireless commitment to our museum,"<sup>597</sup> suggesting a lasting friendship and collaboration for the purposes of maintaining not just the museum but a commitment to the study of military historical objects in West Germany, an end towards which Hahlweg, perhaps unsurprisingly given his background, was happy to work.<sup>598</sup> But the lack of enthusiasm for the museum on the part of the ministry, and

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<sup>594</sup> Harald von Petrikovits, 'Gutachten zum Wehrgeschichtlichen Museum in Rastatt', 22 July 1970, 6, 7, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>596</sup> Brand dismissed them all, mostly on the basis that the author of the report had never himself visited the museum and so was ill-placed to assess its viability, Karl-Hermann Freiherr von Brand, 'Stellungnahme zum "Gutachten zum Wehrgeschichtlichen Museum in Rastatt"', 24 August 1971, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>597</sup> Brand despaired at the uncertainty with which the museum was now faced, blaming the political leadership inside the ministry, 'Brand to Hahlweg', 25 January 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS; 'Brand to Hahlweg', 6 February 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

<sup>598</sup> Hahlweg attempted to intervene on Brand's behalf with the deputy Generalinspekteur, asking that he remain in post, though that was unsuccessful, as Brand himself informed him, 'Hahlweg to Schnell', 12 February 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS; 'Brand to Hahlweg', 22 February 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS; the response Hahlweg received suggested that Brand himself had caused problems by demanding his level of pay be maintained, though Brand denied this and rather suspected political machinations, 'Schnell to Hahlweg', 12 February 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS; 'Brand to Hahlweg', 14 March 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS; Hahlweg himself suggested that if Brand had to leave, Arnold Wirtgen would become his successor, which is significant given Wirtgen would come to lead the institute to which Hahlweg left his papers and collections after his death in 1989, 'Hermann to Hahlweg', 15 February 1974, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0005, WTS.

a lack of apparent support from other military historical organisations even inside the Bundeswehr suggests an uneasy positioning. It suggests that criticisms tarring all institutions with the same brush of militarism miss rather more complex internal dynamics, debates, as in the case of Messerschmidt's ascension to the role of leading historian of the MGFA, around the proper place of military history not just in a number of wider public or academic settings, but within the configuration of the military public sphere and military institutions on the whole.

## Conclusion

Towards the end of his life, nearly a decade after he had officially retired from Münster, Hahlweg decided to bequeath his collections of books and weapons, and primary materials including significant parts of the Clausewitz *Nachlass* which he had personally acquired, to the *Wehrtechnische Studiensammlung* in Koblenz. There was some resistance to his plans from the defence ministry, as there was a desire on Hahlweg's part to keep his holdings complete, while the ministry wished to separate them and to house parts in various museums with only the weapons making their way to Koblenz.<sup>599</sup> The bigger problem however presented itself only years later, as an enterprising student revealed that Hahlweg had joined the SS on 1 June 1933 and the NSDAP on 1 September 1936.<sup>600</sup> This prompted, following sustained media coverage, an investigation which ultimately resulted in the end of the Werner-Hahlweg-Prize under that name.<sup>601</sup> The relevant authorities even considered

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<sup>599</sup> 'Bertram to Hahlweg', 18 January 1988, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS; Hahlweg's response emphasising the need to maintain the integrity of his holdings in, 'Hahlweg to Bertram', 19 February 1988, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0016, WTS.

<sup>600</sup> René Betker, 'Das Historische Seminar der Berliner Universität im "Dritten Reich", unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der ordentlichen Professoren' (Technische Universität Berlin, 1997), 132–33; later officially confirmed by a ZMSBw working group, 'Stellungnahme zur Vita des Namensgebers' (28 March 2013), document obtained by the author via a request as per §1 Informationsfreiheitsgesetz.

<sup>601</sup> 'Bericht BAAINBw Z3/Z3.2 - 01-54-00' (28 February 2013), document obtained by the author via a request as per §1 Informationsfreiheitsgesetz.

contesting the will in which Hahlweg had left his estate to the Federal Republic, in the hopes that this might relieve them of the responsibility to award the prize, citing their lack of awareness of Hahlweg's past when accepting the inheritance.<sup>602</sup> Ultimately, it was agreed that the prize would no longer be awarded, in the hope that there would be no legal consequences for violation of the will, and a new prize, financed by funds gained from the interest accrued on Hahlweg's estate, now no longer named for him however, was created.<sup>603</sup> The prize reflects the uneasy position of military historical scholarship in the Federal Republic. Hahlweg had neither a special ideological attachment to National Socialism, nor had he committed any war crime himself (whether he witnessed any, we do not know). He had dealt relatively openly with his past and had, even an eventual investigation concluded,<sup>604</sup> engaged constructively with students, activists, and colleagues, even those from the GDR.

The acceptance of military historical scholarship by a wider public audience remained fragile in the Federal Republic, in particular where it might be associated with the National Socialist, or indeed, the Imperial German past. But as interest in Brand's museum and the reception of Hahlweg's teaching demonstrate, various sections of the wider civilian public were more receptive than the military public sphere or the armed forces themselves believed they might be. Yet, debates around the production and dissemination of military historical knowledge were critical to the engagement between military(-adjacent) structures and civil society. As such, the struggles over resources and institutional configurations addressed in this chapter represent important flashpoints for the production of knowledge itself. Hahlweg, as the country's only designated professor in military history, served as an important reference

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<sup>602</sup> 'Anlage 1 zum Bericht BAAINBw Z3/Z3.2 - 01-54-00', 11, document obtained by the author via a request as per §1 Informationsfreiheitsgesetz.

<sup>603</sup> 'Entscheidungsvorschlag - 01-54-00' (13 March 2014), document obtained by the author via a request as per §1 Informationsfreiheitsgesetz.

<sup>604</sup> 'Stellungnahme zur Vita des Namensgebers', 7.

point, but also deployed the influence which he had gained as a result in order to shape the military public sphere. Hahlweg viewed his chair clearly as a way of “closing the gap which has been opened up by the five military historical chairs abandoned in 1945.”<sup>605</sup> This happened both as a result of his engagement with military-historical structures outside the university, as in the case of the museum at Rastatt, but also more directly in his capacity as a teacher in the university seminar room. Hillgruber meanwhile had attempted to use the chair he had demanded at the same interface as Hahlweg as a means of self-promotion and received a cold welcome both from the students at Freiburg and from the ministry, neither of whom were satisfied with what he represented.

Ultimately, the structures of the military public sphere remained relatively stable in this period. Largely, as yet, untouched by the upheavals of the 1960s, its structures continued to favour conservative voices and diminish those of a more radical persuasion, although, as Hahlweg’s example shows, there was room to engage constructively with students who were increasingly interested in military-political and military-historical issues as a basis for their own political analyses. At the same time, within the military public sphere, little had changed with regards to the production of military-historical knowledge. Scholarship was still shaped by structures so opaque, even participants in the events at issue had trouble recognising who exactly was trying to shape the writing of given histories, as in the case of the early historiography of rearmament. The ire directed at people like Messerschmidt, who were attempting to correct the early historiography of the Second World War which had minimised the involvement of the Wehrmacht in the atrocities committed in the course of the war of annihilation, suggests that political conflagrations over the writing of military historical work

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<sup>605</sup> Werner Hahlweg, ‘Kurzer Bericht über meine Tätigkeit auf dem Gebiet der neuzeitlichen Wehrwissenschaften und der Militärgeschichte’, 30 September 1967, 1, Nachlass Werner Hahlweg A 0014, WTS.

were not just possible but increasingly likely, and they would burst into the public sphere when, in the course of opposition against the exhibition on the crimes of the Wehrmacht organised by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research in the 1990s, thousands of Neo-Nazis marched in cities right across unified Germany.

## Chapter 4: The Peace Movement and Military Counter-Publics, 1979-1989

In late February 1982, the BMVg received a strange letter of support.<sup>606</sup> Having read about NATO's so-called double-track decision of 1979 and the FRG's ambition to station the medium-range Pershing II ballistic missiles on its territory, the author offered the ministry of defence to station them on his property near his house. "My own personal sense of security eases my taking this unconventional step," he wrote, while "the unusually high density of trees on my property provides appropriate cover for the missiles."<sup>607</sup> Perhaps unexpectedly, the ministry replied, asking for a detailed plan of the property in order to be able to carry out a "serious assessment" of this "interesting proposition".<sup>608</sup> Unfortunately for the ministry, this came to naught, chiefly because the author was Winfried Bornemann, a man who had over the years made a name for himself by sending hoax letters to various government authorities.<sup>609</sup> Still, the apparent seriousness with which the offer was addressed highlights the potentially incendiary nature of the issue, which soon came to a head.

By the time of Bornemann's letter reached the BMVg, what contemporaries called the "Second Cold War" was already in full swing. As Anja Hanisch has observed, even the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, created as a result of the Helsinki Accords in 1975, was unable to effectively mediate the escalation.<sup>610</sup> Following *détente*, the end of the 1970s saw tensions increasing anew as NATO settled on the double-track decision

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<sup>606</sup> Various people are being identified only by their initials to protect their privacy.

<sup>607</sup> 'Bornemann to BMVg' (25 February 1982), B 487/1, BArch-MA.

<sup>608</sup> 'BMVg FÜ S III to Bornemann' (30 April 1982), B 487/1, BArch-MA.

<sup>609</sup> 'Personalien', *Stern*, 1982.

<sup>610</sup> Anja Hanisch, 'From Helsinki to Afghanistan: The CSCE Process and the Beginning of the Second Cold War', in *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s*, ed. Christoph Becker-Schaum et al. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 37–51.

and the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.<sup>611</sup> As Jan Hansen has argued, it is possible to read the rise of widespread protest movements in Germany and elsewhere as a sign that the Cold War as a hegemonic category of analysis was being displaced by something else.<sup>612</sup>

Bornemann's letter arrived in the context of arms-control negotiations which had begun in September 1981 and so-far remained fruitless. What NATO had desired was to reduce the Warsaw Pact's arms build-up, specifically the recently deployed SS-20 missiles.<sup>613</sup> In the case of the failure of negotiations, NATO had threatened to deploy the new Pershing II missiles. Hansen summarises the double-track decision's novelty by stating that, "never before had an alliance offered its opponent negotiations about weapons which had not yet been produced."<sup>614</sup>

In terms of the balance of deterrence, the NATO double-track decision was a result of Soviet intermediate range capability.<sup>615</sup> The USSR's SS-20s were capable, even if stationed beyond the Urals, to hit targets in all of Western Europe. The new calculus of deterrence was based on the question whether the United States would guarantee European security, even if escalation meant American targets, too, could now be hit. The Soviet superiority in this regard was not covered by existing arms control regimes, and thus posed, in the view of

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<sup>611</sup> An overview in, Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung, Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Seminal on the genesis and the role of Europeans in pushing the United States' administration to respond to perceived Soviet aggression is still Kristina Spohr, 'Conflict and Cooperation in Intra-Alliance Nuclear Politics: Western Europe, the United States, and the Genesis of NATO's Dual-Track Decision, 1977–1979', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011): 39–89.

<sup>612</sup> Jan Hansen, *Abschied vom Kalten Krieg?: Die Sozialdemokraten und der Nachrüstungsstreit (1977-1987)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 1–12.

<sup>613</sup> Spohr, 'Conflict', 39–43.

<sup>614</sup> Hansen, *Abschied vom Kalten Krieg?*, 3.

<sup>615</sup> Comparative on this point are Michael Ploetz, 'Erosion der Abschreckung? Die Krise der amerikanischen Militärstrategie am Vorabend des NATO-Doppelbeschlusses', in *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung, Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive*, ed. Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 31–48; Gerhard Wettig, 'Sowjetische Euroraketenrüstung und Auseinandersetzung mit den Reaktionen des Westens. Motivationen und Entscheidungen', in *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung, Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive*, ed. Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 49–64.

NATO, a potential fissure in the American nuclear umbrella.<sup>616</sup> It was, as Tim Geiger and Kristina Spohr agree, the Western Europeans, in particular the West German government under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who pushed for the double-track decision.<sup>617</sup> Ironically, Schmidt would lose his chancellorship in the wake of the break-up of the social-liberal (SPD/FDP) coalition government in part due to differences of opinion on foreign and security matters.<sup>618</sup> It fell to his successor, Helmut Kohl, to implement the double-track decision, and it was his new CDU/CSU/FDP majority, following the 1983 election, which voted on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1983 to implement it.<sup>619</sup> As a result, the USSR broke off negotiations and stationed additional SS-22s in the GDR and Czechoslovakia.<sup>620</sup>

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first, most substantial, charts the development of the *Darmstädter Signal*, a group of soldiers who opposed the official security and defence policy of the Federal Republic, and who organised and mobilised to do so. Their activism, and attendant controversies and court battles, showed just how much sway more conservative voices continued to hold within the armed forces. This was true not just in terms of their institutional power, but of the ability to set the terms of the debate which followed from that power. The second section shows that, outside of military institutions, a critical media ecology could flourish, and did, with one central point of reference being the radio

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<sup>616</sup> Tim Geiger, 'The NATO Double-Track Decision: Genesis and Implementation', in *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s*, ed. Christoph Becker-Schaum et al. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 52–69.

<sup>617</sup> Andreas Lutsch, 'Unter Bedingungen der unvollständigen nuklearen Revolution. Die Bundeswehrführung im Vorfeld des NATO-Doppelbeschlusses', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 79, no. 1 (2020): 85–122.

<sup>618</sup> Tim Geiger, 'Die Regierung Schmidt-Genscher und der NATO-Doppelbeschluss', in *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung, Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive*, ed. Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 95–122.

<sup>619</sup> Andreas Rödder, 'Bündnissolidarität und Rüstungskontrollpolitik. Die Regierung Kohl-Genscher, der NATO-Doppelbeschluss und die Innenseite der Außenpolitik', in *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung, Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive*, ed. Philipp Gassert, Tim Geiger, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 123–36.

<sup>620</sup> Spohr, 'Conflict'; for a technical appreciation of these different weapon systems, Oliver Bange, 'SS-20 and Pershing II: Weapon Systems and the Dynamization of East-West Relations', in *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s*, ed. Christoph Becker-Schaum et al. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 70–86.

programme *Streitkräfte und Strategien*, which has now been running for 52 years. The programme provided an important critical platform outside military institutions which required engagement on the part of military elites. The third section deals with the post-retirement activities of Wolf Graf von Baudissin, one of the most reform minded soldiers of the post-war period. Baudissin helped found an institute for peace research in Hamburg (IFSH) and served as a node around which debates on alternative security policies could take place. He also provides an important study of the ways reform-minded soldiers attempted, throughout the post-war period, to shape personnel policies in favour of their like-minded comrades, although their successes were, if they ever materialised, short-lived.

The peace movement, as reflected in the historiography, was constituted by multitudes of different civil society groups and organisations. Churches, trade unions, feminists, environmental activists, all have been subject to extensive analysis.<sup>621</sup> The role of military opposition to West German security and defence policy remains woefully underexplored, however. The absence of critical voices within security and defence circles creates the implicit assumption that these groups were quietly wholly supportive of government policy. And while we have no evidence to the contrary for most actors within these spheres, it is also clear that this was far from universally true. This chapter charts the rise of critical voices within the ranks of the armed forces and chronicles the struggles which some faced in making their voices heard. Opposition did largely not go unnoticed or unopposed, and often critics felt themselves to have become victims to repercussions on the basis of their political views. But even within the peace movement, it was not always easy for the various civil society actors to relate to soldiers, given that the notion that armed forces were a relic of the past,

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<sup>621</sup> For an overview, Christoph Becker-Schaum et al., eds., *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016).

which had helped promote war and carry out genocide, was relatively widespread. The soldiers here concerned then sat uncomfortably between military institutions and military-adjacent structures who regarded them as a dangerous threat to harmony within the ranks, and civilian actors who regarded their very existence in uniform as a kind of provocation. The soldiers found themselves, then, in the strange bind. They pursued positions apparently too radical for the armed forces, but too tame to elicit much sympathy from the peace movement at large. Beyond expanding the historiography of the peace movement, the chapter takes account of the structures which gave rise to more critical voices on security and defence issues, showing that a *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, a counter-public took shape, parts of which continue to exert influence on West German security and defence policy to this day.

### The Darmstädter Signal

In 1983, galvanised by the perception that the arms control negotiations would fail and in the context of looming approval of the deployment of the Pershing IIs by the Bundestag, which had progressed under some considerable manoeuvring by Schmidt,<sup>622</sup> dissent began to take shape within the West German armed forces. On 26 September 1983, around 20 soldiers of varying ranks published a declaration which would come to be known as the *Darmstädter Signal* (DS),<sup>623</sup> with those who signed up to it known as *Signaler*, in which they distanced themselves from the security policy of the FRG. They declared:

“The Arms Race in East and West has become a great threat to humanity. Ever scarcer resources, precarious livelihoods, global hunger and over 150 wars in the so-called Third

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<sup>622</sup> Kristina Spohr, *The Global Chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the Reshaping of the International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 85–108.

<sup>623</sup> ‘JP to P’ (29 November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA; Of the 20, half were members of the SPD, a handful of the Green Party, and the rest sympathetic to both parties, ‘Prieß to ESE’ (29 November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

World and the increasing danger that such wars could spill-over into Europe, as well as the possibility of a nuclear war ‘by accident’, demand a change of course.”<sup>624</sup>

Beyond this general rejection of the FRG’s security policy, they formulated a number of demands: a return to détente, concrete steps towards disarmament negotiations, proactive arms reduction in order to facilitate talks, the establishment of nuclear weapons free zones in Europe, a focus on the “defensive mission” of the German army, and a step by step reduction of arms exports “to the so-called Third World”.<sup>625</sup> The signatories were “confident that this DS will elicit positive reactions from *Kameraden* of all ranks,” and although they feared professional repercussions, they expected that danger to subside once the number of signatories became sufficiently large, thus signalling broad-based approval for the positions their declaration expressed.<sup>626</sup> One leading Signaler wrote that this was about “stabilising a comfortably large minority.”<sup>627</sup>

Major Helmuth Prieß was identified as a contact and founding member for the DS. Prieß had been a member of the SPD since 1972, a member of the public services trade union ÖTV since 1974, and a member of the Swisttal municipal council (*Gemeinderat*) since 1979.<sup>628</sup>

The question of political loyalty was to plague the DS from the beginning.<sup>629</sup> This was true

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<sup>624</sup> ‘Aktive Soldaten und Mitarbeiter der Bundeswehr sagen NEIN zur Stationierung neuer Atomraketen in unserem Land!’ (September 1983), B 487/3, BArch-MA.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Arbeitskreis Darmstädter Signal, ‘Für die Presse!’ (26 September 1983), B 487/1, BArch-MA; for an analysis of the importance of the idea of the guter Kamerad in German military history, see Kühne, *Kameradschaft*.

<sup>627</sup> ‘Prieß to GK’ (24 November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>628</sup> ‘Steckbrief Helmuth Prieß’, Arbeitskreis Darmstädter Signal, 18 November 2019, [https://web.archive.org/web/20080328231838/http://www.darmstaedter-signal.de/steckbr/steck\\_hp.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20080328231838/http://www.darmstaedter-signal.de/steckbr/steck_hp.php); ‘Helmuth Prieß. Kämpfer für Gerechtigkeit gestorben’, *Kölnische Rundschau*, 27 April 2012, <https://www.rundschau-online.de/helmuth-priess-kaempfer-fuer-gerechtigkeit-gestorben-10935500>.

<sup>629</sup> For an elaboration of Prieß’ critical view of the DKP, see the exchange with Herbert Mies of the DKP, who had gotten in touch, referencing the 20 July 1944 and the supposed natural affinity between German officers and communists, ‘Mies to Prieß’ (30 March 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA; ‘Prieß to Mies’ (4 April 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA; during a later meeting, one Signaler said that ‘if a single DKP member can be found in our ranks, all our work is jeopardised,’ ‘Arbeitstreffen Ak-DS’ (26 September 1987), 4, B 487/108, BArch-MA.

not just in terms of the soldiers' loyalty to the armed forces and their state, which as we will see below became the primary issue in the debates which embroiled the DS. Those who were members of the SPD additionally faced the reality that they were opposed to policies proposed, pursued, and enacted by a government led by their own party.<sup>630</sup> The early 1980s marked a renegotiation of the identity of West German social democracy. The party's left, often led by young, female members became, at the grassroots level, difficult to distinguish from the wider peace movement, which is borne out by the participation of locally active SPD members, many young though all male, in the DS. If this moment saw a transformation of the idea of the political among SPD party members, a move towards more democratic accountability among military and political elites and an embrace of grassroots participation in military and political decision making, this was reflected in the politics of the DS.<sup>631</sup>

Prieß emerged as a leadership figure of the DS, in part due to his effectiveness in mobilising public opinion in support of the endeavour, in addition to his political experience.<sup>632</sup> And yet, early on, the DS ran into trouble when *Unsere Zeit* (UZ), the newspaper of the West German Communist Party (DKP), published an article about the DS. While the initial press release published alongside the DS had been circulated to a number of newspapers, the UZ had not been among them, specifically in order to avoid the suspicion that the DS might be linked to East-German or Soviet machinations. In their defence, members of the *Sprecherkreis*, the small group leading the DS publicly, argued that since the DS had only been published in an abridged form in UZ, their position clearly was not completely favourable to the East.<sup>633</sup> The DS at its inception faced an accusation which plagued activism opposed to NATO member

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<sup>630</sup> Jan Hansen, 'The End of the SPD as We Knew it? Euromissiles, Peace Activism, and the Transformation of the Political', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 29, no. 1 (2018): 61–84.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, 71–76.

<sup>632</sup> 'HD to Prieß' (13 December 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>633</sup> 'Sprecherkreis DS to FÜ H I 3 BMVg' (November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

states' security and defence policy in general, namely that they were ultimately, in some fashion, either directed from Moscow or had, due to their political naivety, fallen victim to Soviet propaganda.<sup>634</sup> This suspicion persistently plagued the DS, but no empirical evidence is available which would support such claims of direct influence.

Suspicion persisted, not just within the military bureaucracy, but also in the ranks of the DS itself, with one Signaler withdrawing support after publication in UZ.<sup>635</sup> In this latter case, the soldier seems to have lost faith in the endeavour because names of the Signaler, including his own, were included. This led to a decision that no names, those of the Sprecherkreis aside, would be published from hereon, even though support grew, with 40 new signatures in the first two months and a total of 140 by early 1985.<sup>636</sup> In early November 1983, with now 60 signatories, the Sprecherkreis issued another press statement, writing that, "the signatories understand themselves as in their professional capacity loyally serving, but in their political activity critically acting soldiers in the sense of the citizen in uniform."<sup>637</sup> The military and civilian leadership of the Bundeswehr viewed the issue quite differently. Far from seeing a group of soldiers politically engaged within the civil-military relations concept the Bundeswehr had long prided itself on, they understood this to be a fundamentally problematic political challenge. It was this perceived challenge to which the DS had responded by no longer including soldiers' names in their publications, a move which they

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<sup>634</sup> Gerhard Wettig, 'The Last Soviet Offensive in the Cold War: Emergence and Development of the Campaign against NATO Euromissiles, 1979–1983', *Cold War History* 9, no. 1 (2009): esp. 91-93; Gerhard Wettig, 'Die Sowjetunion in der Auseinandersetzung über den NATO-Doppelbeschluss 1979–1983', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 57, no. 2 (2009): 217–59; a critique of this argument in Holger Nehring and Benjamin Ziemann, 'Do All Paths Lead to Moscow? The NATO Dual-Track Decision and the Peace Movement – A Critique', *Cold War History* 12, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.

<sup>635</sup> 'Prieß to Signaler' (1 December 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

<sup>636</sup> 'JP to P'; 'Prieß to Signaler' (25 November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA; On early 1985 numbers, 'In Friedensbewegung bekannter Offizier soll Hannover verlassen', *Evangelischer Pressedienst*, 25 January 1985.

<sup>637</sup> Arbeitskreis Darmstädter Signal, 'Pressemitteilung' (14 November 1983), B 487/2, BArch-MA.

believed might shield them from professional repercussions, though, as we will see below, it did so only with limited effect.

### *Repercussions*

The Signaler's caution was warranted, given that public exposure by various members of the DS generally resulted in not just criticism or debate but, regularly, legal or disciplinary consequences. This section, then, summarises a few of these cases to draw out some of the broader themes, which revolve around questions of civil-military relations but more concretely the negotiation of political dissent by those on the left within military institutions. The content of the cases below revolves primarily around the interpretation of a small number of clauses of the so-called *Soldatengesetz* (SG), the law governing rights and responsibilities of soldiers. The relevant clauses, §10 Abs. 6, §15 Abs. 1, and §15 Abs. 3, relate to the duties of the military superior and the political activity permitted to soldiers respectively. I argue that the negotiation of these cases revealed a certain unevenness of military-disciplinary structures. While military superiors punished even the smallest acts of dissent, the courts generally overturned such punishments, citing the right of to free speech soldiers still possessed. These cases therefore show just how wide the gap between acceptable political speech in the armed forces and in civilian society had become by the early 1980s.

In September 1983, Prieß received a letter from Peter Milz, a CDU politician and reserve officer, claiming that the DS represented opinions which “in the end are compatible neither with the SG nor the German basic law.”<sup>638</sup> Yet, Prieß' continued service as an officer made him subject to the former and nominally a defender of the latter, a contradiction which Milz

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<sup>638</sup> ‘Milz to Prieß’ (1 September 1983), B 487/96, BArch-MA.

clearly hoped Prieß would resolve by resigning. But Prieß had no intention of doing so, having stated in defence of his continued service in the spring of 1982 that he believed it to be critical there existed some plurality of opinion within the armed forces.<sup>639</sup> Prieß' remarks clearly did not sit well with Milz, motivating the latter, a politician usually concerned with transport and infrastructure, to submit two questions regarding the political activity of military officers to the government. First, Milz asked whether officers were allowed to endorse positions of the "so-called peace movement" in private or in an official capacity.<sup>640</sup> State Secretary Peter-Kurt Würzbach responded that although officers were in principle allowed to engage in political activity, while officially representing the Bundeswehr they were bound by the official position of the government.<sup>641</sup> According to §15 Abs. 1 SG, soldiers were forbidden from advocating for any political position while on duty.<sup>642</sup> Würzbach stressed that in addition, officers were subject to §10 Abs. 6 SG, which demanded restraint when it came to the expression of their personal opinion, even in private, where this might endanger the trust conferred upon them in their position as military superiors.<sup>643</sup> Milz also wanted to know what measures to government was taking against officers who "by their presence in uniform or by verbal support," indicated their effective opposition to government policy.<sup>644</sup> Würzbach reiterated his previous answer, arguing that it depended on the individual case, but also stated that the line was drawn at support in uniform. Concrete disciplinary

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<sup>639</sup> 'Niederschrift über die Vernehmung eines Soldaten; Heeresamt, der Rechtsberater' (11 June 1982), B 487/93, BArch-MA; Cf. Prieß' ideas in late 1981, 'SPD Ortsverein Köln to Prieß' (24 November 1981), B 487/93, BArch-MA.

<sup>640</sup> 'Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 12. September 1983 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung' (16 September 1983), 14, BT-Drs. 10/395.

<sup>641</sup> Würzbach's reputation had been significantly damaged by the affair which developed around the wrongful dismissal of *General Günter Kießling* due to his suspected homosexuality, Heiner Möllers, *Die Affäre Kießling. Der größte Skandal der Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2019).

<sup>642</sup> 'Schriftliche Fragen', 15; further, 'Plenarprotokoll der 39. Sitzung, 10. Wahlperiode' (30 November 1983), 2679, Plenarprotokoll 10/39.

<sup>643</sup> 'Schriftliche Fragen', 15.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

measures were down to the individual superior, as was the decision whether to take disciplinary measures at all.<sup>645</sup>

These issues came to a head in several cases of DS signatories, who appeared to be challenging the status quo in FRG security policy. So, for instance, in the case of Captain Carl-Alfred Fechner, who had been a member of a group who had handed over a petition to the mayor of Tuttlingen, 10 kilometres from his base, calling for a nuclear-weapons free zone in that city. Fechner had been off duty, in civilian clothing, and had at no point stated his rank or military profession. Fechner, who was later redeployed, he believed due to his continued activism,<sup>646</sup> was not the only Signaler who was punished following a public event. Other cases included Major Franz Meyer, who was subject to disciplinary proceedings following a speech given at an Easter march, First Lieutenant Joachim Ludwig who spoke to a Signaler in his barracks, and First Lieutenant Dieter Staude who was forced to cover up a “swords to ploughshares” sticker on his briefcase.<sup>647</sup> By early 1984, two further officers had their security clearances revoked after being interviewed by military intelligence,<sup>648</sup> possibly due to their membership in the Green Party.<sup>649</sup> Würzbach denied that this was the case, but simultaneously declined to comment further, citing on-going appeals. In one of those cases, an officer would not now receive his promotion, which had already been issued. Würzbach

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 16; in contrast, Würzbach stated in parliament that soldiers who had attended an event of the CDU in Essen in uniform did not violate the law because it had been an event concerned with security policy, ‘39. Sitzung’, 2677–78.

<sup>646</sup> ‘Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 16. Dezember 1985 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung’ (20 December 1985), 27, BT-Drs. 10/4607.

<sup>647</sup> ‘Meinungsfreiheit in der Bundesrepublik am Fall von Hauptmann Carl-Alfred Fechner’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 22 October 1984), 4–5.

<sup>648</sup> ‘Mehrere Offiziere der Bundeswehr gemäßregelt’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 31 March 1984; Würzbach himself in late 1983 confirmed that MAD involvement was not the norm in disciplinary cases involving potential violations of the SG only, ‘39. Sitzung’, 2680.

<sup>649</sup> A prominent example of this was Major General Gert Bastian, who had been asked to go into retirement in 1980 due to his opposition to the NATO double-track decision following a submission of a memorandum on the issue to Apel, ‘Gespräch mit Gert Bastian über die Opposition gegen die Nachrüstung’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 3 August 1981), 2.

cited changes in personnel planning in that case.<sup>650</sup> An indicator for the extreme tensions which marked this debate even in the Bundestag were evident in comments by Ursula Krone-Appuhn, of the CSU. After an extended comment on the lack of care by officers for their men, she praised, “our old battalions. Whoever talked nonsense was punished immediately. Whoever tried hard was rewarded. Under those conditions, military service was fun.”<sup>651</sup>

Fechner was subject to a *strenger Verweis* (reprimand), though this was ultimately overruled by the 2. *Wehrdienstsenat* of the *Bundesverwaltungsgericht* (BVerwG/2. WD), the division of West Germany’s supreme administrative court responsible for military disciplinary cases.<sup>652</sup> The BMVg declined to say whether comments by Fechner’s superior officer, denouncing criticism of the FRG’s security policy as unacceptable, were relevant in this matter.<sup>653</sup> In the end, the *Wehrdienstsenat* found that Fechner had not violated his duty to exercise restraint,<sup>654</sup> or diminished his authority as a military superior.<sup>655</sup> In fact, the court ruled, Fechner’s exercise of his right to freedom of political opinion was objectionable, as far as the law was concerned, “neither in content nor in form.”<sup>656</sup> In Meyer’s case, the court also ruled in his favour, arguing that civic engagement by soldiers was to be expected and encouraged, and even if critical of government policy did not necessarily conflict with the expectation of loyal service.<sup>657</sup> The judgment asserted the defensive nature of the West German armed forces as

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<sup>650</sup> ‘Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 31. Oktober 1983 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung’ (4 November 1983), 19–20, BT-Drs. 10/569; an exchange with Würzbach on the issue in, ‘39. Sitzung’, 2678–79.

<sup>651</sup> ‘Plenarprotokoll der 88. Sitzung, 10. Wahlperiode’ (4 October 1984), 6474–75, Plenarprotokoll 10/88; see also Friederike Brühöfener, ‘Defining the West German Soldier: Military, Masculinity and Society in West Germany, 1945-1989’ (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 325.

<sup>652</sup> ‘Fall Fechner’, 5; fundamentally, Richard Häußler, ‘Streifzüge durch die aktuelle Rechtsprechung der Wehrdienstsenate des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts’, *Deutsches Verwaltungsblatt* 133, no. 11 (2018): 677–86.

<sup>653</sup> In fact, Würzbach declined to comment on even the smallest detail of the case, ‘39. Sitzung’, 2682–83.

<sup>654</sup> ‘Beschluss vom 25.7.1984’, BVerwG 2 WDB 3/84, 1.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>657</sup> ‘Urteil vom 10.10.1985’, BVerwG 2 WD 19/85, 2; some senior officers disagreed with the courts, see Schmückle below or, ‘Vizeadmiral Fromm: Ein Offizier muß Regierungspolitik vertreten’, *Flensburger Tageblatt*, 15 December 1983.

per the constitution and cited various international agreements and treaties in which the FRG had committed itself to peaceful conflict resolution.<sup>658</sup> In his speech, Meyer had not expressed political opinions which were at odds with his position.

“The armed forces have to tolerate such behaviour, just as the soldier has to tolerate criticism by comrades and the public of his behaviour and speech in such cases. Tensions which can result from this...the responsible authority can ease by means of redeployment.”<sup>659</sup>

The court, in other words, sought to create spaces for political debate, even within the barracks.

While the court in Fechner’s case had argued that such small-scale civic activism might seem naïve, a view widely shared within the armed forces, it was the result of a legitimate fear of the consequences of the potential use of nuclear weapons, which had a broad and heterogenous basis in West German society and, “should not...expose those who hold it to ridicule,”<sup>660</sup> nor should it be understood, as in Meyer’s case, to conflict with the soldier’s obligations to loyal service.<sup>661</sup> This, however, was precisely what the Signaler alleged had happened time and again.<sup>662</sup> In Fechner’s case, a press statement by the DS claimed that his superior when issuing the reprimand had pointed at the fact that Fechner’s political demand had been at odds with government policy.<sup>663</sup> In principle, this could warrant disciplinary measures, even the court had conceded. However, this was only to be the case where an

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<sup>658</sup> ‘Urteil’, BVerwG 2 WD 19/85, 2–4.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>660</sup> ‘Beschluss’, BVerwG 2 WDB 3/84, 2.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 3; for a contemporaneous critical legal opinion, Horst Meier and Ulrich Wollenteit, ‘Disziplinarrecht und “politische Treuepflicht”’, *Kritische Justiz* 16, no. 1 (1983): 22–40.

<sup>662</sup> Arbeitskreis Darmstädter Signal, ‘Für die Presse!’ (9 April 1984), B 487/1, BArch-MA.

<sup>663</sup> Arbeitskreis Darmstädter Signal, ‘Pressemitteilung’; Fechner, too, fled into the public limelight, appearing on television to publicise the work of the DS and (perceived) professional repercussions arising from it, ‘Priefß to Signaler’ (20 January 1984), B 487/3, BArch-MA.

officer was sufficiently high-ranking that his opinion might be mistaken to be representative of the position of the West German government.<sup>664</sup> Meyer, unlike Fechner, was found not to have exercised the appropriate restraint,<sup>665</sup> referring to those critical of the peace movement as “revanchists”.<sup>666</sup> This one-sidedness, a feature of the form rather than content of Meyer’s speech,<sup>667</sup> was decidedly in violation of the principle of moderation, the court ruled, imposing a two-year promotion ban. The freedom accorded to soldiers as citizens under the FRG’s constitution imposed additional responsibilities upon each individual soldier, the court concluded,<sup>668</sup> which Meyer was ruled to have disregarded, justifying the punishment.

These cases serve to illustrate a question which was to plague the DS for years to come, namely what constituted improper political engagement on the part of a soldier or an officer. It was this question which also became central to the issue of professional consequences for Signaler, which they often understood to be thinly veiled reprisals. In spite of this feeling, widespread within the DS, the *Wehrbeauftragte*, a parliamentary ombudsman for soldiers,<sup>669</sup> then Karl Wilhelm Berkhan of the SPD, in his annual report for 1983 found that, in general, “superiors have shown the appropriate sensitivity and tolerance.” This was, Berkhan wrote, particularly true of the “middle generation” of officers. Both older and younger generations had “not always found the right tone,” when discussing these matters. However, Berkhan did imply that the ministry in particular pursued cases of public political speech by soldiers differently, depending on whether they supported or opposed the double-track decision.<sup>670</sup> In

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<sup>664</sup> ‘Beschluss’, BVerwG 2 WDB 3/84, 3–4; but see on the limits of this principle, ‘Beschluss vom 10.10.1989’, BVerwG 2 WDB 4/89.

<sup>665</sup> ‘Urteil’, BVerwG 2 WD 19/85, 5.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid., 8–11.

<sup>669</sup> Rudolf J. Schlaffer, *Der Wehrbeauftragte des Deutschen Bundestages. Aus Sorge um den Soldaten* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011).

<sup>670</sup> ‘Unterrichtung durch den Wehrbeauftragten. Jahresbericht 1983’ (24 February 1984), 5–6, BT-Drs. 10/1061; in Berkhan’s report the next year this issue played only a minor role, though questions around the integration of the armed forces within society and their appeal to young people were central, ‘Unterrichtung durch den

order to avoid what they understood to be politically motivated professional reprisals, therefore, the Signaler took to the public sphere. Prieß regularly engaged in public debates, and he and others gave speeches echoing messages contained in the original Signal and professing their solidarity with the wider peace movement.<sup>671</sup> And yet, the above-mentioned cases illustrate that this strategy could result in the exact opposite of the intended outcome.

In a debate about Berkhan's report in early 1984,<sup>672</sup> Roland Vogt of the Green Party raised again the possibility that soldiers had been punished for participating in political activism which opposed NATO's double track decision, referring in particular to the DS and to Ludwig's aforementioned case. In the latter case, Vogt argued that the SG did not demand "political abstinence" from soldiers, but only prohibited the expression of and advocacy for certain extreme political positions, which, the rulings in both Fechner's and Meyer's case explicitly supported. The double-track decision, which he referred to as a *Schicksalsfrage*, a question of the fate of the nation, simply was too important and fundamental to belong to that category. Yet, not only was the reprimand issued to the aforementioned Ludwig not rescinded, he, too, had his security clearances revoked, after further interview by the MAD.<sup>673</sup> The political basis for the kind of support for left-leaning soldiers expressed by Vogt was relatively broadly based, unsurprisingly given the wide-ranging peace movement although the Parliamentary Committee on Defence did in the end describe these as "isolated

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Wehrbeauftragten. Jahresbericht 1984' (28 February 1985), BT-Drs. 10/2946; see also the debate in 'Plenarprotokoll der 160. Sitzung, 10. Wahlperiode' (27 September 1985), 11983--12007, Plenarprotokoll 10/160.

<sup>671</sup> 'General war "von den Socken"', *Neue Rhein-Zeitung*, 28 September 1983; JST, 'Ansprache zur Eröffnung des Ostermarsches Ruhr in Duisburg' (21 April 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA; Helmuth Prieß, 'Redebeitrag auf der dezentralen Veranstaltung des Ostermarsches' (1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA.

<sup>672</sup> Berkhan himself said relatively little, citing the need to maintain the trust of all sides, '88. Sitzung', 6482-83.

<sup>673</sup> 'Plenarprotokoll der 62. Sitzung, 10. Wahlperiode' (30 March 1984), 4440-42, Plenarprotokoll 10/62, in an interjection recorded in the parliamentary protocol, Würzbach, in spite of the previously cited on-going appeal, claimed that Ludwig met with members of verfassungsförderlicher Organisationen, which warranted the punishment, a contradiction which was not lost on Vogt; Vogt's interpretation of the SG echoed later in '88. Sitzung', 6476-78.

incidents”.<sup>674</sup> Olaf Feldmann, disarmament spokesperson for the FDP, argued that the freedom of expression of soldiers must never be restricted to opinions held which were in line with government policy.<sup>675</sup> And while even Berkhan himself agreed that the political content of an opinion ought not to be relevant in these cases, it is unclear what this was supposed to mean in practice.<sup>676</sup> At issue here was never, from the point of view of conservatives, freedom of expression, but soldierly loyalty and obedience. That those closer to the centre or the left never quite managed to completely reframe this issue towards one of freedom of speech makes clear the hold more conservative voices had over the meaning of military identity, for they were able to successfully maintain that those soldiers who criticised government policy ultimately had no place in the ranks. The fact that the last active soldier within the DS retired recently suggests that the campaign launched by conservative voices was ultimately successful, and that their influence remains strong.

The cases of Fechner, Ludwig, Staude, and Meyer also illustrate some important tensions between the DS, the lower and higher echelons of the judiciary, and more senior officers. The DS, as we have seen, generally believed themselves to be unfairly targeted. Some senior officers believed not just that the DS ought to be targeted, but that their transgressions were to be punished more severely than they were.<sup>677</sup> This was no doubt grounded in older ideas of civil-military relations, which, these officers believed, demanded unconditional, silent loyalty. The lower echelons of the judiciary, tended to be overruled by the BVerwG in cases where they were seen to punish freedom of political speech, indicating that they had perhaps an overly narrow view of what was and was not permissible. The BVerwG seemed

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<sup>674</sup> ‘Beschlussempfehlung und Bericht des Verteidigungsausschusses zu der Unterrichtung durch den Wehrbeauftragten’ (13 June 1984), 2, BT-Drs. 10/1611.

<sup>675</sup> ‘88. Sitzung’, 6479.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., 6483, 6486.

<sup>677</sup> Noted by Willi Weiskirch (CDU), Berkhan’s successor, was the ‘coldheartedness’ of a number of superior officers in the debate around the 1984 report mentioned above, ‘160. Sitzung’, 11991–92.

more sympathetic to issues of freedom of expression but was more acutely aware of the problems this might bring for military superiors. While this did not in practice mean that the DS soldiers were always acquitted, the penalties were often reduced. But, as mentioned above, even when this was the case, the effect was small as soldiers considering activism might still be deterred and the DS and their supporters were unable to fundamentally reframe the conversation and shift the meaning of military loyalty beyond its traditional confines. In this light, the fact that the courts generally ruled in their favour suggests not just intra-institutional discord of a degree, but a much wider gap in the perception of civil-military relations between civilian and military echelons even of the same institutions, in this case those institutions of military justice.

### *Media Networks*

Conservative voices were framing the political opposition of the DS in terms of the loyal service expected, as outlined above. And while this is unlikely to have been lost on the Signaler themselves, they were unable to effectively reframe the conversation as one of freedom of expression.<sup>678</sup> This was true in spite the fact that the DS leadership at first appeared adept at using a well-established and well-connected media network, which did not escape the, sometimes critical, notice of the Signaler themselves.<sup>679</sup> Prieß and the Sprecherkreis regularly coordinated letter-writing campaigns among the Signaler to produce a critical mass of public support on various issues.<sup>680</sup> This next section deals with these publicity campaigns, but in particular aims at showing their limits in reframing the discussion away from one of loyalty, towards one on freedom of expression, in spite of the concerted

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<sup>678</sup> JST, 'Erklärung zu meiner Versetzung von Hannover nach Köln' (24 January 1984), B 487/3, BArch-MA.

<sup>679</sup> 'HD to Prieß'.

<sup>680</sup> 'Rundschreiben DS' (22 January 1984), B 487/3, BArch-MA; 'Rundschreiben DS' (29 February 1984), B 487/4, BArch-MA.

effort across multiple forms of media. Because while these campaigns could be effective, they also occasionally revealed the limited media expertise of the Sprecherkreis.

One particular advocate for publicity of the DS, if not always in agreement with their politics, was Bernd C. Hesslein, who used his platform at the helm of *Streitkräfte und Strategien*, a critical radio programme aired fortnightly on *NDR Info*, to give room to the DS' positions. Hesslein was often given a forum in official Bundeswehr publications, something which the DS itself was long denied.<sup>681</sup> The DS leadership also briefed Signaler as to how to respond to critics during debates. Hans Schueler, Lieutenant Colonel of the Reserves, lawyer, and long-time writer on legal issues at the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*, wrote to Prieß in April 1984, expressing his sympathy for the DS. Although he himself supported the double-track decision, he viewed it as “intolerable that its opponents inside the Bundeswehr apparently should be limited in their freedom of expression.”<sup>682</sup> At least some of Schueler's sympathy may have originated from the fact that his own journalistic career at the conservative daily *Die Welt* was cut short over a difference of political opinion in 1969.<sup>683</sup> But nevertheless, his sympathy, and that of Hesslein, show that there were media channels with significant audiences which might be open to the DS, if they could be leveraged effectively and carefully.

In early February 1984, the TV-programme *Monitor*, shown by the public broadcaster *ARD*, aired a segment on the DS. Just a few days later, General Gerd Schmückle, who had meanwhile retired after a stint as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe at NATO, had

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<sup>681</sup> ‘Rundschreiben DS’, 22 January 1984.

<sup>682</sup> ‘Schueler to Prieß’ (11 April 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA.

<sup>683</sup> Christian Schmidt-Häuer, ‘Wächter des Rechts’, *Die Zeit*, 19 May 2004.

commented in a radio interview that in the DS, the TV-programme had granted coverage to a group, which

“wants to enforce a security policy completely different from that of the Federal Government. This I regard as outrageous in an army. An officer has to serve with obedience and not to pursue his own ideas or those of a political party.”<sup>684</sup>

Schmückle, following his retirement, became a formidable presence in the military public sphere, which we will return to. Towards the end of February 1984, the magazine *Stern* published an article profiling leading members of the DS, among them Prieß and Fechner, as a result of the Monitor segment. This proved a particular headache because the soldiers were pictured in uniform, which produced a certain amount of panic among the Signaler, given their difficult history with the SG. The *Sprecherkreis* argued that they were safe, though there seemed to be a move on the part of the ministry in the works to punish unauthorised images in uniform like these in future. Further, debate instructions as above were issued.<sup>685</sup> Signaler were to point out that they had no editorial control over the article, a weak argument at best given that they had agreed to pose for the article in uniform after all. Should members be subjected to questioning regarding the organisational leadership of the DS, they were, the *Sprecherkreis* argued, not obliged to answer, given that this fell outside of their duties.<sup>686</sup> Whether this line of argument reassured any of the junior soldiers or those serving their compulsory military service, seems unlikely. What the Monitor incident makes clear is the extent to which perceptions among the DS and more conservative voices differed. Schmückle had, as clearly as anyone, made the case that loyalty ought to trump personal political preferences, with the caveat that it depended upon the degree to which the personal opinion

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<sup>684</sup> ‘Rundschreiben DS’ (6 February 1984), B 487/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>685</sup> See also, ‘Schröder to Prieß’ (27 February 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA; ‘Schröder to Röhrs’ (27 February 1984), B 487/5, BArch-MA.

<sup>686</sup> ‘Rundschreiben DS’, 29 February 1984.

differed from the course the state intended to pursue. He also appears to have believed, a point I return to below, that higher-ranking officers were rather freer to voice dissent than junior officers, the exact opposite of what the courts had ruled in the cases we have seen above.

February 1984 proved to be a turning point for the mood within the Sprecherkreis, minutes from a meeting in December of that year suggest. A number of leading members expressed discontent over what they argued were the “directionlessness and actionism” of the DS, though they also complained of “organisational deficiencies”.<sup>687</sup> One problem seemed to be the question as to whether the DS focused sufficiently on soldiers, and thereby whether it lived up to its stated purpose, the expansion of debate within the Bundeswehr. These doubts mainly came from inside the Sprecherkreis itself, and the main avenue of critique seemed to be that the DS should provide a forum which allowed soldiers to confront complex and difficult situations with regards to security policy.<sup>688</sup> Prieß rejected this, arguing that critics seemed to intend to turn the DS into a research institute, rather than a broad church which could accommodate a wider set of political positions for debate.<sup>689</sup> Yet the critics seemed mainly concerned with public perceptions of the DS. They argued, a thinly veiled stab at Prieß who publicly endorsed SPD security policy, that DS positions, expressed through various members of the Sprecherkreis, often seemed ad-hoc echoes of party-political positions, or attempts to ingratiate the DS with “groups which attack official security policy”. An example of this latter accusation was said to be speeches given at Easter Marches associated with the peace movement by Prieß and Meyer.<sup>690</sup> The DS needed to return to its

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<sup>687</sup> ‘Anlage zum Kurzprotokoll vom Treffen des Sprecherkreises in Bonn-Röttgen’ (15 December 1984), 1, B 487/7, BArch-MA.

<sup>688</sup> RF and AH, ‘Kritik zum Darmstädter Signal’ (13 September 1984), B 487/7, BArch-MA.

<sup>689</sup> ‘Anlage’, 2–3.

<sup>690</sup> RF and AH, ‘Kritik’, 1.

original goals.<sup>691</sup> This meant a focus on debate, but also a formulation of concrete suggestions as to how to pursue the DS' original goals as outlined above.

But the critics also suggested moving away from “abstract discussions about security policy,” and towards more concrete issues: “the limits of loyalty”, “meaning and content of *Innere Führung*”, “political culture in the Bundeswehr”.<sup>692</sup> It was to be a focus on these issues which has come to define the DS in the decades since, although the group has been unable to cause a significant shift in debates on either political culture or loyal service. What the criticism facilitated was not just a debates on the aims of the DS, it also made clear the structural issues which arose from an informal grouping which, since the UZ debacle,<sup>693</sup> had kept membership if not secret then confidential, thereby offering a convenient way for Prieß to hold on to the reins, citing privacy concerns when asked to circulate the new suggestions to members.<sup>694</sup> And while the DS was unsuccessful in provoking a wider shift within the armed forces, it has continuously offered a forum to dissenting voices in the ranks. Most prominent among those was Lieutenant Colonel Jürgen Rose, who we met at the beginning of the thesis, and who, while a member of the board of the DS, became the first conscientious objector to the German contribution to the war in Afghanistan in 2007.<sup>695</sup>

From the beginning, the DS, in the form of Prieß, had pursued networks and contacts with prominent personalities. Major General (Retired) Gert Bastian was in regular contact with Prieß, and encouraged at least one young soldier, who was a member of the CDU youth-

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<sup>691</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>693</sup> ‘RF to Prieß’ (3 November 1984), B 487/7, BArch-MA; Lists later distributed via request, ‘Arbeitstreffen Ak-DS’, 3.

<sup>694</sup> ‘Prieß to PM’ (15 October 1985), B 487/9, BArch-MA.

<sup>695</sup> ‘Soldat verweigert Tornado-Einsatz’; on a similar case in the context of the Iraq war, see ‘Urteil’, BVerwG 2 WD 12/04; Hebler, ‘Der Widerstreit von Gehorsampflicht und Gewissensfreiheit des Soldaten – Anmerkung zum Urteil des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts vom 21.06.2005 (2 WD 12.04)’; evaluating, Derleder, ‘Das Gewissen des Militärs’.

wing, to join the DS.<sup>696</sup> Yet, Bastian was not to be a long-term ally. He killed himself following his murder of his partner, leader of the Green Party Petra Kelly, in 1992.<sup>697</sup> In early 1984, Prieß also corresponded with Baudissin, who had by then retired as a Lieutenant General and become Professor at the *Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik* at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), to whom he sent the original Signal. Baudissin had always regarded himself as an advocate for peace, once stating in an interview near the end of his life that Heusinger had advocated for his inclusion in the process of rearmament because he needed someone who would help shape the new army's "conscience".<sup>698</sup> Prieß may have expected Baudissin to be sympathetic to the cause of the DS, but Baudissin, in what we may regard as an indicator of his feeling towards the DS, had to confess he had lost the document.<sup>699</sup>

Baudissin's substantive verdict was devastating. He regarded the DS' theses as reductive and wondered whether there was a point to their activism, given that much of this had been said elsewhere. In what must surely have been a blow to Prieß and the others, Baudissin wrote that, "this kind of political activity outside the 'normal' political groups seems to me only compatible in a very limited sense with my concept of the citizen in uniform." In a typically dry manner, Baudissin wrote that, "as an elder, I do not know if I would take responsibility for the younger signatories, who make themselves vulnerable unnecessarily and without hope of success." He thought little, he concluded, "of martyrdom with little chance of success."<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Uwe Bogen, 'Nicht alle Soldaten für Nachrüstung', *Pforzheimer Zeitung*, 10 December 1983.

<sup>697</sup> Saskia Richter, 'Petra Kelly, International Green Leader: On Biography and the Peace Movement as Resources of Power in West German Politics, 1979-1983', *German Politics & Society* 33, no. 4 (2015): 80–96; Silke Mende and Birgit Metzger, 'Eco-Pacifism: The Environmental Movement as a Source for the Peace Movement', in *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s*, ed. Christoph Becker-Schaum et al. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 119–37.

<sup>698</sup> Mainhardt Graf von Nayhauss-Cormons, 'Interview mit Graf Baudissin' (April 1991), 43, BDZ 391, BDZ.

<sup>699</sup> 'Baudissin to Prieß' (15 February 1984), B 487/4, BArch-MA.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*; In 1990, Parliamentary State Secretary Willy Wimmer responded to a question by SPD MdB Gernot Erler that there was no evidence that disciplinary measures against lower ranks were pursued vigorously, 'Wimmer to Erler' (20 March 1990), B 487/109, BArch-MA; Original questions in, 'Disziplinarmaßnahmen

Baudissin himself had been careful with regards to his own personal political activity while in uniform. Though he had generally been outspoken and joined a trade union while still on active duty, he only joined the SPD after his retirement, and throughout his career in the Bundeswehr, he believed himself to have been held back by a lack of experience on the Eastern Front during the Second World War.<sup>701</sup> Baudissin could, in his associations, be more selective than the DS. In April 1979, he had an argument with Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, who, “due to technological reasons,” believed war could again be conducted freely without fear of escalation.<sup>702</sup> Baudissin’s position, however, was not far removed from that of the DS. He wrote in 1982, that he believed “in the strength pluralistic society, the dynamism of our conflicts and complexity of our problems, but, above all, the contingency of one’s own position.”<sup>703</sup> Here, again, is a moment at which the more radical approach to civil-military relations envisioned by the DS came into conflict with experience and socialisation. Baudissin was, and this even his enemies conceded, a classic Prussian officer, and in spite of even his credentials he had been unable to compel more conservative officers throughout his career to change course on military identity. His comments above, then, rather than reflecting a wholesale critique of the DS may reflect a lifetime of activism, one which ultimately bore little fruit, and which cautioned towards pragmatism, rather than wholesale abandonment of the project the DS pursued.

By 1986, a *Förderkreis Darmstädter Signal* had been formed, as an official association (*Verein*) which could raise funds and help organise activities and events.<sup>704</sup> In particular, the charitable nature of the *Förderkreis* was to help alleviate a need for funds which had plagued

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gegen Soldaten des Darmstädter Signals’ (6 April 1990), BT-Drs. 11/6889; Official answers in, ‘Disziplinarmaßnahmen gegen Soldaten des Darmstädter Signals’ (8 May 1990), BT-Drs. 11/7068.

<sup>701</sup> Günter Kießling, ‘Aus dem ersten Soldatenleben’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 November 2001.

<sup>702</sup> ‘Baudissin to HB’ (12 April 1979), BDZ 619.

<sup>703</sup> ‘Baudissin to Heinz Röhr’ (25 May 1982), BDZ 633.

<sup>704</sup> ‘Satzung des Arbeitskreises “Darmstädter Signal”’ (6 December 1986), B 487/18, BArch-MA.

the DS from the start.<sup>705</sup> It also provided the soldierly DS with a direct line to wider civil society and a number of prominent figures were recruited to the board, including Friedrich-Wilhelm Freiherr von Sell, former superintendent of the public broadcaster WDR, while Meyer took over as managing director.<sup>706</sup> Sell and Meyer immediately went to work, recruiting Green Party politician Henning Schierholz to the board and, from 1987, SPD politician Katrin Fuchs.<sup>707</sup> In his letter of acceptance, Schierholz expressed a central tension at the heart of the DS. He wrote,

“I am a political pacifist and conscientious objector, who questions the existence of armed forces in principle... Such an attitude of course also extends to the DS, which for me is only legitimate in as far as it organises soldiers who stand up for disarmament and are ready to continuously develop their positions.”<sup>708</sup>

This question had been raised before, notably in the critique of the DS formulated in 1984, when the authors argued that there existed a fundamental difference between the peace movement, for whom “every soldier is one too many”, and the DS, who generally took the existence of armed forces for granted.<sup>709</sup> That tension was never really resolved, even after the Cold War ended.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> ‘Prieß to Signaler’, 25 November 1983; ‘Rundschreiben DS’, 22 January 1984; Accounts show that the Förderkreis was able to raise nearly 30,000 DM in donations by 1989, ‘Förderkreis DS Jahresabschluß 1989’ (7 April 1990), B 487/109, BArch-MA.

<sup>706</sup> Sell had himself served in the Wehrmacht at the end of the war and had spent about a year as a British prisoner of war. His father Ulrich had been the executor of the will of Wilhelm II and died in 1945 in Soviet captivity, Friedrich-Wilhelm Freiherr von Sell, ‘Einladung zur Vorstandssitzung’ (9 April 1986), B 487/15, BArch-MA.

<sup>707</sup> ‘Arbeitstreffen Ak-DS’, 2.

<sup>708</sup> ‘Schierholz to Sell’ (21 March 1986), B 487/14, BArch-MA.

<sup>709</sup> RF and AH, ‘Kritik’, 4.

<sup>710</sup> ‘Prieß to Ak-DS’ (1 May 1990), B 487/109, BArch-MA.

*The DS and the Limits of Military Loyalty*

Questions around the limits of loyal military service were adjudicated not just in the courts, but in and across the ranks, and the DS felt that their opponents enjoyed the protection of the highest echelons of military power, which they used publicly to draw into question the legality of the DS' activism. So, for instance, in the case of an interview by former chief of the MAD Major General Hubertus Senff, in the Bundeswehr publication *Heer*.<sup>711</sup> The question which provoked such outrage among the Signaler was, in full:

“How do you assess action, for instance by members of the DS, aimed against the Bundeswehr? Do non-democratic forces with such ‘demonstrations for peace’ aim to undermine the fighting power of the armed forces?”<sup>712</sup>

Senff immediately rejected the MAD's responsibility in this matter, given, he argued, these were questions to be assessed with disciplinary regulations or, perhaps, criminal law in mind. The MAD's purview, he said, was to assess the dangers of *verfassungsfeindliche Bestrebungen*, and to collect and evaluate information in this regard. In conclusion, he said, such *Bestrebungen* had “not yet” been apparent when it came to the DS (*bisher nicht erkennbar*). It was this last qualification which led to a vigorous campaign by the DS not just against the questioner, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Uhde, but against Senff himself. What was implied here by both Uhde and Senff can best be understood again in the context of the question of what might count as loyal service. If these issues indeed were ones of freedom of expression, as the DS had continuously claimed, then of course these remarks were outrageous, implying as they did potentially unconstitutional behaviour. But this, clearly, is not the frame through which anyone not associated with the DS viewed these issues. Rather, to military institutions, including military justice, these could only be understood as questions

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<sup>711</sup> Peter Uhde, ‘Melden macht frei’, *Heer*, 15 September 1987.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

of (dis-)obedience and dangerous levels of activism unbecoming of the ranks, undermining potentially the fighting power of the armed forces as a whole.

Prieß immediately wrote a complaint, accusing Uhde of having acted in an *unkameradschaftlich* manner, in addition to demanding an apology from Senff directly.<sup>713</sup> The DS network immediately sprang into action.<sup>714</sup> One wrote to Uhde directly, stating he could not imagine that “a man in your [Uhde’s] position would disseminate publicly such serious accusations without being able to present concrete evidence.”<sup>715</sup> Another two wrote to the editorial board of the publication, making similar points and demanding evidence or retraction.<sup>716</sup> Sell went another way, writing directly to Chancellor Kohl, demanding to know whether the idea that those who criticised the Bundeswehr were immediately suspicious was widespread.<sup>717</sup> Kohl’s chief of staff Martin Guddat argued in response that Sell’s view that hostility to the constitution was implied by Uhde’s question was only one interpretation. And anyway, Guddat countered, the defence minister had told him the question had been viewed critically in editorial board meetings after the publication, and therefore this sort of incident was unlikely to recur. Any suggestion that Senff himself ought to be disciplined for his “not yet,” was rejected. Guddat concluded by stating that, “being open for the exchange of varying and conflicting opinions is an important feature of civic responsibility.”<sup>718</sup> This particular quote was to return to haunt Guddat during a later debate with Sell over the so-called

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<sup>713</sup> A matter complicated by the fact that he and Prieß were part of the same command, to which Prieß had been assigned in what he himself deemed a punitive manner, ‘Prieß to stellv. Amtschef Heeresamt und Chef des Stabes’ (4 October 1987), B 487/108, BArch-MA; ‘Prieß to Senff’ (8 October 1987), B 487/23, BArch-MA; Prieß was not the only DS member who formally complained, ‘DS to Chef des Stabes 4. Panzergrenadierdivision’ (15 October 1987), B 487/23, BArch-MA.

<sup>714</sup> ‘JS and AB to Redaktion der Truppenzeitschrift “Heer”’ (27 September 1987), B 487/23, BArch-MA; ‘Prieß to Geerdts’ (12 October 1987), B 487/23, BArch-MA.

<sup>715</sup> ‘BH to Uhde’ (16 October 1987), B 487/108, BArch-MA.

<sup>716</sup> ‘SW to Zentralredaktion der Truppenzeitschrift Heer’ (15 October 1987), B 487/108, BArch-MA; ‘UW to Zentralredaktion der Truppenzeitschrift Heer’ (20 October 1987), B 487/108, BArch-MA.

<sup>717</sup> ‘Sell to Kohl’ (13 October 1987), B 487/108, BArch-MA.

<sup>718</sup> ‘Guddat to Sell’ (5 January 1988), B 487/108, BArch-MA; For an answer to the complaints raised above, ‘Hein to Prieß’ (24 November 1987), B 487/23, BArch-MA.

*Soldatenurteile*, which held that the statement that any soldier was a potential murderer was protected by freedom of speech.<sup>719</sup>

In principle, these sorts of debates were nothing new. As we have seen, the DS had engaged in them from the start. A problem which the Signaler themselves slowly became aware of, though they were unable to resolve it, was that the institutions they found themselves a part of were not equipped to deal with the expression of political opinions outside of a relatively narrow spectrum. Few were ready to reject the institutions outright, preferring instead to widen the spectrum of public opinion within them. What is clear, is that the institutions tried to erase this internal resistance. In a response during a parliamentary question-and-answer session in November 1983, Würzbach stated that he believed not all those who had taken part in uniform in peace movement marches in the preceding months were soldiers. He suggested, in fact, that, “we have evidence, that not all were soldiers who we saw on the television screens as part of these protests, that...uniforms were distributed, which were worn to give the public the impression that soldiers were in attendance in large numbers.”<sup>720</sup> The tension between a commitment to service and an uneasy position among the ranks has endured within the DS to this day, although a kind of resolution is now in sight. In October 2019, the last active-duty soldier on the board of the DS retired. The last holdout, Captain Florian Kling, suggested the DS should dissolve. The Förderkreis would continue to exist, to write the history of the association and to provide support should a group of soldiers wish to pursue a similar course in future.<sup>721</sup> The DS has always occupied a liminal position, one between

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<sup>719</sup> Revolving around a quote from a 1932 essay by Kurt Tucholsky: ‘For four years there were entire square miles of land upon which murder was obligatory, whereas a half hour’s distance away it was strictly forbidden. Did I say “Murder”? Of course murder. Soldiers are murderers.’ This translation in Justin Collings, *Democracy’s Guardians: A History of the German Federal Constitutional Court, 1951-2001* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 266.

<sup>720</sup> ‘39. Sitzung’, 2680.

<sup>721</sup> Tobias Schulze, ‘Kritische Soldaten gehen aus’, *taz*, 17 October 2019.

camps, rejecting the common sense of nuclear deterrence, but also the pacifism which often characterised the peace movement. This, they shared with Baudissin, who viewed himself as an advocate for peace rather than an anti-war campaigner. But from what we have seen above, it seems they were too activist even for the father of the concept of the citizen in uniform.

### Streitkräfte und Strategien

Although the DS in its political advocacy broke new ground, it emerged into a military public sphere already substantially changed. The sphere now presented itself, following the founding of Baudissin's IFSH and other institutions, as a more diverse eco-system. One key part in this process was played by the aforementioned radio programme *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (S&S). First aired on 8 July 1968 and led and shaped for decades by the aforementioned Hesslein and Karl-Heinz Harenberg, though founded by Bernhard Würdehoff, the programme still runs and to this day forms an important part of a media ecology critical of the armed forces.<sup>722</sup> Hesslein had served "enthusiastically" in the Wehrmacht for the entirety of the war, taking part in the invasions of Poland, France, and the Soviet Union, becoming a British prisoner of war in Italy in 1945 and attending re-education classes at Wilton Park.<sup>723</sup> Harenberg was born in Goslar in 1936, and thus too late to have served in the war. He spent his entire career at the *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (NDR), primarily responsible for S&S.<sup>724</sup> The programme was a production of the NDR, although it was also picked up by the WDR and was thus available in Bonn, and in particular on the Hardthöhe,

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<sup>722</sup> As late as 1979, the programme conceived of itself as a 'critical chronicle', 'Die Reformpläne des Hamburger Senats für die Hochschule der Bundeswehr', *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 23 February 1979), 1.

<sup>723</sup> Wilfried Weinke, 'Kämpfer für das freie Wort', *taz*, 12 August 2011, <https://taz.de/!256340/>; Hesslein declared himself to have been a soldier until he was released from captivity in 1948, Hermann Hagena and Reinhard Mutz, eds., *Streitkräfte und Strategien. Sicherheitspolitik – kontrovers diskutiert* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001), 315.

<sup>724</sup> Hagena and Mutz, *Streitkräfte und Strategien*, 315.

the seat of the BMVg. In its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary episode, aired on 14 July 2018, the programme's leading journalists wrote that certain high-ranking military officers, like the former chief of staff of the armed forces, General Wolfgang Altenburg, appreciated the programme's contribution to the culture of debate of the armed forces.<sup>725</sup> The dissent and critical engagement promoted by the programme could this receive a hearing at the highest echelons of military institutions. This was, however, not always the case when the same arguments were put forward by lower- or middle-ranking officers, like those who formed the DS. There is neither the room here nor the intention to provide for a comprehensive discourse analysis of the radio programme, or for a detailed investigation into its inner workings. Rather, this section considers the coverage the programme gave to some key issues throughout the 1980s, especially its continued engagement with peace research and arms control issues, but also questions around civil-military relations.<sup>726</sup> But the section is not interested in the coverage itself, but rather in the reactions it provoked, particularly from current or recently retired senior officers.

From when it first aired in 1968, S&S ran once about once a month. Beginning in 1981, S&S has been airing roughly every two weeks. Whatever its frequency, the programme runs for about 30 minutes and covers two to three topics. Each topic generally involves interviews with two or more experts as well as some background information. The experts are often critical, arguing generally from the point of view of the parliamentary opposition, though they are not often parliamentarians. They are academics, lawyers, activists, but also soldiers, though often those who, like the DS, were critical of the armed forces' leadership. Baudissin, for instance, was a regular guest and contributor, perhaps unsurprisingly given his proximity

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<sup>725</sup> '50 Jahre Streitkräfte und Strategien', *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 14 July 2018), 3.

<sup>726</sup> German arms exports in particular have been a constant theme, see 'Erfahrungen mit der reformierten Offiziersausbildung. Gespräch mit Hauptmann Bornemann, dem ersten Absolventen der Bundeswehrhochschule der die FüAk besuchte', *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 19 January 1981).

to the recording studio in Hamburg.<sup>727</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, Bastian too made a number of appearances, criticising the NATO double-track decision.<sup>728</sup> Harenberg took his role as a critical journalist educating the public extremely seriously. Following a report on NATO defence capability and strategy and the need for an upgraded nuclear arsenal in 1979, he said, “that we are being so poorly informed...is not least due to the fact that we ask so few questions. That we accept defence as a God-given scourge [*Heimsuchung*].”<sup>729</sup> Hesslein for his part opened a programme in early 1981 by stating that, “after two world wars which were begun by Germany, each endured to a devastating defeat, the fatal tendency to prefer military to political reasoning has not abated.”<sup>730</sup> “Reflectiveness in politics...is not a German characteristic,” Hesslein said, asserting that the programme’s purpose was, “to promote it, to at least give it a chance.”<sup>731</sup> These statements were hard-learned, and perhaps it was Harenberg’s and Hesslein’s service during the Second World War which allowed for an easier reception of this critique. But that their critical reporting required a response was clear to the Bundeswehr at least by the early 1980s, and when one was given by the ministry, Harenberg and Hesslein usually gave it airtime, too.<sup>732</sup>

But their critical attention did not mean that Harenberg and Hesslein entirely rejected the premise of military institutions. More generally, it led them to pursue a pragmatic approach

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<sup>727</sup> ‘50 Jahre Streitkräfte und Strategien’, 22; ‘Sicherheitspolitik’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 10 November 1982); Baudissin’s first appearance in, ‘Wolf Graf von Baudissin, Generalleutnant a.D.’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 23 December 1968). For a number of other contributions by Baudissin to S&S, see BDZ 603.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 9 Baudissin and Bastian were connected not just by their appearances on the programme, but by the fact that they had both served as commanding officers of the *Panzergrenadierbrigade 4*, though with more than a decade between them.

<sup>729</sup> ‘Reformpläne des Hamburger Senats’, 10.

<sup>730</sup> ‘Gespräch mit Bastian’, 1.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

<sup>732</sup> ‘Zwei Offiziere berichten über ihre Erfahrungen beim Studium an der Hochschule der Bundeswehr in Hamburg’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 9 November 1981); response, ‘Gespräch mit dem Pressesprecher der Hamburger Bundeswehrhochschule, Hans Seiler, über einen kritischen Erfahrungsbericht von zwei Offiziersstudenten’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 7 December 1981).

which would highlight issues with existing institutions, allowing for dissenting voices within military institutions to air their concerns and drive movement for potential reforms. One example of this is an interview conducted with General Günter Kießling in 1982, in which the question of effective integration within NATO was raised. Kießling, then Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe at NATO, bemoaned a lack of integration of staffs and below the level of general officers, regretting that the Bundeswehr did not train enough staff officers at foreign military academies. It seems obvious that Kießling raised this critique in part because on S&S it would receive attention it otherwise might not, and, more importantly, that it might be listened to by some at the ministry.<sup>733</sup>

Their platform, Harenberg and Hesslein overwhelmingly offered to reformist voices, rather than traditionally minded officers.<sup>734</sup> In August 1981, Bastian was again on the programme to point out that opposition to the double-track decision was being derided as aiding the communist cause by an SPD government, who ought to know better, given that the social democrat-led peace movement was similarly labelled in the late 1950s.<sup>735</sup> To Bastian, the peace movement aimed to “prevent damage to the German people,” and to regard this as *Schützenhilfe* for Moscow was ridiculous.<sup>736</sup> When asked about the heterogeneity of the peace movement, Bastian stated that this was not to be understood as *prima facie* rivalry, but rather as working towards different goals. He opposed the double-track decision as a singularly risky and dangerous decision, while others aimed more generally at NATO strategy. This more generalised criticism, Bastian believed to be fruitless. Concrete demands

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<sup>733</sup> ‘Die Rolle der Deutschen in der NATO. Interview mit dem stellvertretenden OB-Europa, General Günther Kiessling’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 13 September 1982), 8–9.

<sup>734</sup> Cf. Zimmermann, ‘Zwischen Reformern und Traditionalisten? Aushandlungsprozesse zum Traditionsverhältnis in der Bundeswehr’; Ziegler, ‘Deutsch-deutsche Militärgeschichte?’

<sup>735</sup> ‘Gespräch mit Bastian’, 5.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

would be more effective, he believed.<sup>737</sup> In airing this position, Bastian made use of S&S as an important forum for audiences interested in critical coverage on security and defence issues, and perhaps hoped that this would shift not just public opinion but force a more concrete engagement, allowing perhaps for dissent, from the BMVg.

Engagement on S&S with these issues was sustained, perhaps in part in order to widen the spectrum of acceptable opinions which could be expressed without fear of repercussions in the military public sphere. S&S regularly covered the field of peace research, which Hesslein defined in 1982 as, “the idea that other ways, less costly and less deadly than arms races, can lead to peace.” In the same programme, S&S covered controversy surrounding the *German Society for Peace and Conflict Research* (DGFK). The DGFK’s aims were defined as “working towards the prevention of wars and the survival in the present,” while simultaneously “through peaceful transformation, strive towards an order which supplies the prerequisites for the realisation of peace.”<sup>738</sup> S&S outlined the conservative critique of the DGFK, which pointed towards a perceived lack of diversity among the projects supported by the society and their limited practical applicability.<sup>739</sup> S&S defended peace research against the charge, with Hesslein arguing that the DGFK’s task was, “not to supply useful assessments, but inconvenient truths,” a fitting description for his own work, too.<sup>740</sup> The programme presented an impassioned plea for the continued relevance and independence of peace research, which was threatened by a withdrawal of support by the states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein, all CDU governed (CSU in the case of Bavaria), in the face of a discipline which was far outgunned, almost literally, by

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<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

<sup>738</sup> ‘Der Streit um die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 18 January 1982).

<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

research and development into arms production. Defence expenditure in general proved an issue of continuing relevance to S&S, in part as a means of critiquing the government's spending priorities, as for example in a September 1982 programme, which raised the issue of increased defence spending at a time of cuts to social services.<sup>741</sup>

The programme regularly benefited from the desire of retired but formerly high-ranking officers to air their grievances. So, for instance, in the case of Schmückle's earlier comments, (he had retired in 1980), and also when it came to the so-called *Kießling-Affäre* of 1983-1984.<sup>742</sup> Kießling, Schmückle's successor at NATO, had been suspected of being homosexual and was forced into retirement on the basis of this presumed sexuality, which was deemed to be a security risk. Kießling fled into the public limelight, and defence minister Manfred Wörner was forced to accept a dismissal of Kießling with the usual honours in March 1984 as a compromise solution.<sup>743</sup> Although the target of Schmückle's ire was General Wolfgang Altenburg, then chief of staff of the armed forces, his comments clearly appealed more widely, and Prieß, too, took note of the interview.<sup>744</sup> Schmückle on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1984 declared that he was "distraught". "It is of course unthinkable for generals to accept the humiliation of a colleague and not to demand a swift and definitive resolution."<sup>745</sup> But, Schmückle continued,

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<sup>741</sup> 'Planer ohne Verantwortung. Die Emcke-Vorschläge zur Reorganisation des Verteidigungsministeriums', *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 13 September 1982), 1; ironically, Harenberg endorsed the use of consultants from McKinsey in revealing inefficiencies, a practice which 35 years later led to a parliamentary inquiry and allegations of corruption, Tillmann Neuscheler, 'Oberst wirft Berater unverschämtes Gebaren vor', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 June 2019.

<sup>742</sup> S&S had interviewed Kiessling prior to all this in 1982, 'Deutsche in der NATO'.

<sup>743</sup> A contemporaneous account, 'Zweideutig eindeutig', *Spiegel*, 20 February 1984; a recent evaluation, Möllers, *Affäre Kießling*.

<sup>744</sup> Excerpts in, 'Interview mit dem Vier-Sterne-General a.D. G. Schmückle' (30 January 1984), B 487/3, BArch-MA.

<sup>745</sup> 'Die Bundeswehr im Spannungsfeld vom Bürger in Uniform – Kameradschaftspflicht und dem Primat der Politik – Interview mit dem Vier-Sterne-General a.D. G. Schmückle', *Streitkräfte und Strategien* (NDR Info, 30 January 1984), 5.

“the generals of Frederick the Great pounded their sabres on the marble floors of Sanssouci when the old man talked nonsense or said something they were not happy with. And I always thought that was wonderful that in that Prussian tradition...this courage before the throne was always accepted, even by the kings.”<sup>746</sup>

This, clearly, raised the eyebrows of Prieß, who noted, “Schmückle’s forked tongue.”<sup>747</sup> Schmückle had, after all, preached obedience as we have seen above. Yet in fact, Schmückle can be read as having been entirely consistent. He may have implied a distinction between generals and other officers of lower rank. The former, given the scale of their responsibilities, enjoyed the privilege of speaking openly, in a private setting, truth to even royal power. The latter did not.<sup>748</sup> But beyond this distinction, it was clear that Schmückle hinted at the fact that particular kinds of criticism were acceptable on behalf of higher officers, particularly where the honour and standing of their social group were concerned. The reference to a “forked tongue” by Prieß implies that he may have failed to see, too, that Schmückle here was not defending the right of even higher officers to criticise government security policy. The issue, here as before, was being reframed. In Schmückle’s mind, loyal service and critique could go hand in hand, but perhaps only on the part of the highest echelons of the armed forces, or, more likely, on the part of officers whose loyalty to the state was not in doubt as it was, as he had implied above, in the case of the DS.

### Baudissin and the IFSH

One old hand in the military public sphere who bridged the gap between the Bundeswehr and peace research was Baudissin, who had retired from the armed forces in 1967 and who, in

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<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> ‘Schmückle Interview’, 30 January 1984, 5.

<sup>748</sup> This somewhat careless reading by Prieß or other Signaler is not entirely uncharacteristic.

1971, became the founding director of the IFSH. Start-up capital for Baudissin's institute came with an initial grant of nearly 1 million DM from the Volkswagen Foundation, which would thereby fund the institute for three years, until 1974.<sup>749</sup> It was, according to the IFSH's documents, the board of the Volkswagen Foundation which elected Baudissin to the presidency of the new institute, with *Staatsrat* (Hamburg state secretary) Helmut Bilstein acting as president of the board at the institute's foundation.<sup>750</sup> The institute's facilities were renovated especially for this purpose and put at its disposal by the city of Hamburg.<sup>751</sup> The starting period of the institute seems to have been beset by some difficulties, as nearly two years after its founding, Baudissin wrote in answer to one public inquiry that it was still in development.<sup>752</sup> By the late 1970s, Baudissin was made a professor at the university, which, he argued, put the institute on "a more solid footing."<sup>753</sup>

In the early days, Baudissin sought inspiration elsewhere, contacting Ernst-Otto Czempiel, professor at the University of Frankfurt and one of the FRG's primary authorities on peace research. Czempiel, after accepting the chair in international politics at Frankfurt, had helped found the *Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* (HSFK). Baudissin asked for, and received, detailed advice from Czempiel regarding the organisation and structure of the latter's institute.<sup>754</sup> The HSFK, though, was still in its early stages, and had no formal association with any university. From the start, Baudissin was seen as an important player, not just by Czempiel, but by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, by then a full professor in Bonn, who

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<sup>749</sup> By the late 1970s, the institute was mainly funded by the city of Hamburg, 'Wirtschaftsplan 1978' (20 October 1977), 2, BDZ 618.

<sup>750</sup> 'Protokoll der XVI. Kuratoriumssitzung' (27 April 1979), BDZ 618.

<sup>751</sup> 'Pressenotiz IFSH' (4 November 1971), BDZ 606.

<sup>752</sup> 'Baudissin to JG' (5 February 1973), BDZ 606; though Baudissin received an early boost by S&S, which featured his institute's founding as a new milestone in the story of West German peace research 'Hesslein to Baudissin' (11 January 1972), BDZ 603.

<sup>753</sup> 'Baudissin to Horst Afheldt' (25 April 1979), BDZ 620.

<sup>754</sup> 'Ernst-Otto Czempiel to Baudissin' (8 November 1972), BDZ 602.

moved a two-day symposium specifically so that Baudissin could take part.<sup>755</sup> Jacobsen had long been an important player in the military public sphere, helping build the foundations of a conservative historiography, dominated by retired Wehrmacht generals, of the Second World War in the early 1950s, and having belonged to the group around Percy-Ernst Schramm at Göttingen.<sup>756</sup> By January 1972, Baudissin believed the main hurdles to be behind him. The institute was set up, and, though little research was yet happening, he seems to have been optimistic.<sup>757</sup> Meanwhile, Baudissin taught at Hamburg, although there were no resources for doctoral students in the early years.<sup>758</sup> By the middle of the 1970s, the institute became a place where young people could work during their mandatory civil service (meaning they had objected to compulsory military service).<sup>759</sup>

In September 1977, Baudissin defined, for an American correspondence partner, militarism as,

“a general attitude that glorifies violence and maintains that war is the only or at least the normal way to ‘solve’ social and international conflicts. Militarism calls for superiority, non-transparency, and perfect solutions; it refuses to accept compromise and could also be called the inability to live with conflicts.”

Most militarists, Baudissin argued, “do not wear uniform,” and fundamentally relied on simplistic assumptions about the world.<sup>760</sup> The nod to a lack of uniform among militarists is significant. On the one hand, it suggests, analytically, a reliance on concepts like the military-

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<sup>755</sup> ‘Baudissin to Hans-Adolf Jacobsen’ (29 January 1973), BDZ 602.

<sup>756</sup> See Chapter 1 above as well as Fröhlich, ‘Der Generaloberst’.

<sup>757</sup> In a letter to Marianne Grewe, an educator and jurist, but also wife to the FRG ambassador to Japan, whose long-time military adviser in a former post had been Schmückle, ‘Baudissin to Marianne Grewe’ (11 January 1972), BDZ 602.

<sup>758</sup> ‘Baudissin to Jürgen Heinbokel’ (2 March 1972), BDZ 602.

<sup>759</sup> ‘JK to BB’ (29 July 1976), BDZ 606.

<sup>760</sup> ‘Baudissin to MK’ (8 September 1977), BDZ 606.

intellectual complex engaged with at the beginning of the thesis. On the other hand, it may also serve as a hint to the influence of a former military elite which still fundamentally viewed war and military forces more broadly as a way of solving foreign policy problems. His role as a primary communicator and visible node for peace research and activism, Baudissin took in stride. In early 1981, he corresponded with an elderly man writing to him from a retirement home. In the lengthy exchange, Baudissin made clear that he believed there were no “angels” on either side of the Cold War, arguing that both superpowers were interested in the realisation of their interests.<sup>761</sup> This willingness to engage in detailed exchanges with individuals in good faith marked Baudissin as invested in a culture of debate even on the smallest scale.<sup>762</sup> Baudissin was so dedicated to communicating by means of a wide range of outlets that, in early 1980s, even *Playboy* approached him for a contribution.<sup>763</sup> By the late 1970s, he was also regularly speaking at secondary schools, with some schools visiting the institute itself.<sup>764</sup>

In the early 1980s, just as the institute was expanding, with Baudissin pushing towards integrating it into the further education system in Hamburg,<sup>765</sup> it was clear that a timeline for Baudissin’s retirement was needed, given he was now in his 70s.<sup>766</sup> Baudissin himself aside, the institute’s staff was young, largely in their 30s.<sup>767</sup> Baudissin’s trajectory in this own telling, is quite remarkable. In an interview in the late 1970s, he described his military-political socialisation by describing the unease he felt when, at an officer’s dinner in the mid 1920s, the first toast was to, “the supreme warlord, his imperial majesty the *Kaiser* and King

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<sup>761</sup> ‘Baudissin to HK’ (28 January 1981), BDZ 629; ‘Baudissin to HK’ (25 February 1981), BDZ 629.

<sup>762</sup> Baudissin even helped at least one American student with a term paper on the Bundeswehr, ‘Baudissin to GF’ (17 November 1972), BDZ 602.

<sup>763</sup> ‘Bettina von Beust to Baudissin’ (22 August 1980), BDZ 620.

<sup>764</sup> Wolf Graf von Baudissin, ‘Emilie-Wüstenfeld-Schule Besuch’ (30 June 1977), BDZ 619.

<sup>765</sup> ‘Protokoll der XVI. Kuratoriumssitzung’, 2.

<sup>766</sup> ‘Protokoll der XVII. Kuratoriumssitzung’ (15 February 1980), 4, BDZ 618.

<sup>767</sup> ‘Wirtschaftsplan 1978’, 5–6.

of Prussia.”<sup>768</sup> This fundamental disloyalty and opposition to the constitution of the Weimar Republic, which the soldiers had sworn to defend, irked Baudissin, who said that the “good Prussian way was to quit one’s service to a sovereign with whom one did not identify.”<sup>769</sup> Again, here we see a stance relevant to the earlier discussion of the DS. There existed, in Baudissin’s thought, a fine line between those whose service ought to continue, like his own, who engaged in particular kinds of criticisms compatible with loyal service, and those whose positions were incompatible with that same ideal. His comments to Priß suggest that he thought the latter was approaching the line beyond which service to the state which he criticised so harshly might become impossible. This is not to equivocate between soldiers in the 1920s still loyal to the Kaiser rather than the republic and the left-wing opponents of the FRG’s security policy. It is rather to argue that both fell outside the scope of opinions Baudissin argued soldiers could legitimately hold while continuing to serve. As for himself, Baudissin acknowledged the good fortune that he had ended up in a regiment, the 9. (*Preußisches*) *Infanterie-Regiment*, which became a cradle of the military resistance against the Nazi regime.<sup>770</sup>

In a letter to Kießling in April 1982, Baudissin sketched the wider, from his perspective clearly dire, research environment for peace research. Beyond the withdrawals from the DGFK mentioned above, he believed the plan by the Hamburg government for his institute was to make it less research oriented, with “Marxists” dominating the university, and a number of other academic commitments looming.<sup>771</sup> As his most dangerous opponents, Baudissin identified as those on the far-right of the CDU/CSU, who injected the “poison of

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<sup>768</sup> ‘Interview mit Herrn Schüddekopf’ (January 1979), 1, BDZ 379.1.

<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

<sup>770</sup> Though on the complicity of the military resistance in genocide see above as well as Gerlach, ‘Männer des 20. Juli’.

<sup>771</sup> ‘Baudissin to Kießling’ (20 April 1982), BDZ 632.

nationalist obstinacy” into mainstream public discourse in doses in which it was not immediately noticed, but still influenced public perceptions.<sup>772</sup> In a letter to Schmückle in October 1982, Baudissin made clear the threat which the withdrawal of funds from the CDU/CSU led states, and industry funding, posed to the DGFK and his own institute.<sup>773</sup> While Schmückle’s original letter is not contained in Baudissin’s documents, it seems the former offered the latter a position in the United States, for Schmückle had meanwhile, at least temporarily, relocated to Washington DC. Baudissin never took him up on the offer, no doubt in part due to his commitment to public debate in West Germany, no matter how discouraged he may have been by the shifting political-institutional landscape.

After his retirement, Baudissin helped develop SPD security policy as part of a working group, together with Klaus von Schubert and Hans Koschnick, long-time mayor of Bremen.<sup>774</sup> They agreed, unsurprisingly, that security policy, “is in need of broad-based social legitimation,” and asserted that pacifists, too, had a place in debates to this end.<sup>775</sup> To the three authors, “without a desire for peace, anti-militarism, and an active peace and disarmament policy, the SPD would lose its identity as a social democratic party.”<sup>776</sup> Deterrence was the central contradiction which the SPD had to bear, which had to be endured, “until a better international order renders it superfluous.”<sup>777</sup> Having thus defined the primary objective of social democratic security policy, the authors cautioned against a lack of debate. This is a position Baudissin endorsed more widely, so too in a letter Friedrich Beermann, a long-time friend.<sup>778</sup> Contrary to the DS, Baudissin argued that any disarmament

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<sup>772</sup> ‘Baudissin to AJK’ (18 September 1974), BDZ 604.

<sup>773</sup> ‘Baudissin to Schmückle’ (26 October 1982), BDZ 633.

<sup>774</sup> ‘Baudissin to Egon Bahr’ (24 November 1981), BDZ 627.

<sup>775</sup> Hans Koschnick, Wolf Graf von Baudissin, and Klaus von Schubert, ‘Grundpositionen sozialdemokratischer Sicherheitspolitik’ (19 May 1981), 1, BDZ, uncatalogued.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>778</sup> See Schramm’s appeals to Beermann in Chapter 3 above.

efforts could only go hand in hand with stronger integration into existing strategic alliances, writing that any attempt to weaken ties with the United States, for instance, would allow for the USSR to drive a wedge between European allies, too.<sup>779</sup> Baudissin here developed a theory of military action based on Soviet domestic politics. He believed that a crisis internal to the Soviet Union and a West German turn away from NATO may lead to external military adventurism on behalf of the Soviets, with little associated risk.<sup>780</sup> Baudissin did in principle endorse the idea of deterrence, nuclear weapons he described as “ultima ratio regum”,<sup>781</sup> making again clear that his approach to security policy was shaped, more than anything, by a pragmatic response to existing challenges.

#### *Baudissin, Military History, and Personnel Policy*

Baudissin’s activism and his engagement in public prior to his retirement had led to a rift between himself and his former comrades of the *Unterabteilung Innere Führung* of the Amt Blank. In response to an invitation from none other than Kießling for a reunion, Baudissin responded by saying that the rift between himself and some of his former colleagues now went so deep as to prevent conversations beyond small talk.<sup>782</sup> Kießling and Baudissin had a relationship dating back to the 1950s when he had promoted Kießling as his “able subordinate”.<sup>783</sup> While Baudissin was set in his political views, he clearly had enormous respect for his political opponents, writing of Wörner, “as a conservative, he sees the power political importance of personnel policy more clearly than our comrades.”<sup>784</sup> This is

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<sup>779</sup> ‘Baudissin to Beermann’ (20 February 1973), BDZ 601.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

<sup>781</sup> ‘Baudissin to EL’ (12 August 1980), BDZ 622.

<sup>782</sup> ‘Kießling to Baudissin’ (2 August 1982), BDZ 632; ‘Baudissin to Kießling’ (13 August 1982), BDZ 632; ‘Kießling to Baudissin’ (18 October 1982), BDZ 632; ‘Baudissin to Kießling’ (26 October 1982), BDZ 632.

<sup>783</sup> ‘Baudissin to Kießling’, 20 April 1982.

<sup>784</sup> ‘Baudissin to Helga Haftendorn’ (13 December 1982), BDZ 632; ‘conservatives of a certain ilk’, wrote Baudissin, ‘are sadly condemned to become reactionaries, and often do not respect the rules, the loss of which they scold others for,’ ‘Baudissin to Adelsheim’ (21 January 1981), BDZ 627.

something Baudissin had implored Wörner's predecessor, Hans Apel, to do.<sup>785</sup> Baudissin's prolonged interest in personnel policy remained active beyond his retirement, which was marked, until 1982, by SPD governments which he hoped to be able to influence in this regard, to use their power to appoint enough high-ranking officers and ministry staff to secure a progressive leadership for the Bundeswehr for years to come. Schmückle's appointment to NATO as Director of the International Military Staff in 1974, for instance, Baudissin believed, must have caused frustration for Lieutenant General Peter von Butler, a conservative whom he replaced.<sup>786</sup> This was at least one example, Baudissin wrote, of SPD ministers, in this case Leber, pursuing an effective personnel policy.<sup>787</sup>

It is no surprise that Baudissin focused on personnel policy. He himself was well networked, and generally well-liked, though seen as perhaps a touch aloof. After his appointment at Hamburg, he remained in close, if infrequent, contact with Lieutenant General Bernd Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven, deputy Generalinspekteur.<sup>788</sup> In a letter sent in April 1972, Freytag wrote that he and Baudissin both hoped, by means of appointments to the NATO Defence College, to promote not simply German influence upon NATO strategy, but also the officers sent there themselves, an endeavour which had been supported by de Maizière, who had recently retired.<sup>789</sup> While Baudissin maintained good connections to de Maizière, he seems to have distanced himself somewhat from the ministry. In 1981, he noted that his recent trip to the ministry was the first time he had spoken there about questions of civil-military relations since 1958.<sup>790</sup> In 1982 Baudissin declined to attend birthday celebrations for de Maizière in

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<sup>785</sup> 'Baudissin to Hans Apel' (4 May 1981), BDZ 627.

<sup>786</sup> The Butlar/Butler family has a long history of military service, with multiple generations attaining general officer rank across various German armies, Joachim Käppner, *Die Familie der Generäle. Eine deutsche Geschichte* (Berlin: Berlin, 2007).

<sup>787</sup> 'Baudissin to Schmückle' (10 December 1973), BDZ 604.

<sup>788</sup> Baudissin called him, 'my dear and honoured fellow traveller', 'Baudissin to Freytag' (14 February 1972), BDZ 602.

<sup>789</sup> 'Freytag to Baudissin' (27 April 1972), BDZ 602.

<sup>790</sup> 'Baudissin to Rosen' (29 April 1981), BDZ 630.

Bonn, citing reservations about returning there.<sup>791</sup> This is not surprising, given in May 1981 in a letter to then defence minister Apel, he noted that, “the problems of the 1950s are still not overcome; the old front lines obviously continue to run right through the Bundeswehr.”<sup>792</sup> The reference to the “old front lines” here was not one to wartime positions, but rather one to the conflicts about the civil-military relations concepts and ideas of tradition in the immediate post-war period which had seen Baudissin struggle against those more conservative than himself and often come up short.<sup>793</sup>

In 1975, Baudissin exchanged letters with Leber, Apel’s predecessor, on the matter of the new Wehrbeauftragter, with the above mentioned Berkhan eventually appointed.<sup>794</sup> The need to leverage personnel politics in favour of social democratic candidates, or at least those amenable to social democratic ideas, originated in an analysis, by Baudissin, that what he called “neo-conservative” forces were in control of the Bundeswehr, and German NATO appointments, and that such a dominance must be countered.<sup>795</sup> Asked in 1974 whether he believed that the SPD’s “development in recent years – its near total denial of its origins as a socialist workers’ party and its willingness to cooperate with reactionary forces – isn’t partially responsible for today’s climate in the Bundeswehr,”<sup>796</sup> Baudissin dodged the question, though stating that perhaps it was precisely the heritage raised by his interviewer which made a personnel policy of the necessary kind difficult to pursue.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> ‘Baudissin to de Maizièrè’ (22 February 1982), BDZ 632.

<sup>792</sup> ‘Baudissin to Hans Apel’.

<sup>793</sup> Rudolf J. Schlaffer, ‘Die innere Führung. Wolf Graf von Baudissins Anspruch und Wahrnehmung der Wirklichkeit’, in *Wolf Graf von Baudissin, 1907-1993. Modernisierer zwischen totaler Herrschaft und freiheitlicher Ordnung*, ed. Rudolf J. Schlaffer and Wolfgang Schmidt (Münster: Oldenbourg, 2007), 139–207.

<sup>794</sup> ‘Baudissin to Leber’ (19 March 1975), BDZ 604.

<sup>795</sup> ‘Baudissin to RL’ (31 October 1974), BDZ 604.

<sup>796</sup> ‘Interview mit Herrn Schüddekopf’, 21.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

In a characteristic manner, Baudissin likened, in what is no doubt also a rhetorical move, political tolerance in the armed forces to political tolerance more generally. In society at large, of which the Bundeswehr was simply an extension, albeit one of a particular kind, there was need for more tolerance of differing political opinions.<sup>798</sup> In general, Baudissin welcomed political engagement in the Bundeswehr, for he argued that a depoliticization of the armed forces would benefit “reactionaries” first and foremost.<sup>799</sup> Precisely these reactionaries, Baudissin had, throughout his career, attempted to keep at bay. He attempted to widen debate within the armed forces, just as he would later do as head of the IFSH. But his efforts, though he was supremely well networked, are only part of a wider effort in the 1970s and 1980s to construct a counter-public within and beyond the military public sphere, which I have here sketched out in parts, and which ran up against the formidable power of conservatives across the military public sphere and military institutions. Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion of the expression of political opinion within these institutions which would have been unthinkable a decade or two earlier.

But matters of the past, too, continued to occupy Baudissin. To the MGFA’s leading military historian, Messerschmidt, he wrote in 1978 that he had always viewed critically academic research in the “orbit of the executive,” and that he had thus himself always objected to the current configuration for military history in the FRG, with an institute at its heart which formed part of the Bundeswehr itself. Messerschmidt apparently turned to Baudissin to ask for his advice, whether he was supposed to go public with what he deemed to be a violation against his freedom as a historian. Baudissin cautioned Messerschmidt, writing that while he had gotten much done in the “golden 50s” only by going public, a careful analysis of the

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 21.

“relative forces” was needed first.<sup>800</sup> By this time, he also said he had no more connections to the BMVg, and so could not influence developments there. Leber, with whom he had regular contact, had meanwhile left the post. Schmückle had retired, as had Freytag.<sup>801</sup> In conclusion, Baudissin wrote to Messerschmidt that he believed the *Dienstherr* had the right, perhaps even the duty, to intervene, “in the case of reactionary conceptions, we would certainly demand it.” Given that Messerschmidt’s letter is lost, the complete meaning of this comment is unclear, but Baudissin may have been asserting his opinion that history written under the thumb of power will inevitably be influenced by that power.<sup>802</sup> Any “new” conception of such a project required pre-emptive defence against bureaucratic intervention. It would, in summary, simply need to be “invincible”.<sup>803</sup> The forces of public opinion were aligned against Messerschmidt as we saw in Chapter 3, and a public campaign was used to malign him within the MGFA. Perhaps, then, Baudissin’s advice was unwise in this particular instance. It is clear that his advice was a product of a pragmatism which viewed public confrontation, as in the case of the DS, only *in extremis* an acceptable option.

Messerschmidt had asked Baudissin to weigh in on the title of the MGFA’s series on the Second World War (eventually entitled, *Das deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*). Baudissin cautioned against entitling the series *The Third Reich and the Second World War*, arguing that this seemed to suggest a “particularism” which implicitly denied the continuities of German history. Any writing of the history of the war must go further than an “apolitical” history of battles and operations.<sup>804</sup> A project with a longer view, would encompass not just the Second World War, but both world wars, which were “not to be separated from each

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<sup>800</sup> ‘Baudissin to Messerschmidt’ (22 August 1978), 6, BDZ 608.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

other.”<sup>805</sup> Messerschmidt objected to this, arguing that the whole work would dispel any such notions.<sup>806</sup> Baudissin raised objections to the use of the concepts of “fascism and anti-fascism”, and wondered whether anything was really gained by emphasising the capitalist nature of the Nazi regime.<sup>807</sup> In terms of the project’s coverage of the resistance, Baudissin argued what needed more emphasis was the distinction between different opposition groups. Some, Jews and “Marxists” for instance, only could choose between emigration and resistance if they hoped to survive. Some others, and here there can be no doubt Baudissin thought of the military resistance, may have survived by simply not acting against the regime.<sup>808</sup>

Baudissin no doubt chose his words carefully, for possible criminal conduct in the past was still being policed. In 1980, Baudissin had recalled, in a private context, that during certain operations during the Second World War, Wehrmacht officers had been given orders not to take prisoners, but to execute any captives instead. Major General (Retired) Johannes Müller, writing in his capacity as president of the *Verband deutscher Soldaten* (VdS) demanded to know whether Baudissin had indeed said such a thing, and, if so, demanded he present Müller with documents proving the truth of his assertion.<sup>809</sup> The VdS’ reaction shows the ways in which particular kinds of knowledge about the Second World War would be policed by conservative networks long into the post-war period. It is notable, too, that this reaction was produced not by a particular comment about a particular officer or operation, but rather a more general statement made in a private setting. This strong response, then, was not motivated, for instance, by fear of criminal responsibility, but rather of a wider desire to

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<sup>805</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>806</sup> ‘Messerschmidt to Baudissin’ (19 September 1978), 2, BDZ 608.

<sup>807</sup> ‘Baudissin to Messerschmidt’, 3–4.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>809</sup> ‘Müller to Baudissin’ (1 July 1980), BDZ 622.

preserve a particular myth, which as we have seen was actively constructed from the moment the war ended, that the German armies had been unaware of the crimes committed on or behind the front lines.

## Conclusion

The 1980s saw, for really the first time since the 1950s, a fundamental contestation over the meaning of military service that was begun by those in uniform who were inclined towards a more modern, more progressive sense of what it might mean to be a soldier and to loyally serve one's country. The soldiers affiliated with the DS argued that it was possible to criticise security policy while in uniform, which amounted to a radical challenge of existing conditions. As a result of challenging the status quo, they experienced the structural power of more conservative ideas of military service and military identity, and thus conducted their campaigns in public in order to help open military structures by force of public opinion or political reform. Yet, at least in the case of the DS, this was unsuccessful. Perhaps this endeavour was unsuccessful because the pragmatic reformist line, as Baudissin had learned over decades of service, was extremely difficult to walk. It risked alienating both sides, those who had remained outside the institutions as conscientious objectors, for instance, and those who were dedicated to a more conservative understanding of the rights and responsibilities of soldiers. S&S and emerging critical academic endeavours such as peace research were equally unable to make a dent, but they did provide important outlets for soldiers who wished to object to existing consensus on foreign, security, or defence policy.

Prieß had served in uniform for 32 years by the time he retired in 1993. Fechner, and the other DS officers, too, were committed to serving in the armed forces. This moment, then, marked a shift, as a military elite fundamentally still comprised of those who had served

during the Second World War was for the first time challenged internally by those who had not. This generational gap was also one shaped by the fact that the likes of Prieß, who otherwise may have been even more marginalised within the institutions they had pledged to serve, were backed up by a group of young conscripts, whose politics, in line with wider social developments, were extremely progressive in the context of military institutions. A lack of war experience and a more progressive understanding of military identity ultimately did change the face of West German military institutions. It meant increasingly that those who left the armed forces behind no longer regarded themselves as soldiers in the way that veterans of the Second World War had done previously. Peacetime military service left less of an impression on them than wartime service had on previous generations. But a more progressive understanding of military identity also meant that one could cease to be a soldier. An individual was not defined by having worn uniform in perpetuity, in a way which was not always straightforwardly accepted by the post-war military elite, as we have seen. This, paradoxically, meant as Prieß, Fechner and others left the armed forces, they likely no longer considered themselves to be soldiers in the same way that older generations had done. They were citizens who had, quite simply, taken off their uniforms.

While the DS issued the most direct challenge yet to the status quo of military institutions, ultimately their comparatively radical politics came up against the blunt institutional power of military conservatives, who had effectively shaped the institutions which were now to supposed to accommodate more left-wing points of view. Military disciplinary institutions at the lowest levels, presided over by staff officers, were unable or unwilling to accommodate the views of those not much younger than themselves. These decisions were only revised once civilian dominated courts became involved and the ordinary judiciary ruled in a given case, or when specific cases came to the attention of politicians who then were able to

mobilise support around them. All this suggests that the penetration of particular ideas of military service and military loyalty, fundamentally shaped by generations of soldiers who had seen service in the Wehrmacht and Reichswehr, was strong. The structures which these older generations had put in place were able to resist official doctrine, such as that designed by Baudissin and others, the citizen in uniform. It might therefore be assumed that any more radical civil-military relations concept would have been rejected or neglected by them. As Baudissin's unwillingness to attend a reunion of his old office suggests, even those who had in the early days shaped a more liberal concept of civil-military relations could not now agree on what ought to be done.

This is remarkable because it occurred with conscription still in place. The fact that each year over a hundred thousand men from across West German society entered the ranks, with some remaining in uniform for the long-term, and were yet unable to shift this conservative consensus on military identity raises some important questions for civil military relations not just in the 1980s or the 1990s, but in particular after the end of conscription in 2011. For if it was the case that even when more conservative structures had to engage such positions regularly, they were unable to accommodate them, serious attention needs to be paid to the question whether the effective abolition of conscription has allowed old conservative structures to regain strength, and for new ones to flourish without effective checks on whether these military structures at all reflect political and social attitudes, even to a limited degree, of society at large. For them to exist fundamentally out of step would be to raise the question as to whether such institutions, in their current form, did not threaten, in the long-term, to exist in parallel to other institutions of the liberal democratic state and if they did what the consequences might be.

## Conclusion

After the end of the Second World War, in the ruins of German military tradition and military institutions, and in the wake of genocide, military networks quickly reconstituted themselves. They immediately began to shape the new state and organised to do so. Over the next decade, they shaped not just the new military institutions and civil-military relations concepts, but also the early historiography of the Second World War and the institutions which produced those histories. Organising in this way, they demanded economic restitution and political power, in part, as a means towards the restoration of the social status they had previously enjoyed. By the middle of the 1950s, the reconstituted networks needed to come to terms with the re-established military institutions and the fact that military strategy increasingly revolved around nuclear weapons. The intense debates which followed occasionally spilled over into a wider public sphere, in a way which could end even the most promising careers. As new associations such as the Clausewitz-Gesellschaft were formed in the wake of rearmament, they provoked questions regarding to the future of the military public sphere and its potentially declining relevance. Meanwhile, soldiers continued to police the boundaries of military historical knowledge and expertise, continuing in their double role as gatekeepers who also took part in or at least had a stake in debates about military and strategic issues.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the military public sphere increasingly made inroads into the higher education sector, with Andreas Hillgruber and Werner Hahlweg as its most prominent exponents. Hillgruber struggled at Freiburg in the face of student activism and became embroiled in a bureaucratic struggle with the MGFA regarding his control over military historical scholarship to be produced there. Hahlweg meanwhile fared better with students while also working to establish didactic structures, such as the military historical museum at Rastatt. The 1970s also saw the first effort at writing a historiography of rearmament, the

scope of which was still determined by the old networks which had swung into action immediately after 8 May 1945. It was only in the early 1980s, in the context of the peace movement, that the military public sphere was seriously challenged publicly for the first time. Activist soldiers pushed debates over security and defence issues into the ranks in a way which had been impossible until now, raising civil-military relations issues which were ultimately adjudicated by the courts. Other fora, like radio, were important in widening debates and participation by providing critical media attention. In Hamburg, Baudissin attempted to wield influence from afar to shape military institutions and debates from the outside in, something which he had never quite accomplished while in uniform. These latter conflicts in particular bring to light the fragmented, partially overlapping and interconnected nature of the military public sphere, which was clearly not homogenous, but instead characterised by dominant voices and more critical or marginal ones. It was thus far from harmonious in its message and its inter-personal relationships.

While the structures of the military public sphere appeared to shift over time, its networks remained remarkably stable. They were able to assert their power and influence, and their own view of what it ought to mean to be a soldier, for decades until after many of its members had retired. It is this stability which is at the heart of the thesis. The difficulties faced by more progressive soldiers, illustrated in particular in the final chapter, serve to show just how powerful conservative military voices were in silencing dissent, even at the height of opposition to a very specific set of defence and security policies. Their cases also suggest that there is no easy policy or institutional fix for some of the issues identified here. Military structures were, to a degree, built by the members of the military public sphere in part to resist change and outside influence, even from democratic policy makers. The stability of the military public sphere allowed them to communicate various facets of military identity to

civilian society at large. One aspect which has played an important role in the thesis is military history, which often sought to address the question: what did it mean to be a soldier at a particular moment in time? These structures are important, because military historical narratives are the primary way ideas from the military public sphere found wider reception. One example of this is the fact that rearmament processes still are not completely understood. This is primarily due to the fact that some of those soldiers working to rearm the new Federal Republic attempted, quite successfully, to obscure the negotiations and compromises which shaped these processes. With regards to the history of the Second World War, individual interests, also played an important role. While Hillgruber sought to advance his career, others, like Hans Speidel, attempted to create new heroes and role models for the new state. Others still attempted to minimise their own guilt. All of their legacies together have left us with the myth of the clean Wehrmacht, which has proven remarkably resilient and resistant to critical historiographical intervention. This is in part due to the fact that the processes which led to its creation were not as yet well enough understood.

The focus on the structures of the military public sphere has shown a remarkable stability of a conservative consensus on military ideas. However, there were significant generational shifts which took place inside some of the organisations here outlined. Older officers who had been socialised in the Imperial German Army increasingly lost their influence. Those brought up in the armed forces of the Weimar Republic, like Baudissin or de Maizière, proved rather more enduring. The balance of the current and former military elite shifted towards those who had been socialised either in the Wehrmacht or in the Bundeswehr. That brought with it an important shift of the class background of officers. Only during the Second World War had the officer corps been meaningfully opened to officers not hailing from upper or upper-

middle class backgrounds,<sup>810</sup> leading to a much higher proportion of officers who had no noble or bourgeois backgrounds. This is reflected in the thesis, as the early chapters featured a large proportion of noble officers, though their nobility was apparently no asset in post-war society at large. Audiences within the military public sphere shifted too. In the 1950s and 1960s, most former officers were still in their professional prime. By the 1980s, far greater numbers of the group overall were of retirement age, given the much-reduced size of the post-war armies no longer produced as many officers. That shift in the overall age of the current and former military elite marked the debates around the Darmstädter Signal as the affairs of younger officers became subject to commentary by retired officers like Schmückle and Baudissin.

In focusing on the structures of the military public sphere, the thesis was able to accomplish two goals. First, it showed that while the new material coming to light on the early years of the FRG and the entanglement between the OG, later the BND, and military structures is important,<sup>811</sup> progress understanding the influence of Wehrmacht military elites in the Federal Republic can, alongside the new historiography, be made without access to such documents. Second, the thesis was able to push the chronology of the existing literature forward. Work on military networks, like Frank Reichherzer's,<sup>812</sup> for instance, tends to focus mainly on the 1950s. The new historiography on the Organisation Gehlen and the BND has expanded the frame, but its remit does not extend beyond Gehlen's retirement in 1968. My aim has been to show that a focus on networks can help us push beyond these confines into the 1970s and 1980s. This expansion of the chronological frame raises important questions

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<sup>810</sup> Kroener, 'Auf dem Weg zu einer "nationalsozialistischen Volksarmee"'; an interesting contrast is, Christoph Rass, *Das Sozialprofil des Bundesnachrichtendienstes. Von den Anfängen bis 1968* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2016).

<sup>811</sup> See the Introduction above, but most importantly Keßelring, *Neuformierung*.

<sup>812</sup> Reichherzer, *Alles ist Front!*

regarding the continued influence of conservative military elites by means of the structures they designed in the post-war period, which will require further research.

The transformation of the military public sphere shows just how improbable it was that nascent military structures might attempt to overthrow the new liberal-democratic order, that “*Weimarer Verhältnisse*” might recur.<sup>813</sup> In that sense, the thesis underscores the stability of the Bonn Republic and its success in stabilising a precarious political landscape. But even if conservative military elites were not able to challenge, nor interested in challenging, the prevailing political order, the thesis documents the limits of the new state’s power to penetrate these institutions and to impose its political values and ideas onto the leadership of the new armed forces. The officer corps was no longer primarily recruited from the “desired circles” among the aristocracy, but the identity of the military elite was more stable than it appeared. Even if “antidemocratic” attitudes were no longer central to their self-understanding, officers retained a habitus which was conservative and apolitical, at the heart of which lay the idea that these attitudes defined a “true” soldier.<sup>814</sup> Anselm Doering-Manteuffel has argued that historical research in the 1950s promoted the idea of continuity between the German Empire and the Federal Republic, explicitly initially rejecting any notion of 1945 as a crucial breaking point.<sup>815</sup> So, too, did the military public sphere reject the idea that military elite habitus or a particular idea of military identity was implicated in the genocide in which many of them had participated, which negated any need for reform. But while in the 1960s, West German society at large was at the peak of its liberalisation,<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>813</sup> Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart* (München: Siedler, 2009), 887.

<sup>814</sup> Jens Scholten, ‘Offiziere. Im Geiste unbesiegt’, in *Karrieren im Zwielficht. Hitlers Eliten nach 1945*, ed. Norbert Frei (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2001), 160–61.

<sup>815</sup> Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, ‘Deutschlands 20. Jahrhundert im Wandel zeithistorischer Narrative’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 306, no. 1 (2018): 100–102.

<sup>816</sup> Ulrich Herbert, ‘Liberalisierung als Lernprozeß. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze’, in *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung, 1945-1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 7–49.

military institutions resisted those same processes and as a result the liberalisation of military institutions was delayed when compared to wider civil(ian) society.

### *Lost Causes*

The military public sphere promoted a view of the Second World War which ultimately amounted to a “strategy of exculpation,” as Kerstin von Lingen has observed.<sup>817</sup> In absolving themselves of responsibilities for Germany’s strategic failures during the Second World War, they denied any responsibility for the crimes and the murderous conduct of the war in the East, which had not just enabled the perpetration of the Holocaust but had become indistinguishable from it, both on and behind the front lines.<sup>818</sup> They had also murdered and let die, of hunger, exposure, and cold, millions of Soviet prisoners of war and civilians.<sup>819</sup> Some had supported these endeavours because they were ardent National Socialists, though most were not. But even so, they believed in their own racial superiority, and in the superfluosity of millions of Soviet lives.<sup>820</sup> This was true even for many of those, including Philipp von Boeselager, Rudolf-Christoph von Gersdorff, Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg, Henning von Tresckow, and Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, who would eventually attempt to overthrow the regime and some of whom lost their lives as a result.<sup>821</sup> But they did not do so primarily because they objected to the ideological project of the regime which they attempted to overthrow, but because it was losing the war. They feared the consequences of such a defeat, perhaps in particular due to their own complicity.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> Lingen, *Kesselrings letzte Schlacht*.

<sup>818</sup> Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*.

<sup>819</sup> Seminal, Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941 - 1945*.

<sup>820</sup> Stahel, ‘National Socialist Military Thinking’.

<sup>821</sup> Gerlach, ‘Männer des 20. Juli’.

<sup>822</sup> Knoch, ‘Gewissenlose Führung’.

The early post-war decades saw the emergence of a kind of truce. The complicity of all but the worst offenders within the former general staff was downplayed within the military public sphere. One example of the ways crimes such as these were negotiated was by means of exclusion. Major General Otto Ernst Remer, who had been instrumental in suppressing the 20 July 1944 attempted coup in Berlin, is one example of this. While there were in the early 1950s serious debates over the meaning of the attempted coup, a consensus existed that Remer should never have been a general officer, and that his elevation to such exalted status had been the result only of his service to the regime, not of soldierly ability.<sup>823</sup> Such low opinions were reflected in the fact that among the generals the rumour circulated that Remer had fled the Eastern Front in civilian clothing in April 1945 to save his skin. At least one other general officer had so attempted to evade Soviet captivity, namely Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner who, in what apparently was his Army Group's last *Fieseler Storch*, flew to the Austrian Alps on 9 May 1945, having ordered his troops to fight on in spite of the unconditional surrender issued the day before. Schörner, too, was deemed an "unworthy" general officer, being later identified as the ideal-typical "Nazi general".<sup>824</sup> But while Schörner was certainly brutal, it is unclear that he was exceptionally so, or that he was a uniquely fanatical Nazi, as he has been labelled since.<sup>825</sup> Rather, excluding Remer and Schörner functioned as means of consolidating the ranks, given that the two appeared to be nearly universally disliked they had few allies to defend them, unlike Manstein or Guderian. Adenauer's Vice-Chancellor Franz Blücher made this surprisingly clear when he said that the "positive side" to cases such as these was that it allowed for the separation between "real

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<sup>823</sup> Searle, 'Die unheilbare Wunde. Der 20. Juli 1944 im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Wehrmachtsgeneralität, 1949-1969', 109.

<sup>824</sup> Klaus Schönherr, 'Ferdinand Schörner. Der idealtypische Nazigeneral', in *Die Militärelite des Dritten Reiches. 27 biographische Skizzen*, ed. Ronald Smelser and Enrico Syring (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1995), 497-509.

<sup>825</sup> A point made in a remarkable letter by a former officer in Schörner's corps, Ernst Zuckerschwerdt, 'Die Sonderbefehle des Generals', *Die Zeit*, 2005.

*Soldatentum* and militarism.”<sup>826</sup> These were only the two most public cases of exclusion from the ranks for, as we have seen, threats of exclusion and the policing of identity boundaries was a constitutive feature of the military public sphere

In downplaying the crimes committed by the Wehrmacht, and the racial animosities which had motivated them, the military public sphere worked towards the creation of something which bears structural similarities with the Lost Cause Myth of the American Confederacy. In the American case, this myth amounted to the idea that the Confederacy had seceded and gone to war with the Union in order to protect its unique culture and way of life, often summarised as the fight for “states’ rights”.<sup>827</sup> But the emergence of the idea that this defence of a unique and distinctive way of life, rather than the defence of slavery, had been the proximate cause of the American Civil War was the result of the conscious use of lies and deception.<sup>828</sup> But so, too, did the myth emerge that the Wehrmacht, and in particular its leadership, had been unaware of the crimes which were committed behind the front lines by the SS and the attendant SD *Einsatzgruppen*. Not only was this not true, debate about what Wehrmacht high command did or did not know about the Holocaust obscured to a degree their complicity in other crimes. The war of annihilation became, as we have seen above, reinterpreted as a defensive war against “Judeo-Bolshevism”. Whatever crimes were committed were understood to be less serious than those potential crimes which the Wehrmacht’s enemies would commit if they won. But this narrative led, like the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, to a strange phenomenon, which amounted to a kind of long-term denialism, as the crimes of the Wehrmacht faded from public memory.

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<sup>826</sup> Bert-Oliver Manig, ‘Der Bluthund ist zurück’, *Die Zeit*, 2005.

<sup>827</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, 2nd ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019).

<sup>828</sup> Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020).

Though utterly false, the myth of the clean Wehrmacht has nonetheless proven powerful and enduring.<sup>829</sup> Debate now revolves around the question of the extent of the Wehrmacht's involvement in atrocities, rather than the fact, and there is general agreement on the matter that the armed forces played a significant part in the perpetration of atrocities during a war which can only be correctly referred to as one of annihilation.<sup>830</sup> The so-called "Wehrmacht Exhibition", staged by historians and activists in the 1990s in order to highlight the part the armed forces played in the genocide, is clearly relevant to both the myth-making and the contestation of the myth itself.<sup>831</sup> If the structure of the Clean Wehrmacht Myth as that of a lost cause raises the spectre of the American Confederacy, that other great military historical myth of a lost cause,<sup>832</sup> one desideratum of research must be the question of the relationship between these two myths. And though beyond the scope of the thesis, the ambition here, which relates to a critical account of the exercise of power in the pursuit of historiographical revisionism on the part of the military elite of a state which had long since been defeated, might be relevant, too, to scholars of that other lost cause. Scholarship of the Confederacy might, in turn, supply some important insights for the study of the legacy of the atrocities

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<sup>829</sup> The myth has, since the 1990s, acquired the structure of a 'Lost Cause'. Some of that is due to Franz Halder, who 'embodies better than any other high German officer the dramatic difference between myth and reality...His postwar apologia and his service to the Americans and to their understanding, particularly, of the war in the East stand in marked contrast to the reality of his career.' Ronald Smelser and Edward J. II Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front: The Nazi-Soviet War in American Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63, more generally, see 39–63.

<sup>830</sup> This will also be addressed in Chapter 3 below. Another descriptor might be 'apocalyptic war', see Michael Geyer, 'German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945', in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 527–97.

<sup>831</sup> An overview of the ensuing debates in, Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, and Ulrike Jureit, eds., *Verbrechen Der Wehrmacht. Bilanz Einer Debatte* (München: C.H. Beck, 2005).

<sup>832</sup> The Clean Wehrmacht Myth and the Lost Cause of the Confederacy are broadly similar as narrative archetypes. The idea of a lost cause here does not serve to deny the defeat itself, but rather to confer honour upon those who fought what they deemed a necessary and heroic, but ultimately unsuccessful battle. This point I owe to David Astin Walsh.

committed by the Wehrmacht, not least of which is the connection between contemporary far-right movements and the legacy of mythmaking.<sup>833</sup>

*From “Defamation” to the Crimes of the Wehrmacht Exhibition*

It was this myth, this lack of a perception that the Wehrmacht too, rather than solely the SS or the SD, had committed genocide or conducted a war of annihilation which helped create an explosive atmosphere in the 1990s. This moment provided an opportunity for the mobilisation of the far-right and ultimately gave rise to Neo-Nazi terror. The catalyst was the above-mentioned Wehrmacht Exhibition which toured the FRG in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The exhibition focused on the complicity of the Wehrmacht in the perpetration of the Holocaust and other war crimes, particularly on the Eastern Front and in the Balkans. But the long-term denialism sketched above provided a basis here for extensive mobilisation against the exhibition, which was led by far-right and neo-Nazi groups who managed to regularly call upon thousands to march in streets across reunified Germany. What is remarkable is the extent to which protesters took up the old call that the German soldier was being “defamed”, and that he had done nothing wrong but fought bravely for his country.<sup>834</sup> Rüdiger Proske, co-founder of the NDR programme *Panorama* and formerly himself a pilot in the Luftwaffe (though he was shot down in 1940 and spent the war in Canada as a prisoner), argued that the exhibition was an endeavour of “old communists and late 68ers” who wished to defame the Bundeswehr “with the aid of the Red Cell within the MGFA.”<sup>835</sup> Proske’s pamphlet was circulated by Chancellor Helmut Kohl to his ministers, but such rejection was in any case

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<sup>833</sup> A point most recently made by Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory*; Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

<sup>834</sup> Felix Berth, ‘Aufm’, *taz*, 3 March 1997.

<sup>835</sup> Quoted in Hannes Heer, ‘20 Jahre Wehrmachtausstellung: Thesen, Debatten, Folgen. Ein persönlicher Blick’, in ‘*So war der deutsche Landser...*’. *Das populäre Bild der Wehrmacht*, ed. Jens Westemeier (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2019), 86–87.

widespread. Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who had taken part in the Siege of Leningrad,<sup>836</sup> criticised the exhibition for its “horrible portrayal” of the supposedly criminal Wehrmacht.<sup>837</sup> These rejections of the evidence presented were legitimated by the fact that the exhibition contained a number of errors.<sup>838</sup> But the fact that the older justifications and expressions of denial resurfaced suggests that something else, perhaps darker and more fundamental, was at play.

While debates over inaccuracies raged in the *Feuilleton*, the above mentioned far-right groups and neo-Nazis enthusiastically embraced the opportunity the exhibition offered to mobilise, organise, and recruit. The early 1990s had already seen a number of high-profile terror attacks perpetrated by the far-right, not least the arson attacks at Mölln and Solingen, which in turn had followed the xenophobic riots in Hoyerswerda and Rostock-Lichtenhagen.<sup>839</sup> Uwe Böhnhardt, Uwe Mundlos, and Beate Zschäpe, the three core members of the so-called “National Socialist Underground” (NSU), all took part in multiple protests against the exhibition in the late 1990s. It appears likely they committed an attack on the exhibition itself while it was being shown in Saarbrücken in March 1999. The neo-Nazi terrorists went on to commit at least ten murders before they were discovered.<sup>840</sup> Stephan

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<sup>836</sup> Michael Wolfssohn, ‘Vom Oberleutnant zum Soldatenkanzler?’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 December 2014.

<sup>837</sup> Though Schmidt never visited the exhibition himself Heer, ‘20 Jahre Wehrmachtausstellung: Thesen, Debatten, Folgen. Ein persönlicher Blick’, 87.

<sup>838</sup> The most notorious account of these errors, perhaps overstating their gravity, in Bogdan Musial, ‘Der Bildersturm. Aufstieg und Fall der ersten Wehrmachtausstellung’, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 1 September 2011, <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/53181/die-erste-wehrmachtausstellung?p=all>.

<sup>839</sup> Thomas Prenzel, “‘Am Wochenende räumen wir in Lichtenhagen auf’”. Die Angriffe auf die Zentrale Aufnahmestelle für Asylbewerber in Rostock im August 1992’, in *Flüchtlingslager im Nachkriegsdeutschland. Migration, Politik, Erinnerung*, ed. Henrik Bispinck and Katharina Hochmuth (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2014), 234–53; David Begrich, ‘Hoyerswerda und Lichtenhagen. Urszenen rassistischer Gewalt in Ostdeutschland’, in *Generation Hoyerswerda. Das Netzwerk militanter Neonazis in Brandenburg*, ed. Heike Kleffner and Anna Spangenberg (Berlin: be.bra, 2016), 32–44; more widely on far-right violence in the 1990s, Matthias Quent, *Rassismus, Radikalisierung, Rechtsterrorismus. Wie der NSU entstand und was er über die Gesellschaft verrät* (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2016), 164–288.

<sup>840</sup> Frank Jansen, ‘Verübte NSU Anschlag auf Wehrmachtausstellung?’, *Tagesspiegel*, 3 December 2011, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/spur-ins-saarland-veruebte-nsuanschlag-auf->

Ernst, a long-time neo-Nazi with possible connections to the NSU, too, protested against the exhibition multiple times in the early 2000s. In 2019, Ernst murdered the CDU politician Walter Lübcke.<sup>841</sup> There is, then, a rather extended genealogy of denialism of the crimes committed by the Wehrmacht, which connects the personal and professional interests of the Wehrmacht generals and the military public sphere in the immediate post-war period with the ideological project of the new German far-right in the present, although why exactly the myth of the clean Wehrmacht became so powerful an organising force for the new far-right requires further research.

But it is clear that part of its power derived precisely from the fact that it circulated so widely, not just among those on the fringes, but at the very heart of the conservative establishment in West Germany. One example is the Bitburg Controversy of 1985, provoked by the Kohl administration when it invited U.S. President Ronald Reagan to a cemetery which contained graves of Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS soldiers, but initially planned no visit to a concentration camp.<sup>842</sup> Nor did Kohl wish to take part in the funeral services following the attacks in Solingen eight years later, with his spokesman Dieter Vogel declaring he had “other important appointments.”<sup>843</sup> But how the legacy of the military public sphere’s strategy of exculpation managed to bridge the far-right fringes and the conservative centre is not quite clear. Perhaps part of it was a successful campaign which suggested that in implicating the

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wehrmachtsausstellung/5918538.html; ‘Protokoll 221. Verhandlungstag – 28. Juli 2015’, NSU Watch, 28 July 2015, <https://www.nsu-watch.info/2015/07/protokoll-221-verhandlungstag-28-juli-2015/>; ‘Protokoll 295. Verhandlungstag – 06. Juli 2016’, NSU Watch, 6 July 2016, <https://www.nsu-watch.info/2016/07/protokoll-295-verhandlungstag-06-juli-2016/>; ‘Protokoll 357. Verhandlungstag – 06. April 2017’, NSU Watch, 6 April 2017, <https://www.nsu-watch.info/2017/04/protokoll-357-verhandlungstag-06-april-2017/>.

<sup>841</sup> Nathan Niedermeier, ‘Lübcke-Mord: Kontakte zu NSU-Umfeld weitreichender als bisher angenommen’, *Correctiv*, 14 January 2021, <https://correctiv.org/aktuelles/neue-rechte/2021/01/14/luebcke-mord-kontakte-zu-nsu-umfeld-weitreichender-als-bisher-angenommen/>.

<sup>842</sup> A visit to Bergen-Belsen was only added to Reagan’s itinerary later, Hartman, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*.

<sup>843</sup> Heribert Prantl, ‘Erst stirbt das Recht, dann stirbt der Mensch’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 May 2013, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/brandanschlag-von-solingen-1993-rechtsextremismus-1.1683458-0>.

Wehrmacht in war crimes and genocide, it was not just the leadership which had engaged in criminal behaviour, but millions of ancestors, reflected in placards proclaiming, “our grandfathers were no criminals.”<sup>844</sup> This enabled a millionfold rejection of the crimes of the Wehrmacht as a rejection of the complicity of one’s own family, which is only slowly being undone, including by projects like those at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.<sup>845</sup> But, as the author has learned from personal experience, even when confronted with material documenting the complicity of one’s ancestors, some family members may find this difficult to accept.

### *Soldiers or Veterans?*

In the introduction, I argued that, *pace* Kühne, the thesis was not going to focus on the idea of “veterans”, as many of those within the military public sphere did not understand themselves as such, but rather, particularly in the early post-war decades, viewed themselves as soldiers still.<sup>846</sup> This self-understanding, which endured defeat, genocide, captivity, and perceived “defamation” makes sense of the fact that the old structures of command and authority still permeated the military public sphere, could still be mobilised in order to shore up support or to discipline and punish. Courts of honour or courts martial also continued to exist, in a way. When an article was published in the Irish outlet secured by Liddell Hart for the German generals in 1951 drawing into question the actions taken by Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, who was commanding an armoured formation in Normandy on D-Day, statements were secured by Geyr from various living observers in defence of his actions and his character, and

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<sup>844</sup> ‘Chronik Die Wehrmachtsausstellung zwischen Krawallen und Kritik’, *Spiegel*, 27 November 2001, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/chronik-die-wehrmachtsausstellung-zwischen-krawallen-und-kritik-a-169990.html>.

<sup>845</sup> Oliver von Wrochem, ed., *Nationalsozialistische Täterschaft. Nachwirkungen in Gesellschaft und Familie*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Metropol, 2016).

<sup>846</sup> For a summary of this point, see the Introduction above, as well as Chapters 1 and 2 especially.

the whole matter adjudicated by the editor of the journal.<sup>847</sup> Although this particular dispute would continue to fester for decades,<sup>848</sup> it suggests, as Speier outlined, the existence of disciplining mechanisms behind the scenes which were meant to preserve a sense of unity in public, even if these disagreements were common knowledge within the military public sphere. The stakes were high initially perhaps due to the fact that officers wished to preserve their reputation in order to be able to serve in the new armed forces. Once the new armed forces were established, all many had left were their past deeds, and the protection of their legacy required careful consideration. Identification with *Soldatentum*, the professional and social class of soldiers, softened the institutional change which had occurred and contained a claim to continued relevance. But it also contained the possibility of future service, particularly given that some continued to argue that a war with the Soviet Union was coming, and that they would have to be relied upon once more to defend (West) Germany. More than a few may have harboured hopes that they might reconquer those Eastern Territories which they had lost in their protracted defensive battles with the Red Army in the latter stages of the war.

#### *German Combat Veterans of the War on Terror*

While the legacy of these older generations of soldiers no longer is at issue directly in Germany, their examples are useful for considering a new issue which has emerged in the past two decades. Military forces increasingly constitute a viable option among others in the arsenal of German foreign policy options. In 2010, Federal President Horst Köhler resigned in the wake of comments suggesting troops might be deployed in order to secure German economic interests abroad. Criticism of Köhler was relentless in spite of the fact that, even as

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<sup>847</sup> 'Ruge to MacCarthy' (10 April 1951), ED 91/12, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv; 'Geyr to MacCarthy' (4 June 1951), ED 91/12, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

<sup>848</sup> 'Lang to Geyr' (14 September 1964), ED 91/12, Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv.

he spoke, German troops were already defending global economic interests by taking part in the anti-piracy operation *Atalanta* off the Horn of Africa, having done so since December 2008.<sup>849</sup> And while the secondary literature oscillates between diagnosing a “militarisation” or a “normalisation” of German foreign and security policy,<sup>850</sup> and whether Germany ought to “bear more responsibility”,<sup>851</sup> it misses one important and increasingly salient point. By now, thousands of German soldiers who have rotated through the various deployments of the Bundeswehr, most significantly Afghanistan, understand themselves to be combat veterans, whether Germany is officially at war or not.<sup>852</sup>

The question as to who counts as a veteran in Germany today has been exacerbated by the *Veteranenabzeichen*, the new medal issued by the Bundeswehr to be worn only alongside civilian clothing. Whoever put on the uniform, whatever the length of their service, now officially counts as a veteran.<sup>853</sup> These debates have given rise to a number of new associations which advocate on behalf of veterans. The *Bund Deutscher EinsatzVeteranen*, for instance, advocates for veterans who have served abroad and in particular for those who suffer from mental and physical health issues as a result of such service, arguing that both care and recognition are inadequate. According to their numbers, 10,000 *EinsatzVeteranen*

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<sup>849</sup> Sebastian Fischer, Veit Medick, and Severin Weiland, ‘Köhler geht in Deckung’, *Spiegel*, 27 May 2010, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/umstrittene-bundeswehr-aeusserungen-koehler-geht-in-deckung-a-697144.html>.

<sup>850</sup> Gunther Hellmann, ‘Zwischen Gestaltungsmacht und Hegemoniefalle. Zur Neuesten Debatte über eine “Neue Deutsche Außenpolitik”’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 28–29 (2016): 4–12.

<sup>851</sup> Sarah Brockmeier and Philipp Rotmann, ‘Wofür eigentlich?’, *Die Zeit*, 15 February 2019, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2019-02/aussenpolitik-deutschland-internationale-verantwortung-europamuenchner-sicherheitskonferenz/komplettansicht>.

<sup>852</sup> Timo Noetzel, ‘The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan’, *International Affairs* 87, no. 2 (2011): 397–417, Noetzel, though informative on this, is also one of the protagonists of the aforementioned ‘Berateraffäre’; Nina Leonhard, ‘Towards a New German Military Identity? Change and Continuity of Military Representations of Self and Other(s) in Germany’, *Critical Military Studies* 5, no. 4 (2019): 304–21.

<sup>853</sup> There is, I think, a justified fear that this is an attempt to create a kind of American-inspired ‘Support the Troops’ mentality, Michael Schmidt, ‘Zehn Millionen Deutsche sind jetzt Veteranen’, *Tagesspiegel*, 19 November 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/anererkennung-fuer-soldaten-zehn-millionen-deutsche-sind-jetzt-veteranen/23650408.html>.

leave the Bundeswehr every year.<sup>854</sup> There is, as yet little scholarship on what this might mean, not just for the structures of the military public sphere, but for German society at large. For the first time since the Second World War, significant numbers of German soldiers return home from combat zones, physically or mentally altered, and potentially feeling left behind or unacknowledged by the state which they fought to defend. At the same time, far-right and neo-Nazi networks are proliferating, particularly inside the security services.<sup>855</sup> The AfD appears to regard itself as the natural “soldiers’ party” and its ranks contain a notable number of soldiers, even after the expulsion of Andreas Kalbitz, the head of the parliamentary group in the Brandenburg state parliament.<sup>856</sup> Ironically, *Streitkräfte & Strategien* in particular has increasingly given voice to AfD spokespeople, especially their most prominent defence expert Colonel (Retired) Rüdiger Lucassen.<sup>857</sup> There is as yet no scholarship on the connection between the rise of the far-right and increasingly large numbers of combat veterans in Germany, but given the violent potential of the increasingly significant groups of soldiers associated with extremism on the right side of the political spectrum,<sup>858</sup> this question could hardly be more urgent. As I have suggested at the end of Chapter 4 above, mandatory military service appeared no antidote to the dominance of conservative ideas of military identity in the 1980s, and it is unlikely it would do so. It is worth noting that the combination

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<sup>854</sup> ‘Der Verein’, Bund Deutscher EinsatzVeteranen, accessed 17 February 2021, <https://www.veteranenverband.de/index.php/about>.

<sup>855</sup> Dirk Laabs, *Staatsfeinde in Uniform* (Berlin: Econ, 2021).

<sup>856</sup> Alexej Hock and Annelie Naumann, ‘Die neue Heimat für Law & Order? Soldaten und Polizisten in den AfD-Fraktionen’, in *Extreme Sicherheit. Rechtsradikale in Polizei, Verfassungsschutz, Bundeswehr und Justiz*, ed. Matthias Meisner and Heike Kleffner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019), 49–56; Maria Fiedler, ‘Truppen Sammeln. Die AfD als selbst ernannte Soldaten-Partei’, in *Extreme Sicherheit. Rechtsradikale in Polizei, Verfassungsschutz, Bundeswehr und Justiz*, ed. Matthias Meisner and Heike Kleffner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019), 272–76.

<sup>857</sup> ‘Lucassen: Stopp der Hubschrauberbeschaffung ein Treppenwitz’, *Streitkräfte und Strategien*, 30 January 2021, [https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/sendungen/streitkraefte\\_und\\_strategien/sendemanuskriptstreitkraefte102.pdf](https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/sendungen/streitkraefte_und_strategien/sendemanuskriptstreitkraefte102.pdf).

<sup>858</sup> Most significantly the far-right networks linked to the special forces, Schmidt, ‘Hannibal’s Shadow Army’; Martin Kaul et al., ‘Hannibals Netz. Wie ein Elitesoldat der Bundeswehr bundesweit für den Tag X mobilisierte’, in *Extreme Sicherheit. Rechtsradikale in Polizei, Verfassungsschutz, Bundeswehr und Justiz*, ed. Matthias Meisner and Heike Kleffner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2019), 246–59.

of thousands of potentially disaffected and disgruntled combat veterans *and* relatively insular military institutions might prove particularly dangerous.

But this is hardly just a German problem. In April 2017, First Lieutenant Franco A. was arrested after he had attempted to retrieve, two months earlier, a handgun he had stashed at the toilets in the Vienna airport. It emerged he had registered as a refugee under a fake name, but the rest of the case remains unclear.<sup>859</sup> He stands accused of posing as a refugee in order to facilitate the perpetration of a false flag terror attack. He has repeatedly portrayed himself as a clumsy investigative journalist, trying to blow the whistle on Germany's asylum system. In 2014 he had submitted a thesis at the elite French military academy Saint-Cyr which contained endorsements of far-right extremist positions, prompting an investigation on the part of his French professors which was ultimately dismissed by the German chain of command.<sup>860</sup> While Franco A. had German accomplices, including one who now works for the AfD in the German parliament, it is unclear whether at Saint-Cyr or at his command, the Franco-German Brigade, there was a group of French officers who might have shared some of his views. The French Army appears to have its own problems with far-right extremism in the ranks.<sup>861</sup> In the British Army, soldiers of the Parachute Regiment used the face of Jeremy Corbyn, then leader of the opposition, for target practice on a shooting range in Afghanistan in 2019.<sup>862</sup> In the United States, current and former soldiers were overrepresented among

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<sup>859</sup> Katrin Bennhold, 'A Far-Right Terrorism Suspect With a Refugee Disguise: The Tale of Franco A.', *The New York Times*, 29 December 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/world/europe/germany-far-right-terrorism-refugee.html>.

<sup>860</sup> Bastian Brauns, Astrid Geisler, and Karsten Polke-Majewski, 'Drei Verdächtige und ein rechtes Dunkelfeld', *Die Zeit*, 10 May 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-05/bundeswehr-rechtsextremismus-franco-a-faq/komplettansicht>.

<sup>861</sup> Sébastien Bourdon and Matthieu Suc, 'Des néonazis font carrière dans l'armée française', *Mediapart*, 8 July 2020, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/080720/des-neonazis-font-carriere-dans-l-armee-francaise>.

<sup>862</sup> 'Jeremy Corbyn Target Practice Film Soldiers Disciplined', *BBC News*, 4 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-essex-48868071>.

those charged with attacking the Capitol on 6 January 2021.<sup>863</sup> Particularly worrying is the possibility that military institutions function as spaces insulated from wider social and political scrutiny, as well as out of reach of the security services, not to mention the fact that there appears to be some degree of sympathy for far-right politics in police and intelligence circles. Considering the history of the military public sphere suggests that a tendency towards more conservative or even far-right opinions has been, at least in Germany, a more or less constitutive feature of armed forces in the post-war period, and one which even at the height of the European peace movement, younger, more left-wing soldiers found it difficult to push back against.

### *The Military Public Sphere Today*

De Maizière retired from his position as chief of staff of the German armed forces on 31 March 1972. Franz Halder died two days later.<sup>864</sup> It was not until 1986, when Admiral Dieter Wellershoff took over the position that the Bundeswehr was commanded, for the first time,<sup>865</sup> by an officer who had not experienced combat during the Second World War.<sup>866</sup> De Maizière himself died only 2006 and his death, over three decades after he retired as the FRG's highest-ranking soldier, serves as a reminder of the longevity of older generations of officers. It is thus perhaps fair to say that a military public sphere beyond the confines sketched above is only two decades old, perhaps less. The early 2000s saw the deaths of the last surviving

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<sup>863</sup> Tom Dreisbach and Meg Anderson, 'Nearly 1 In 5 Defendants In Capitol Riot Cases Served In The Military', *NPR*, 21 January 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military>.

<sup>864</sup> Manstein the next year, Gehlen in 1979, Heusinger in 1982, and Speidel in 1984, to name but a few.

<sup>865</sup> His predecessor, Wolfgang Altenburg, had briefly served as a 'Flakhelfer' for the German navy towards the end of the war, 'General Wolfgang Altenburg', Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 21 February 2011, [https://web.archive.org/web/20110520125536/http://www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg!/ut/p/c4/NYxBC4JAEIX\\_0Y52kOhWhNQloUvaJdZ1WIfcWRlHvfTjW4Peg-\\_wPnjwhFS2C3mrFNkOUEPj6NCupg2LN4GYJkWhORiPk-vJ9Yqvn\\_PIKHYgnkZ8K86S9hUe22OHxkVG3ajISolerEYxYxQdNjOLJGOogybLz6csz\\_7JP0VZX-r7vthdb2UFYwjHLzMQRfo!/.](https://web.archive.org/web/20110520125536/http://www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg!/ut/p/c4/NYxBC4JAEIX_0Y52kOhWhNQloUvaJdZ1WIfcWRlHvfTjW4Peg-_wPnjwhFS2C3mrFNkOUEPj6NCupg2LN4GYJkWhORiPk-vJ9Yqvn_PIKHYgnkZ8K86S9hUe22OHxkVG3ajISolerEYxYxQdNjOLJGOogybLz6csz_7JP0VZX-r7vthdb2UFYwjHLzMQRfo!/)

<sup>866</sup> Two subsequent chiefs of staff, Harmut Bagger (1994-1996) and Harald Kujat (2000-2002) were born in territories lost after 1945. Bagger in East Prussia and Kujat in the so-called *Reichsgau Wartheland*.

representatives of an older generation of officers, such as de Maizière and Kielmansegg, alongside a rapidly shifting security landscape. In the course of the 1990s, Bundeswehr forces increasingly took part in multinational operations, but a sea change was marked by their participation in combat operations in Kosovo.<sup>867</sup> The Bundeswehr today has over 3000 soldiers deployed across the globe, with the largest contingents in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and Syria.<sup>868</sup> Over one hundred soldiers have lost their lives as a result of these operations, and mass civilian casualty events, too, have been a feature of these operations. The most notorious occurred on 4 September 2009, when then-Colonel Georg Klein ordered an air strike which resulted in the death of around 100 civilians. Klein has since been promoted and continues to serve within the ranks.<sup>869</sup>

But what does the military public sphere look like today? What networks shape it? What interests? What do its structures aim to do? One problem in answering these questions remains the opacity of the military public sphere. Reserve officers in particular are an important force in German politics but remain invisible as rarely do they advertise their service or their rank and are not identified as such by the media. Past military experience or an on-going reserve career are commonplace when it comes to politicians specialising in defence issues.<sup>870</sup> What this means is, due to that very opacity, unclear. It may be that some, though elected, feel beholden to the armed forces in a way a civilian might not. It may simply mean that they, more familiar with military issues and needs, are able to better bridge the gap

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<sup>867</sup> Frank A. Stengel, *The Politics of Military Force. Antimilitarism, Ideational Change, and Post-Cold War German Security Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020).

<sup>868</sup> 'Die Einsätze der Bundeswehr', Bundeswehr, accessed 18 February 2021, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/einsaetze-bundeswehr>. 'Die Einsätze der Bundeswehr', Bundeswehr, accessed 18 February 2021, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/einsaetze-bundeswehr>.

<sup>869</sup> Ulrike Winkelmann, 'Nato-Luftangriff bei Kundus. Verhinderte Aufarbeitung', *Deutschlandfunk*, 2 September 2019, [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nato-luftangriff-bei-kundus-verhinderte-aufarbeitung.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=457813](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nato-luftangriff-bei-kundus-verhinderte-aufarbeitung.724.de.html?dram:article_id=457813).

<sup>870</sup> For instance Peter Tauber and Lars Klingbeil, Daniel Lücking, *Twitter*, 12 April 2019, <https://twitter.com/DanielLuecking/status/1113182017204703232>.

between military and civilian interests. Even more opaque remains the network of associations, such as the CG, which still exists, as well as the *Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik*, the successor organisation to the GfW, which also continues to be supported by the German state.<sup>871</sup> The extent of their influence is difficult to ascertain, but it seems likely that their views, particularly given the fact that they serve as networking and lobbying groups for formerly high-ranking soldiers and business executives, continue to shape security and defence policy in unified Germany.

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<sup>871</sup> Peter Tauber also serves as vice-president of the GSP, ‘Bundesvorstand’, Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik e.V., accessed 18 February 2021, <https://www.gsp-sipo.de/wir-ueber-uns/bundesvorstand>.

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