

e Edition

Walter Goerlitz

**History of
THE GERMAN
GENERAL STAFF**

1657-1945

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CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS

I

THE Prussian General Staff is a product of a specific phase of European development. It grew out of that combination of absolute monarchy with standing armies which became so typical a phenomenon after the 'Thirty Years' War. In more than one instance, where that combination occurred, the military element was integral to the whole structure of the State. In the Spanish Empire it was the paid professional Army that held that scattered and heterogeneous thing together. In the Habsburg dominions with their diversified mixture of peoples the Army played a similar part.

Nowhere did this hold more true than in that composite state formed by the union of the Electorate of Brandenburg with the secularized inheritance of an East Prussian religious order. Writing towards the end of the eighteenth century, the military historian von Behrenhorst declared that the Prussian monarchy was not a country that had an army, but an Army that had a country which it used as a billeting area, and Mirabeau once made a somewhat similar remark. There is more than a little truth in these observations; the history of Prussia is essentially the history of the Prussian Army.

During the 'Thirty Years' War the speculative traffic in mercenaries had developed into something like a major industry. It was by bringing its bigger practitioners under his control, and also by forcing the recalcitrant nobility to do service to their sovereign, that the Great Elector laid the foundations of a standing Prussian force—and, with it, of Prussia. The chequered hotchpotch of the Hohenzollern possessions had come together through purchase, through conquest and through inheritance. It was the Army that formed the iron ring that held them together; one may even go so far as to say that in the strict sense there has never been a Prussian nation at all, though there has most certainly been a Prussian Army and a Prussian State.

Aside from the Army, the absolute monarchy of the Hohenzollerns had two other props, a Protestant orthodoxy with a peculiar Prussian colouring of its own, and a patriarchal system of land



ownership. All matters of Church government were, of course, dependent upon the King, the Church's activating doctrinal principle being the subject's duty of obedience—which last was often inculcated to the neglect of more cardinal Christian virtues. As to the landlords, they were compensated for the sovereign's encroachment on certain privileges of their order by the retention of private jurisdiction and the continued dominion over their serfs.

Without the Junkers of East Elbia, without this Prussian aristocracy of sword and service which for two centuries supplied it with most of its officers, the Prussian Army is inconceivable, and this applies with even greater force to the Prussian General Staff. Indeed, the history of the General Staff is indissolubly linked with that of a comparatively small number of noble families. This Junker nobility differed markedly both in spirit and circumstance from what was often the much wealthier nobility of other parts of Germany. Its manorial estates were often far from profitable. As against this, they were free from taxes, save only for the *Lehnpfersgeld*, or Horse-money, an ancient feudal due, quite negligible in terms of actual cash. Military or administrative service was the normal career for the sons of such families—to this rule there was hardly ever an exception—though prior to 1806 few of the young men concerned enjoyed a university education.

Genetically, these people were a mixture. Families of Wendish, Cassubian or "Pruzzian" origin, like the Zietens, Quitzows, Mansteins and Yorcks, may be said to have constituted a sort of basic norm, but there were accretions to this. Huguenot settlement had brought in a sizeable French element, while the incorporation of Silesian and Polish territories introduced a strong Polish influx which was swollen by the tendency of the impoverished Polish noblesse to take service under the Prussian crown. Prior to 1806, about one-fifth of the higher and one-quarter of the lower ranks of the nobility were of Polish origin. Though these families became thoroughly Germanized in habit and outlook, the censorious might claim to see the marks of a distinctive origin in a haughtiness that was crude beyond the average and in their occasional tendency to wild extravagance.

II

The period round 1640, in which the Prusso-Brandenburgian Army was born, saw the beginnings of what was later to be referred to by the comprehensive term *Generalstabdienst*, or "General Staff

Service". The Swedish Army stood at this time in high repute in Northern Europe, and it was on that model that the Great Elector may be presumed to have based himself in creating a so-called Quartermaster-General's Staff. The latter's function comprised all engineering services, the supervision of routes of march and the choice of camping sites and fortified positions. The first mention in the records of a Brandenburgian Quartermaster-General (a certain Lieutenant-Colonel and Engineer Gerhard von Bellicum, or Belkum) appears in 1657. He seems to have been assisted by one Lieutenant-Colonel and Engineer Jacob Holsten, who bore the title of Second Quartermaster-General.

The pay sheets show that the following belonged at this time to the so-called General Staff. There was, first, a Commissary-General, responsible for all matters of replacement, uniform, armament, food and shelter. This officer was assisted by a *Generalwachtmeister*; Sergeant-Major-General is the literal rendering: the rank was known to Cromwell's New Model Army. Further there were two Adjutants-General, one Provendermaster-General, a *General-auditeur*, who dealt with matters of military law, a Wagonmaster-General and an "Enforcer-General" (*Generalgewaltiger*) who with his constables was responsible for police matters. Actually, neither the Quartermaster-General nor the Commissary-General ranked as senior officer of the General Staff. That honour fell to the Master of Ordnance (*Feldzeugmeister*), in this instance Freiherr von Sparr, one of the Great Elector's truly great generals.

Among Bellicum's successors we find in the years 1670-73 a certain Philippe de Chiese, or Chiesa, less well known as a soldier than as the architect of the main building of Potsdam Castle and of the Berlin Mint, and also famous as the constructor of a post-chaise hung in slings, known as the "Berline". Chiesa was succeeded in the years up to 1699 by a number of officers of French origin, de Maistre, du Puy, Margace and de Brion. As regards the staff of the Quartermaster-General proper, this consisted of the following in order of seniority: the *Oberquartiermeister* or Senior Quartermaster (the rank is unknown in English), the General Staff Quartermaster and the Staff Quartermaster. These various functionaries constituted a technical and administrative body which, however, was never really organized on a permanent basis. What happened was that when war broke out, the General War Commissariat, as the General Staff began to be called, would on each occasion be assembled afresh.

In Austria, whose rulers tended to lack military experience and

were not in the habit of taking the field themselves, a somewhat different institution had developed. This was the Court War Council, which surrounded the ruler with a body of persons with active service experience. In so far as this body drew up operation plans, it came closer to what we understand today by a General Staff.

In Prussia, however, the Great Elector was his own Generalissimo and his own Chief of Staff. His grandson, King Frederick William I, founded the tradition that the King was *ipso facto* the Supreme War Lord, leading his own army in the field. Under him, the uniform became the ruler's official livery, and so the most distinguished attire of social life. Service as an officer became the privilege of the nobility. The officer began to look upon himself as the servant of the monarch in whom the State was held to be personified, and the military oath in which the Junker swore loyalty to his sovereign gained a new and profound significance. Indeed, this conception of personal loyalty was the real moral foundation of the Army and was the thing that shaped the highly distinctive mental attitudes of the Prussian and later of the German officer corps as a whole.

Like that of Austria and Russia, the character of the new State was essentially military. Even the civil administration tended to borrow military forms, and the title of *Kriegsrat*, or War Councillor, for ordinary senior government officials is eloquent in this respect. With the exception of the Academy of Sciences, all educational institutions served purely military purposes, as, for instance, did the *Ritterakademie*, the Cadet Schools designed for the education of the nobility, and the *Militärakademie*. The *Ingenieurakademie* duly delivered military engineers, while the Medical School known as the *Pépinière* ensured the supply of regimental doctors.

It was under Frederick William I that the conception of so-called "Prussian Obedience" became a fundamental principle of this Prussian military nobility, and yet in those days, at any rate, it was not an obedience that was merely blind. A story is told of von Seydlitz, the cavalry leader, that when at the battle of Zorndorf, in 1758, Frederick the Great ordered him to attack the still unbroken Russian infantry, he replied, "Tell His Majesty that my head will be at his disposal after the battle, but that as long as the battle lasts I intend to use it in his service."

III

The Great Elector bequeathed an army of 30,000 men to his successor. Frederick I raised the number to 40,000, and Frederick William I increased it further to 80,000. When Frederick the Great died in 1786, the number had risen to 200,000. These rising figures mark Prussia's ascent during the eighteenth century to the level of a great power. The three victorious Silesian wars and the proceeds of the partition of Poland in 1772 added West Prussia and Silesia to Frederick's possessions, while his victories at Rossbach and Leuthen in the Seven Years' War established the Prussian Army's reputation all over Europe, though it was Russia's change of sides, and not Frederick's military performance, that saved him from annihilation by his more powerful neighbours.

Like his predecessors, Frederick the Great was his own Chief of Staff, and the Quartermaster-General's staff remained much the kind of thing that has already been described, the number of officers serving on it totalling about twenty-five. We find, however, that this staff has now a corps of orderlies at its disposal to serve as messengers and despatch carriers, and also that the institution of the Brigade Major has come into being. Brigade Majors were officers who moved about from one place to another and assisted generals by means of reports and the compilation of useful data. It was in the nature of things that this Quartermaster-General's corps should work in close personal contact with the King. Indeed, in later times the latter made the training of these officers his own personal concern, the twelve best pupils of the *Académie des Nobles* in every year being taken for these posts. Even so, there is as yet no question of a genuine General Staff in our sense of the term. The King has as yet no responsible body of military advisers.

We must, however, note the growth of another institution with which the Quartermaster-General's department has a tendency to overlap, and with which in the course of time it develops a very sharp rivalry. This is the office of the Adjutant-General, the germinal cell of that most characteristic Prussian thing, the Military Cabinet of the Prussian kings. Under the first Prussian kings, this office was chiefly concerned with officers' records. Frederick the Great, however, somewhat extended its province in connection with the new system of "directives" which the exigencies of this particular time called into being.

The fact that during the Seven Years' War theatres of operation were scattered and often remote frequently necessitated the employment of large bodies of troops under what were really independent commanders. Within the framework of instructions of a general kind, such officers had to be given a certain freedom of decision. In such cases, apart from Brigade Majors and other more subordinate personnel from the staff, the King liked to attach to the field commander an Adjutant-General or an aide-de-camp, whose rôle was in the nature of that of a royal Commissar. There were during the Seven Years' War five such Adjutants-General attached to the infantry and two to the cavalry, and the best known among them, Hans von Winterfeld, one of the King's closest friends, actually had a number of units under his independent command.

From the year 1758 onwards, there was a single Adjutant-General who had a secretary attached to him. The most important of these was Heinrich Wilhelm von Anhalt. He was an illegitimate son of Prince Wilhelm von Anhalt-Dessau, his mother, a noted beauty, being a clergyman's daughter. This man joined the Prussian Army under the name of "Gustavsohn", served on the Quartermaster-General's staff and was raised by Frederick to the nobility in 1761, and from 1765 to 1781 held, with the rank of colonel, the posts of First Adjutant-General and Quartermaster-General. The interest of this figure lies in the fact that, during the partition of Poland and in the war of the Bavarian succession of 1778, he played so large a part in deciding on the commitments of various bodies of troops that one might almost speak of him as Frederick's Chief of Staff. He seems hardly to have been a very agreeable person, for he enjoyed the reputation of a surly and obstinate martinet, but he shared one characteristic with later chiefs of the General Staff: his work was largely done in secret and he remained almost wholly unknown to the public.

IV

War in the eighteenth century had its own governing principles. The economic and even the political power of the absolutist states was limited, and this, of course, in its turn set a limit to their military means. Moreover, the professional armies of the Hohenzollerns, the Habsburgs and the Bourbons were expensive instruments which were hard to replace, for they were instruments of high mechanical perfection. Infantry marched right into the battle line in firm, mathematically circumscribed formations. It fought in thin lines three

deep, several sets of triple alignments being drawn up one behind the other. All evolutions were carried out according to rule, with the soldiers during all their ingenious wheeling and manoeuvring keeping strictly in step. The aim was the welding together of the men so that they moved and fired with the synchrony of a single machine. The individual as such was at a discount. Frederick the Great is said to have remarked that the soldier needed to fear the sergeant's stick more than he feared the bullets of the enemy; even of his own officers, the great Potsdam sceptic was in the habit of saying that if they ever started to think, not one of them would remain with the colours. There were really only two considerations—speed of march and speed of fire, of which the latter was greatly enhanced by the use of the iron cannon (introduced into the Prussian Army by Duke Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau) since wooden ramrods were liable to break under rapid manipulation.

The short range of firearms restricted the size of the battlefield, so that it was easy in those days for commanders to supervise their dispositions with their own eyes from any rising piece of ground. The provisioning of the well-nigh irreplaceable troops was done by means of a cumbersome system of storehouses, and this also narrowed down the field of operations. If military operations were on a modest scale, the aims of wars were equally restricted. Wars were waged for the possession of a fortress or a province. The merciless life and death struggle between whole peoples, let alone the war of ideologies, had not yet been born.

The strategy of the time was that of the chess board which concentrated on felicitous manoeuvring and avoided, wherever possible, the more painful decisions of a direct encounter. Count Wilhelm von Schaumburg Lippe, one of the most important military historians of the time, says in his *Mémoires sur la Guerre Défensive* that the art of war should be directed to the avoidance of war, or at any rate towards the mitigation of its evils. One of the most typical wars of the century was that of the Bavarian Succession, which was fought by Frederick the Great in 1778 to prevent the union of Austria and Bavaria. In this instance the King and his brother, Prince Heinrich, each with an army of 80,000 men, marched from Silesia and the Lausitz into Bohemia, while the Austrians took up an entrenched position on the Upper Elbe; yet a battle was risked by neither belligerent, and the issue was settled by diplomacy. Till then the notion of a war of extermination had only made its appearance in the Turkish wars which were waged against the House of Habsburg in the Balkans, and in this

case the Osmanli Empire really does seem to have maintained the traditions of Timur the Tartar and Genghis Khan; but these wars took place in an area that lay somewhat outside the consciousness of eighteenth-century Europe.

Change, however, was already at work. In the middle of the century two events had erupted into that polished world of Rococo—the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. The former had been most in evidence in England, but in France, too, it was a sign of the times that land speculators were buying up old ancestral homes. Middle-class business efficiency and the middle-class ability to make money began palpably to breach the charmed feudal circle, and the change finds expression in the military sphere. Technical proficiency begins to threaten the traditional precedence of a titled soldier caste—particularly in the artillery, which now becomes essentially the weapon of the third estate. Scharnhorst, the son of a tenant farmer, begins his career as an artillery officer in the Hanoverian forces. Even Prussia is not wholly immune against this hidden class war, which brings with it a steady dribble of middle-class officers into the artillery and the engineers.

Meanwhile, eighteenth-century military thought was effecting its own *reductio ad absurdum*. Moving, as it did, in a world of artifice and geometrical forms, it induced in a number of minds the conviction that the art of war was a matter of mathematical calculation. Von Templehof, a Prussian artillery colonel, from whose family came Ludendorff's mother, inclined to this persuasion, as did also a certain Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, a Prussian officer who was dismissed the Army because of the irregularities of his life, but aspired to a post on the Quartermaster-General's staff on the merits of his theories. One of von Bülow's main concerns was the angle formed between the base of operations and the operational objective. An angle of ninety degrees was considered the most desirable. In the Prussian Quartermaster-General's staff itself, Colonel Christian von Massenbach was the best-known exponent of this general school of thought, and it was no doubt this kind of speculation, in which all feeling for effective forms of combat had disappeared, that led von Saldern, one of Frederick the Great's latter-day generals, to declare that the essence of all military training lay in the formal evolutions of the parade ground.

V

The petrification of Frederick's military system led to the bureaucratization of the Army command. Under Frederick's successor, Frederick William II, it became plain that the monarchy had grown much too large for a single individual to deal with the whole business of government, especially when that individual was as devoted to the pleasures of life as the potentate concerned. That was why in 1787 there was formed an *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium* or Supreme War Council which under the direction of two Field-Marschals, the Duke of Brunswick and von Möllendorf, was to act as the highest military authority. This body had three departments, one for mobilization, provisioning and Army affairs in general, one for uniforms and equipment, and one to deal with the disabled. Also, theoretically at least, it had the departments of the Adjutant-General and that of the Quartermaster-General under its control. The department of the Adjutant-General was in the charge of the Adjutant-General of the infantry, whoever he might be, and concerned itself with officers' records, with garrison and armament matters and with all questions relating to regulations. The Quartermaster-General's staff, the strength of which at this time was from twenty to twenty-four officers, was now for the first time given its own uniform. In the case of infantry officers on this staff, this uniform consisted of a light-blue coat with red facings and dark-yellow waistcoat and trousers, the coat of cavalry officers being white. In addition to the duties already allotted to it in regard to fortresses and camps, this department was in 1796 asked to concern itself with a typical General Staff activity, namely the preparation of serviceable military maps. With this purpose in view, thirteen *Ingénieur-Géographes* were posted to the Quartermaster-General's staff, their office being in the royal castle at Potsdam. These "Engineer Geographers" were mostly people of middle-class origin, for it was looked upon as beneath the Junker's dignity to busy himself with coloured pencils and dividers.

There was further, from time to time, an exchange of personnel between the Adjutant-General's and the Quartermaster-General's departments. The First Adjutant-General of the infantry, Colonel von Gausau, himself later became head of the Quartermaster-General's staff. Even so the departments were rivals, and in the end the Adjutant-General's department not only secured ascendancy over that of the Quartermaster-General, which never rose beyond the level

of a purely technical body, but also over the *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium*, which suffered considerably under the disadvantage of divided control and had never more than a most nebulous conception of the nature of its functions. Thus the way was opened for the development which we have already noted, whereby the Adjutant-General's department was ultimately to blossom into the all-powerful military cabinet of the Prussian kings, a consummation that had its disquieting side, for the military cabinet's irresponsible *imperium in imperio*, and its ability to influence the sovereign by secret advice, was to provide at least one of the reasons for Stein's dramatic appeal for a reform of head and members. Whatever its shortcomings in this respect, however, the Adjutant-General's department can still claim the distinction of providing the nearest equivalent that the age could show to a modern General Staff.

VI

Strangely enough, the Prussian Army continued, while these changes were in progress, to be the accepted model for Europe, so much so that immediately before the Revolution the French Minister of War was considering the introduction of Prussian drill regulations and the Prussian military organization into France. Yet while life everywhere was congealing into ever stiffer forms, that same France rediscovered a new vitality of her own, and in the military sphere as in others the French Revolution proved a turning point.

Nothing could have offered a sharper contrast at this time than the mood of Germany and that of France. After the long struggle of the Seven Years' War, Germany was hungry for peace. That longing found its spiritual embodiment in Kant's tract, *Towards Everlasting Peace*, which condemns war as the destroyer of all that is good and the origin of all that is evil; it also found it in Schiller's glorification of World citizenship, and in much of the writing of Herder. French aspirations were very different. Moreover, the French Revolution not only propagated the ideas of the freedom and equality of man, it brought into being the Nation State, which in its turn produced the phenomenon of the nation in arms, and with it an altogether new potential of power. The Prussian elaboration of this conception was one of the Revolution's unforeseen consequences—a consequence which, thanks to the German example, was in due course passed on to the Slavs of the East.

French admiration for existing military arrangements only waned

slowly, and Moderate leaders of the National Assembly who honestly sought, as many of them did, to reconcile the officers of the *ancien régime* with the Revolution, encountered little opposition on technical grounds. A proposal was even considered to offer the command of the armies of the Revolution either to the Duke of Brunswick or to the Hessian general and minister Count Ernst Heinrich von Schlichten, both of whom had been trained in the school of Frederick the Great, and many a general of King Louis's army loyally served the Tricolor. The French Drill and Training Regulations of 1791 differed very little from those of the royal army.

A struggle against the old army began, however, when the more radical elements of the Revolution, the Jacobins, rose to power. Many officers were either murdered or executed simply because they were of noble descent, while the very barracks and parade grounds, and all else that recalled the ancient rigid discipline, became detested symbols of the old order. "Soldiers' Committees", prototypes of the "Soldiers' Councils" of 1918, were formed in many regiments, a congress of regimental delegates took place in Strasbourg, and 20,000 naval ratings mutinied at Brest. The National Guard, which the Marquis of Lafayette had originally formed to protect the propertied middle class, was gradually changed into the germinal cell of a new People's Army. When in 1792 Prussia, Austria, England and Spain formed a coalition against Revolutionary France, the leaders of the Revolution deliberately appealed to the patriotism of the broad masses, and the Deputy Dubois-Crancé introduced a bill for universal service into the National Assembly. That bill immediately became law, and with Barrès leading the panegyric, the glorification of the nation in arms began.

VII

The campaign of 1792, that crusade of the Princes which was so singularly short of crusaders, petered out in pitiable failure. The French popular army broke completely with tradition and developed wholly new forms of combat. (Something very like open order fighting appeared, as did the tactic of packing huge numbers of men together for an offensive punch. There was little art in this manoeuvre, but it was exceedingly effective.) Moreover, the new French armies did not look upon war as the exclusive concern of a distant and detached authority with whom the rank and file had little in common, and this may explain their quite unprecedented powers of resilience. Certainly

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they contrived to recover from defeats which would have finished troops of the conventional type for good.

Another new element was economic. With the introduction of the mass army, cannon fodder was not only more plentiful but cheaper; no costly apparatus had now to be employed to recruit or press men to the colours. The new mass army had come to stay, the old feudal order disintegrated. Peace had to be made with France, for, as the Duke of Hohenlohe, one of the coalition's commanders, remarked, you cannot get the better of madmen.

The lessons went home. Men like Kant, Schiller, Hölderlin and Herder were by no means the only ones who greeted the Revolution with enthusiasm. A number of young officers of the more intellectual type, like Major von der Kneesebeck of the Quartermaster-General's staff, and Lieutenant von Boyen (then a simple infantry officer in distant East Prussia), showed marked sympathy for the new spirit coming from the West. Military writers such as Georg Heinrich von Behrenhorst, like the von Anhalt previously mentioned, an illegitimate child of one of the Dukes of Anhalt-Dessau, now abandoned the conception of a mathematic science of war and set about explaining the relationship of military tactics to political upheaval. Behrenhorst's conclusions led him to propose the replacement of the professional army by a cadre army based on a militia. His brother-devotee, von Bülow, followed him in this and insisted in particular on the value of the new skirmishing tactics.

The new "Gospel of Belly-crawling", however, found no response in the *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium* or in the Adjutant-General's department, and its apostles were treated with ridicule or contempt. Bülow in particular remained an outcast, who as manager of a troop of actors, glass manufacturer, speculator and author, led a precarious existence in England and America. Only a handful of generals, headed by Lieutenant-General von Rüchel and Lieutenant-General de Courbière, of whom the latter had commanded the Prussian Guard in the late campaign, made the cause of universal service their own and obtained occasional support from enlightened staff officers like Kneesebeck. Unfortunately, such ideas clashed with the basic principles on which the East-Elbian landowners ran their estates, for they touched on their rights over their serfs and their private jurisdiction—and those rights were already none too secure. The effects of the French Revolution had reached far into the heart of Prussia. In Silesia, where conditions were particularly oppressive, a series of disturbances among the peasants necessitated the calling in of troops.

Whole villages were compelled by the military commanders to run the gauntlet, and so to undergo one of the worst punishments known to the old professional army, in which the prevailing absolutism still found its most typical expression.

Yet the French revolutionary wars had shattered the old scheme of things and brought about world-wide changes which not even the Prussian Army could indefinitely deny. They led to an unprecedented extension both of the area and the objectives of warfare. They also brutalized the whole business of fighting. Strangely enough, the birth of mass armies synchronized not only with the French Revolution and with the English Industrial Revolution but also with that very remarkable biological phase which multiplied human beings in every country in Europe.

The revolutionary masses, which now became militarized, broke with the limitations of what in the eighteenth century had become the aristocratic pastime of war. France now carried on war on the Rhine, in Southern Germany, in Belgium, in Northern Italy, in Egypt, in Syria, in Southern and Western France. She fought against the armies of Prussia, Austria, Spain, Sardinia, England, Russia and Turkey, and against her own counter-revolutionaries. In 1794 France had over a million men under arms.

The direction of so vast a host by a single commander was as impossible as was the simultaneous personal supervision of a number of campaigns carried on in widely separated theatres. Quite obviously the new situation demanded radical changes in technique. First, to be of tactical use, the mobilized masses needed a precise articulation into armies, corps and divisions. The practice of breaking fighting forces up into groups had not been unknown under Frederick the Great, but such groups had not been entities organized into a specific functional pattern. They had in each case been built up out of the different arms as necessity might require. All this now is changed, and the division comes into its own as the new tactical unit.

VIII

But this in its turn calls forth a new necessity, that of linking the division with the command, and so staff officers are attached to it to ensure the correct transmission, interpretation and even the correct execution of orders sent from above. Such officers must obviously be men of highly specialized training. Here the office of Carnot, the War Minister, played its part as a sort of staff officers' breeding ground,

for although it was little more than an organization for reinforcements and supply and had no further authority, it did tend to train the kind of specialist whom the situation required. One feature of this office is especially notable in this connection, for its work was marked by that tendency to anonymity which today is almost the essence of staff work—a circumstance which once led General von Seeckt to remark that staff officers had no names.

The process, therefore, by which the conduct of war comes more and more into the hands of specialists, a process which accelerated with the technical developments of the nineteenth century, has its origins in the French revolutionary wars. It is a depersonalizing process on which the spirit of the mass age has clearly set its mark, and none is more palpably affected by it than the officer of the General Staff. Two sharply opposed influences have thus assisted in forming the character of the German General Staff, the stratified feudal society of old Prussia, and the new nationalism of the French Revolution. It was left to the great reformer Scharnhorst to make a synthesis of these two contradictory elements and so to reconcile the old with the new.

CHAPTER II

THE FATHERS

SCHARNHORST AND GNEISENAU—THE ERA OF IDEALISM

I

IN 1801 Gerhard Johann Scharnhorst applied to the King of Prussia for employment in the Prussian Army. He did this because the Prussian Army at that time was accounted the most important in Germany and held out greater prospects of advancement than either the Hanoverian or Danish Army, the latter of which had offered him an appointment. Scharnhorst added three curious requests to his application. He asked to be posted as a lieutenant-colonel. He also asked to be raised to the nobility and to be allowed to carry out a reform of the Prussian Army. Three essays on various aspects of military science were attached to the application, presumably as a proof of the applicant's qualifications.

Certainly this application argued an unusual character, and in Scharnhorst's case some unusual capacity was certainly required, since neither his circumstances nor any other visible trait recommended him for his chosen career. He had been born in 1755 in Bodenau as the son of a tenant farmer and sometime sergeant-major in the Hanoverian artillery. The father's brother delivered fish for the Hanoverian Elector's table, his brother-in-law was a miller, while Scharnhorst's mother was the niece of one of the suppliers of the Court kitchen. Further, the son's bearing quite singularly lacked that peculiar semi-military stiffness that the Prussians designate by the word *stramm*, while his face, with its fleshy nose and its slight trace of sarcasm about the mouth, was somehow not the right kind of face for an officer at all. He cut a bad figure on parade, his word of command was poor, and he lacked that special kind of eloquence that can at times both delight and inspire the rank and file.

It is to the credit of the Prussian Army that despite these departures from the customary norm, the major's application was approved, but the fact is that there were other reasons for this than his work in military science, and indeed the suggestion to draw him into the

Prussian forces had been made as far back as 1797. Scharnhorst had been brought up in the famous military school of Count Wilhelm von Schaumburg-Lippe, the reorganizer of the Portuguese Army and a champion of the revolutionary idea of universal service. He had earned high distinction in the revolutionary wars in Belgium. As Chief of Staff to General von Hammerstein, the Commandant of the fortress of Ménil, Scharnhorst directed the sortie when that place was besieged. This led to his being appointed Chief of Staff to Count Wallmoden, Commander in Chief of the Hanoverian forces and father-in-law to Reichsfreiherr von Stein, who was at that time congenially employed in administering the Westphalian possessions of the Hohenzollerns. Scharnhorst was thus already accounted a very knowledgeable officer. Moreover, he had an excellent pen and had already acted as editor of a respected military periodical.

II

When Scharnhorst entered the Prussian Army, the second coalition against Napoleon between England, Austria and Russia had come to an end on the battlefield of Marengo, while Napoleon himself had seized unlimited power by the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire. Prussia was at the time passing through one of the less illustrious phases of her variegated history. True, she was no longer the Prussia of Frederick William II who had luxuriated in the deceptive but delightful twilight of the *ancien régime*. The swarm of colourful mistresses were there no longer, and there had been other salutary changes, but though the outrageous had disappeared from Prussian life, it was merely to make room for the futile, and in the fields of diplomacy, defence, administration and social life the State machine worked with a complacent incompetence which even by eighteenth-century standards was remarkable. Few denied the need for reform, but fewer ventured on action, and so Prussian policy was at this time marked by a timid conservatism which in the long run nearly ended by conserving nothing at all. Napoleon was at this time extending his power over Southern and Western Germany and over Belgium, Switzerland and Italy. From Egypt he was threatening Britain's possessions in India. Yet Prussia, gorged with her acquisitions from the second partition of Poland, sought diligently to retain her neutrality. This was not so much a policy as the result of having no policy at all.

Internally the picture was scarcely more heartening. The nobility,

closely bound together by blood and marriage, poor, unyielding, ambitious and ravenous of emolument, held all the key posts in its hands. This applied particularly to the Army. All the generals and regimental commanders were titled, only the Artillery could produce an occasional colonel who was actually a commoner, the Fortress Artillery being distinguished by the possession of no less than three. Actually, the Junkerdom, which to a man like Stein seemed a caricature of genuine nobility, had, as a matter of fact, forfeited much of its old stubborn self-assurance, though this merely increased the obstinacy with which it clung to what it still possessed.

Meanwhile, under this uninspired leadership, the Army, the backbone of this State of warriors and colonizers, had gone from bad to worse. Its outmoded tricks of drill, its rough and brutal methods of discipline, its scourgings and runnings of the gauntlet, made it seem like a single huge antediluvian penal institution. Only too often in the little garrison towns of East Elbia the peaceful burghers were startled out of their sleep when the dull thunder of the alarm gun proclaimed through the darkness that a soldier, or perhaps a number of soldiers, had deserted.

It needed a stronger personality than the reigning monarch, Frederick William III, to set this ramshackle house in order, but if Frederick William singularly failed to do anything, he was not utterly blind to reality. For some time, though the notion came to nothing, he toyed with the idea of liberating the serfs, and he was certainly aware of the fact that something had to be done about the Army. In a memorandum of 1795 he refers to that institution as a diseased body which must be helped back to health. It was a striking but not an exaggerated description.

III

Whatever her defects, however, Prussia was in Scharnhorst's case as good as her word, and his somewhat novel request to be raised to the nobility was complied with shortly after his entry into the Prussian service. He was, moreover, posted to the Quartermaster-General's staff, where he undertook the supervision of military schools, but he found yet another at least equally important activity, for in July, 1801, Scharnhorst founded in Berlin the *Militärische Gesellschaft*, which had the reform of the Army as its aim.

The president of this society was Lieutenant-General von Rüchel, Inspector of the Guards and Governor of Potsdam. Rüchel's

adjutant, Major von dem Knesebeck, was, as already related, an enthusiast for the ideas of 1789, and had at the time drawn up a memorandum on the strengthening of the Army through a territorial militia, and it was about this time that the idea came to Scharnhorst of using just such a national and universal militia as a stepping stone to a People's Army.

A number of young officers of lieutenant's and captain's rank joined the society, including Boyen, Grolman, Clausewitz and Rühle von Lilienstern, all of them wholehearted supporters of Scharnhorst. The ardour of these enthusiasts was, however, subject to the chastening influence of a number of adherents of the old school who had a certain scientific interest in the new but tended to bring what was perhaps a more critical spirit to bear. Such were Colonel von Phull, of the Quartermaster-General's staff, and Colonel Hans von Yorck, at that time commander of a regiment of the *chasseurs à pied*. The last named, who was probably the more captious of the two, had served under the Dutch in a foreign legion at the Cape and in Java, and had during this service made acquaintance with the new open order fighting. As a dour old Prussian traditionalist he naturally refused to recognize that the new tactics were based on the assumption of changes in the social structure. He also declared that there was too much learned talk in the society, more of it, in fact, than an "honest Prussian's" brains could cope with.

Actually, most of the generals doubted whether the success of the French "mob-heaps" offered ground for subjecting the system of Frederick the Great to re-examination. Even Rüchel was in the habit of saying that the Prussian Army possessed several generals of the quality of "Herr von Bonaparte". Such things, however, did not affect the clarity of Scharnhorst's insight, for the study of the Napoleonic wars had left him in no kind of doubt as to the epoch-making changes which the French Revolution had set in motion. He saw their military implications—the exploitation of all the resources of popular strength by means of universal service, the new type of infantry combat which was followed by the attack of huge massed columns, the subdivision of the Army into divisions composed of all types of weapons, and last, but by no means least, the creation of a proper Army General Staff—and Scharnhorst's convictions were sufficiently intense and the weight of his authority sufficiently great to make the ascendancy of the new ideas assured.

Two things however must be noted about this man. First, he was no revolutionary. He wished to see the new growing organically out

of the old. He wished a retention of the valuable traditions of the past. In this respect he was a sort of double to Stein who, in the civilian doctor, wanted reform to come as an orderly development in the process of history. Further, Scharnhorst was also perfectly clear in his mind that the creation of a militia, the introduction of universal service, necessitated the granting of political rights to the serfs on the great estates. This freeing of the peasants and the recognition of a universal duty of bearing arms were two things that went hand in hand. Hegel, who was to become the philosopher of the almighty State, had already indulged in reflections on an ideal German constitution. In these the correlation between universal service and popular representation, both of which the author demanded, had been clearly apparent.

As Director of the *Militärakademie*, Scharnhorst now became the educator of a new generation of officers whose representatives were to play a great part in the decades to come. It was a generation inspired by a high sense of moral responsibility and by glowing idealism. Among Scharnhorst's pupils were a number of young men who were later to earn distinction—Lieutenant Carl von Clausewitz, the son of an impoverished family of Protestant theologians, Staff-Captain Carl Wilhelm von Grolman, the son of a high Prussian judicial functionary descended from an ennobled merchant family in Bohemia, Lieutenant August Rühle von Lilienstern, son of an ennobled Prussian officer from Frankfort with an estate on the Priegnitz, and Staff-Captain Hermann von Boyen. It is significant that all these men came, as did Stein and Hardenberg, not from the ranks of the rooted Pomeranian Junkers but from other regions and other sections of society. Scharnhorst's pupils, who were later to form the kernel of the Prussian General Staff, underwent a training which was both moral and intellectual. It was not for nothing that the curriculum of the old *école militaire* of 1790 had included the philosophy of Kant. Kant had brought the moral conduct of the individual into relationship with universal law, and something of Kant's categorical imperative continued to animate these men.

Scharnhorst himself was a man of high moral sensibility and a believing Christian, who was fully conscious of all the terrible aspects of the trade of war. He knew the fearful responsibility which the waging of a war entailed. He brought up a generation of men from whom one cannot withhold respect, and he brought them up in the conviction that war as a political expedient is only permissible in circumstances of desperate necessity, that it is only permissible when

resorted to unwillingly as the last remaining expedient. Time and again he warned against a *Kabinettspolitik*, a policy conducted secretly and with unworthy motives in which the purely military point of view was allowed to prevail.

Without willing it, Napoleon had in the military field become the great instructor of the German states, but in one respect his imitators went beyond the original, for since Napoleon tended in the main to be his own Chief of Staff and to draw up his own operational plans, the French General Staff was limited to the Army General Staff pure and simple. There was nothing like a Great General Staff such as was ultimately developed in Germany. The French Emperor's Chief of Staff, Marshal Berthier, who had served as a French colonel in the American War of Independence, was, strictly speaking, nothing but the director of a military bureau, whose function it was to issue and transmit orders but who had no responsibility for advising his Commander in Chief.

That Prussia now struck out on a line of her own in this particular field is due to the educational work of Scharnhorst, but also to the imagination and organizing ability of that somewhat controversial figure, Colonel von Massenbach, of the Quartermaster-General's staff, who was another member, and a most active one, of the *Militärische Gesellschaft*. Von Massenbach was in many ways a remarkable individual. The scion of a noble Württemberg family, he was a small, squat, bald-headed man, with large, lively eyes. He was a man of restless mind, consumed by a devouring ambition, and incidentally a warm admirer of Napoleon. He was certainly a more brilliant man than Scharnhorst, though temperamental, unstable and cursed with an unfortunate manner. That is why, despite his considerable achievements, he disappears comparatively early from the stage and does so under something of a cloud.

Now, von Massenbach had in 1801 drawn up instructions relating to service on the Quartermaster-General's staff, and two important memoranda, dated January and November, 1802, respectively, justify his being called, at any rate as far as Prussia is concerned, the father of a unitary General Staff organization. In these memoranda, Massenbach pointed out the necessity of a permanent General Staff which was to function even in peace-time as a planning centre. He proposed, and this proposal is the essence of the whole concept, that even in time of peace operational plans for every conceivable military eventuality should be prepared, the work being divided into three fields, relating to three possible theatres of war, Austria, Russia and France.

Thus his projected General Staff consisted of three brigades, though it was in the east alone, with Russia or Austria, that is to say, that he foresaw the possibility of war. The thought of a war with the France that he so much admired does not seem to have entered his mind.

Further, he insisted, and this too was a proposal of the utmost importance, that as an integral part of the training programme, journeys should regularly be undertaken in peacetime for the purpose of reconnoitring the terrain of possible scenes of operations. Such reconnaissance journeys were also to be undertaken abroad. Other proposals related to the regular alternation of service with the General Staff and with the troops, and to what was to be the most important right of any future Chief of Staff—the *Immediatvortrag* to the sovereign, the right, that is to say, to have unhindered and uncontrolled access to the Supreme War Lord; so that no limits would be set to the Chief of Staff's influence on the latter's decisions; this last proposal was to be frequently repeated, but was only translated into reality comparatively late.

Frederick William III held Massenbach's memoranda to be so important that he referred them to the highest generals for their opinions. Only Rüchel expressed unreserved agreement; most of the others were doubtful. Field-Marshal von Möllendorf feared the danger of possible indiscretions if plans of operation were prepared in advance and then stored away. General von Zastrow was uneasy about the advisability of treating a General Staff as a training school. All generals, he felt, would now become endowed with field-marshal's talents and none of them would be willing to take orders from the other.

For all that, the King in 1803 acted on Massenbach's suggestions and ordered the reorganization of the Quartermaster-General's staff, Major-General von Gravert being entrusted with the task. Lieutenant-General von Geusau was appointed Chief of Staff, and was at the same time entrusted with the direction of the War Department of the *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium* and with that of the Engineer Corps—a considerable extension of the Quartermaster-General's province.

The Quartermaster-General's staff now consisted of twenty-one officers, and all save Scharnhorst came from titled families. The special military ranks which these men carried being, it is believed, without any British counterparts, it will be best to give them in the original German. The twenty-one officers consisted of three *General-quartiermeisterleutnants*, equivalent in seniority to colonels, or in

certain cases, apparently, to major-generals, six *Quartiermeisters*, equivalent to majors, six *Quartiermeisterleutnants*, equivalent to captains, and six adjutants. The number was supplemented by six "Officer-Geographers", together with a small staff of engravers, clerks, and orderlies. The whole corps was divided in accordance with Massenbach's plan into three brigades, each under one of the *Generalquartiermeisterleutnants* and each corresponding to one of the three "theatres of war". The three *Generalquartiermeisterleutnants* were Major-General von Phull, himself the son of a Württembergian general, Massenbach and Scharnhorst, the respective areas of the three brigades being as follows. The 1st or Eastern Brigade took over the territory on the right bank of the Vistula, the 2nd or Southern Brigade, Central and Southern Germany including Silesia, while the 3rd or Western Brigade took over Western Germany.

In some ways the auspices under which the new institution began were not too propitious, for the Chief of Staff and his three Brigade commanders were a somewhat diversified group. Lieutenant-General von Geusau was old; his wits had grown somewhat dull and he had lost such aptitude as he ever possessed for keeping his head above water in a sea of red tape. Phull was essentially a peevish pedant, though he had an occasional gleam of insight and could at least see that reforms were necessary. Massenbach was a *bel esprit* but unfortunately quite incapable of resisting the siren quality of his own eloquence. Further, Massenbach, as has already been told, was, among other things, a disciple of the mathematical school and could never permanently shake off the recurrent obsession that the peacetime registration of all the positions that would prove most favourable in any military eventuality was an adequate prescription for victory. Above all, his nervous instability, which once at a shooting party nearly cost a relative his life, set limits to his usefulness. Scharnhorst alone, whom Phull and Massenbach called a pedantic schoolmaster for his pains, had that combination of intellectual power and emotional balance to grasp exactly what was required to give a real meaning to Massenbach's creation.

Yet whatever the quirks of its principals, Prussia now had a proper General Staff and had never had such a thing before. The only trouble was that nobody knew the true use of this piece of apparatus and that among the organized disorder of the various military hierarchies the exact limits of its functions and authority remained extremely nebulous. Alongside of the Quartermaster-General's staff—

theoretically, indeed, above it—there was the *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium* under Field-Marshal von Mollendorf and the Duke of Brunswick, of whom the former was nearing eighty while the latter was getting on for seventy. It was not these, however, but the Adjutant-General's department which possessed the greatest influence on the conduct of military affairs. The Adjutant-General's department was functioning, as we have seen, as a secret military cabinet and a kind of personal staff to the sovereign, and its head at this time was the Adjutant-General of Infantry, a certain Major-General von Köckritz, according to Stein, a typical product of the "Monk's obedience" of the Potsdam garrison, whose entire world consisted of cards, port and tobacco. Nobody had yet made up his mind how in an emergency the competencies of these various authorities were to be arranged.

Both the reputation and the work of the Quartermaster-General's staff rested for the time being entirely on Scharnhorst's personality, but Scharnhorst was not the advocate of any hard and fast system. He merely preached the realization of certain basically new ideas, the validity of which had lately been recognized—ideas such as the strengthening and completion of the Army by means of a militia, the creation of mixed divisions composed of all arms under their own staffs (staffs for which Scharnhorst was training the necessary staff officers) and the adjustment of combat methods to the needs of the time.

Napoleon's strategy aimed at a merciless annihilation of his enemy. Scharnhorst was still capable of visualizing a different type of war, but he saw one of the consequences of the increasing size of armies, he saw that as a result of this increasing size it was necessary to divide forces during the approach march. His principle, "Never stand in concentration, always do battle in concentration," was already formulated in anticipation of Moltke's thought, and this in its turn necessitated the presence of that 'operational' staff to which allusion has already been made.

IV

In 1805, the third Russo-Austrian-British coalition was formed against Napoleon. Sweden joined the alliance, and it was plain that as far as Prussia was concerned the crisis had come. The agreeable notion of Count Haugwitz, Prussia's Foreign Minister, that Prussia could stand aside and, as *tertius gaudens*, make profits out of the strife of the Great Powers, had proved illusory, as had the fear that the

Czar's request for right of way through Prussia concealed a sinister scheme to annex that kingdom. Moreover, the Czar had at least asked permission to enter Prussian territory, while France, without observing that tedious formality, had quietly violated it.

The result was the defeat of Haugwitz and his party. Prussia signed an alliance with France's enemies, though enough of her old caution remained for her to prefer armed mediation to the hazards (if these could be honourably avoided) of actual belligerency.

Such hesitancy on the part of her king was understandable and even praiseworthy, for Frederick William distrusted both his own abilities and those of his army. Scharnhorst, however, believed that there was no escape from conflict with Napoleonic France and used the opportunity to take a step of some importance. He sent a memorandum on the operational possibilities to Hardenberg, who had now superseded Haugwitz as Foreign Minister. The event is of some slight interest, for it marked the first occasion on which a senior officer of the Quartermaster-General's staff sought to play the part of a responsible adviser in a political decision.

Meanwhile, the Prussian Army was put on a war footing and in that stifling summer of 1805 that seemed so pregnant with disaster, Scharnhorst, with a view to reconnoitring certain areas of ground, arranged for the officers of his brigade to go on the first staff training journeys which formed so important a part of Massenbach's proposals. In later times these so-called General Staff journeys were to constitute one of the most important parts of the Prussian General Staff's training.

In October the Austrian armies under Mack were surrounded at Ulm. Napoleon's main army advanced into Moravia, where in December the Austro-Russian coalition suffered its annihilating defeat at Austerlitz. This reduced the idea of Prussian armed neutrality to absurdity before it had ever been properly born. Austria made peace with France, Napoleon united the South German States in the Confederation of the Rhine and very skilfully offered Hanover as a bait to Prussia in order to split her off from England.

Prussia was now nearly isolated, and her isolation was in due course rendered complete by her own diplomatic ineptitude. Apart from the Duke of Saxony Weimar, only the Electors of Saxony and Hesse-Cassel remained at her side. Russian help in case of war was distant and uncertain, the great opportunity for Prusso-Austro-Russian collaboration had been allowed to slip by, while Prussian finances had been prematurely exhausted by mobilization.

Stein, who since 1804 had been Prussian Minister of Finance, felt the urgency of the hour. He strove desperately for some kind of thoroughgoing reform and for the abolition of the irresponsible government of the King's cabinet. He was quite prepared to force the King to action by some kind of Palace revolution, provided only that all generals and ministers would act in concert with him. Unfortunately among the high-ranking generals only Rüchel, Blücher and Phull would give him support. Scharnhorst himself believed that the time for such a plan had gone by, war being, so to speak, at Prussia's door. Perhaps he was wise, though it is difficult to see how an over-precipitate reform could have produced worse results than those which actually eventuated.

V

In August, 1806, Prussia mobilized once more. The organization into divisions which had so long been advocated was now hurriedly carried into effect; but the Quartermaster-General's staff had no real authority and the Army and divisional staffs lacked the skill born of experience. Scharnhorst drew up a plan for a massing of forces, so placed that they could take the offensive against any French concentration either on the Rhine or the Main, and considering Prussia's inferior numbers, such a spoiling attack was probably the only possible strategy, for it might just conceivably have gained time, and time might have brought allies. But other counsels prevailed, and Scharnhorst's plan was abandoned in favour of the old-fashioned conception of a main and two auxiliary armies whose task would be to cover the territories of the allied Princes in Thuringia and Hessen. Thus Prussia's slender forces were quite needlessly extended and in fact largely dissipated in advance. When it became clear that Napoleon was deploying his forces on a long line between the Sieg and the Upper Palatinate, Scharnhorst again proposed a great offensive to effect a quick, bold breaching of this line. Again, thanks largely to the glibness of Massenbach, he failed to carry his point. "I know what we ought to do," he wrote to his daughter on October 7th, 1806. "What we *will* do is known to the Gods alone."

Thus a war accepted under the worst possible conditions was fought in the worst possible way, and what was ultimately to become the Great Prussian General Staff made its *début* on the stage of history with a fiasco. For this it can hardly be blamed, since it was crippled from the start, its highest officers being simply distributed

among the various armies, so that the greater part of their usefulness was completely destroyed. Von Geusau and von Phull were posted to Royal Headquarters, where the Adjutant-General's department was playing the part of a sort of secret general staff on its own. Von Massenbach became Chief of Staff to Duke Hohenlohe, who was commanding one of the two Prussian armies in Thuringia. Scharnhorst was made Chief of Staff to the Duke of Brunswick, who commanded the second of the Prussian armies. There were thus in reality three general staffs, one headquarters, two army commanders, to say nothing of the activities of the Adjutant-General's department, which was a law unto itself.

The one quality that was not lacking in most of the commanders was a sublime self-confidence: "We two aren't half bad," wrote Rüchel to his superior, Blücher, who commanded the third Prussian army, while a Prussian colonel expressed his regret that his men had to drag muskets and sabres around with them. There would, he maintained, be no difficulty in driving the French curs out of the country with cudgels. Only Blücher seemed to be uneasy, for he saw the lack of unity and the confusion of counsel in the Command.

In the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, the Prussians were admittedly outnumbered. Even so, however, the determining element was precisely that faulty sense of timing which is the essence of poor generalship. The Prussians lay in what we have seen to be an over-extended line some distance west of the Elbe, and the strategy of Napoleon, pursued with immense energy, was to work round their left flank and so cut them off from their retreat across that river. As the development of this manoeuvre became apparent to his enemies, it was met by the dashing riposte of Prince Louis, whose heroic death upon the field earned a tribute even from Napoleon himself, but Prince Louis's effort failed, for as he sought to drive into the flank of the superior French forces, the French redeployed to meet the thrust with wholly unexpected speed.

This, however, was not decisive and the real cause of the catastrophe was threefold. First, Hohenlohe, who faced Napoleon's main forces on the great plateau above Jena, did not press home his attack at a time when there was some chance of success. There was some excuse for this since Brunswick, who lay to his rear near Auerstadt with the main Prussian force, had ordered him to keep to the defensive, and this brings us to the second cause, namely that Brunswick himself vacillated too long in making his decision whether to stand or withdraw across the Elbe. The result was that Hohenlohe's

defence, which was acting as a screen to the main body behind, was worn down before that same main body had an opportunity to escape.

The third cause of the defeat lay in the tardy arrival of Rüchel, who was to have reinforced Hohenlohe. This delay was due to that over-extension of the Prussian forces which Scharnhorst had so ardently striven to avoid. We may add yet a fourth cause, and that a wholly irrational one. Napoleon, quite unaware of the fact that the great bulk of the Prussian forces were not with Hohenlohe but lay to the rear at Auerstadt, had sent Davout to work round the other Prussian flank, i.e. the right one. Davout thus encountered the superior main Prussian force and won an independent victory on his own, though at the end the twin Prussian disasters merged into one. Scharnhorst himself was wounded, having himself picked up a musket, as the whole Prussian force was beginning to go reeling to defeat, and taken his place in the line.

The melancholy light of an autumn evening saw the Prussian Army in flight. Some looting broke out among soldiers from the South Prussian and new East Prussian provinces, from the territories, that is to say, that had recently been Polish, while here and there officers who were especially hated were subjected to violence. Scharnhorst made his way from the field and at first joined the King's *entourage*. On this evening, however, he was riding a particularly unmanageable horse, with the result that he fell behind and got separated from royal headquarters in the dark. Chance determined that he should fall in with Blücher, who, with the remains of his cavalry, was trying to save the heavy artillery. Blücher, that rough, thoroughly ill-educated man, who was nevertheless endowed with an excellent natural intelligence, was the first Prussian officer to see the value of a scientifically trained and highly qualified Chief of Staff. He was retreating over the Harz mountains towards Mecklenburg—Yorck and his *chasseurs* joined him on the way—and thanks to that retreat, marked as it was by a number of stubborn engagements, considerable French forces were diverted from their main task, which was the occupation of the eastern provinces of Prussia, but the retreat was memorable for yet another reason, for during the course of it Scharnhorst became Blücher's indispensable adviser. The military marriage which was begun on this march was the first example of something that was to occur time and again in the history of the Prussian and German armies. It was the first example of the co-operation between a naturally gifted commander and a scientifically trained Chief of Staff.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff, Mackensen and Seeckt represent the final stages of that line of development.

Lack of ammunition and supplies at length forced Blücher and Scharnhorst to surrender at Rakau near Lubeck. They were almost the only ones who in the hour of defeat contrived to safeguard the honour of Prussian arms.

The rest of the story is as pitiful as it is ignominious. Lieutenant-General von Kleist capitulated in Magdeburg with 24,000 men, while General von Lecocq, himself a sometime reformer, surrendered in Hamlin. The strong fortresses of Küstrin and Stettin capitulated without a shot. Von Hohenlohe, with 12,000 men, the remains of his force, laid down his arms at Prenzlau. It was von Massenbach, who now had completely lost his head, that persuaded him to take that step.

In Berlin, the senior minister, General Count von der Schulenburg, heard the news of the defeat. At a loss for more felicitous expedients, he issued a proclamation which declared that His Majesty had lost a battle and that the citizen's first duty was to remain calm. Amongst others, the news of the double defeat moved Dietrich von Bülow to utterance. This, he said, was the result of locking up the generals and allowing incompetents to command. He was not far wrong, but in Prussia it was still dangerous to be right on such matters, though Bülow came to his inevitable end for his criticisms, not of the Prussian monarchy but of the Czar, whose generalship at Austerlitz had, he averred, not been all that might have been expected. Bülow was imprisoned and was shortly afterwards extradited at the Czar's request. He died on the journey to Siberia as the result of ill-usage by a Cossack.

VI

The old order had revealed itself bankrupt. It had proved incapable of either decision or leadership and had now lost any respect or affection on the part of ordinary citizens that it had ever possessed. Indeed, things had now reached the stage where the ordinary Prussian often derived actual pleasure from the downfall of the overbearing officer caste. In Silesia the established nobility had less fear of a French invasion than of the resentment of their miserable ill-used serfs, for the breakdown of the old dispensation was plain enough to see, and serfs were in many instances refusing their services.

It was in this dark hour of Prussia's history, when the court had fled to Eastern Prussia and French armies were flooding all the monarchy's dominions, that Stein drew up his plan for the setting up of responsible ministerial government on the English model, and many must surely have thought the moment had come for the reconciliation of the absolute monarchy of the Hohenzollerns, which had risen up as a warrior power nourished on the rough barren soil of the eastern plains, with the forces of the age and with those of the German spirit. Yet even now the unhappy vacillating monarch could not summon up the determination to give Stein a free hand in internal affairs. Indeed, when Stein persisted in his demands, he was dismissed.

Externally the situation seemed equally hopeless. The support provided by the Czar was insufficient, the Polish provinces were in full revolt and, despite the winter, which usually brought all operations to a standstill, French troops were preparing to advance on Königsberg.

In the military sphere, chaos was complete. Thanks to the fact that nobody really understood the function or purpose of the Quartermaster-General's staff, that staff had virtually been out of commission. Geusau had been suspended, Massenbach was in French captivity, while Phull had taken service with the Russians. The staff's chief, General von Laurens, was sitting impotently in Königsberg. The only man to whose advice the King was prepared to listen was the Adjutant-General, the old, dull-witted von Köckritz.

There was an exchange of prisoners of war. Scharnhorst returned and was sent to serve with General Lecocq, who commanded the special corps serving in East Prussia with the Russian armies; he was, however, not sent as Chief of Staff but as *Assistant*, though the post of such a military "Assistant" was without precedent or clearly defined duties. For all that, the quality of Scharnhorst's personality made its mark. When Bennigsen attempted to check the French advance at Eylau, Scharnhorst, under the sinister light of a winter sky, marched out with the Prussian Corps from Hussehnen. Leading his troops through a snowstorm, he took the enemy in the flank, a manoeuvre that decided the day. Despite heavy losses, Prussians and Russians maintained their ground, but the Russian commander failed to turn this indecisive battle to his advantage, and the defeat of Friedland in the summer of the following year sealed the fate of the Hohenzollern state. The Czar deserted his Prussian ally, and the King was forced to sign the Peace of Tilsit. The greater part of the Prussian

monarchy remained under the occupation of French troops, large territories were lost, and the period of occupation was made dependent on the payment of an indemnity of indetermined amount.

It was the ultimate humiliation, but it was also the turning point, and the beginnings of a new climate in public affairs were marked by a novel and interesting manifestation, namely the appearance of parties, a thing so far unprecedented in Prussian history. In characteristic Prussian fashion, however, these had a military and bureaucratic rather than a political background, the reform party being very largely formed by soldiers. Massenbach, who had returned from captivity, attained, together with a certain *Kriegsrat* Frederick von Cölln, a kind of leadership as a critic of the system, while other supporters of the cause included Scharnhorst, Boyen, Grolman, Clausewitz and, above all, Lieutenant-Colonel von Gneisenau, who had made a name for himself by the successful defence of the fortress of Kolberg.

It was not given to Massenbach to see the triumph of a cause with which he had been largely, even if not always too felicitously identified. He resigned at an early stage from the commission and his military employment was in due course terminated. The fact is that his unstable temperament had been the undoing of him, and even when leading the party of reform he had largely damaged his own cause by slanderous exaggeration. Elsewhere, too, his insufferable dogmatism had made him unequivocally detested. Moreover, his conduct during the late campaign had been distinctly questionable. He passes into the shadows of history, a pathetic figure, to whom posterity may have given less than his deserts, for some slight share in the planning of the great edifice that is here described cannot be denied him.

Meanwhile, though Napoleon had insisted on the dismissal of Hardenberg, the reforming element in the higher bureaucracy was able to force the King into the recall of Stein. This happened in July 1807 and in that same month a committee for military reorganization was formed on which Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Massenbach, Lieutenant-General von Bronikowsky and the newly-appointed Adjutant-General, Count von Lottum, were called upon to serve.

The object of this body's deliberations was the elimination from the Army of what were considered "unworthy elements", and the creation of a fighting force which was equal to the requirements of modern war. That this object was in course of time largely attained was due to an act of self-purification on the part of the officer corps that was wholly without historical precedent. All the higher officers

submitted their conduct during the war to examination. Some 800 were disciplined, some being dismissed the Army or condemned to active sentences in a fortress.

Scharnhorst now developed his comprehensive programme of reform. It contemplated the abolition of the long-service professional Army, which was to be replaced by a standing Army based on universal service. It also proposed the abolition of the privileges of nobility and of the cadet schools and the elimination of dishonouring punishments. Scharnhorst's Army was no longer to be the servant of the King but first and foremost the servant of the nation, whose power and capacities universal service was to liberate as it turned the subject into the citizen.

In his design for the instrument that was to lead this new national force, Scharnhorst approximated more closely to the picture that ultimately emerged than any rival draughtsman. Scharnhorst's plan here was for the formation of a "General Staff of the Army" with four sections (somewhat confusingly called Divisions). One was for strategy and tactics, one for matters of internal administration, one for reinforcements, and one for artillery and munitions. The Divisional staffs should similarly be composed of four sections. This was to some extent the model according to which the Great General Staff with its different sections, or *Abteilungen*, was formed. Further, the "Royal Mapping Office" which had charge of war maps was to be subordinated to the General Staff. Actually the highest military authority was to be a War Ministry to which both the Quartermaster-General's staff (as we must still call it) and the Adjutant-General's department (the department of the unhappy military cabinet) were to be subordinated.

Needless to say, the King did not take this invasion of his rights in good part, but lack of royal enthusiasm was but one of a number of obstacles which hindered the realization of the new proposals. The insecurity of the country, the precarious state of its finances, the impoverished condition of its agriculture, which was the backbone of Prussia's economy, and, above all, the uncertain future of the Prussian rump state, for that state could at any time be brought to an end by a stroke of Napoleon's pen—all these tended to relegate the programme of reform to the sphere of pious aspiration. In addition, there was the opposition of the old Prussian Junkers, who found an advocate in General von Yorck, but more especially in a nobleman from Brandenburg, Friedrich August Ludwig von der Marwitz auf Friedersdorf. These diehards held to the idea that the Army's prime

function must remain that of furnishing a livelihood for the sons of the impoverished Prussian nobility, whom the King should continue to provide in the cadet schools with the opportunity of a military education. The officer corps was, as before, to remain a closed knightly corporation, whose exclusiveness was not to be endangered by the intrusion of a bourgeois-liberal system of education. The battle in the Army between the *Federbüschen* and the *Federfuchsern* ("Plumes" and "Quilldrivers") filled the whole nineteenth century.

Since they saw matters from this point of view, the reactionaries showed particular hostility to Scharnhorst's proposed General Staff. For these people Scharnhorst's plan reflected a partiality for a particular kind of education and culture which made the Prussian officer of the old school feel ill at ease. Further, the Pommeranian nobility protested against the introduction of universal service, which it designated as "Revolutionary equality-mongering". In the eyes of the reactionaries, the arming of subjects constituted revolution, and by and large this point of view was shared by the King. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were stamped as "Jacobins".

All this was but part of a larger failure to achieve a general liberalizing of Prussia or the creation of a true constitutional monarchy which might have served as a model for other German states to follow, nor was it long before much of the reformers' idealism had been completely dispersed. A few breaches were made. Stein succeeded in securing the abolition of serfdom, but representative government remained a dream and that bulwark of old Prussian feudalism, the landlords' judicial powers and their rights to maintain their own police, remained untouched. In the military sphere, Scharnhorst contrived to get approval for the remodelling of the officer corps. Something of the deep chasm disappeared which before Jena had existed between the ordinary civilian and the officer. It was said that in the old days the "Harmonic", a society to which wealthy and cultured commercial circles in Magdeburg belonged, had a rule reading, "Dogs and Officers Not Admitted". Now that the sons of commoners could become officers, and that not only in the despised technical and light troops, the artillery, engineers, Hussars and Chasseurs, the barrier of distrust broke down. Since commissioned rank no longer depended upon birth but upon the abilities of the individual concerned, it might well have been thought that the old caste feeling would have given place to a more egalitarian spirit. That this was not the case was due less to the old officer corps than to the new elements that began to be absorbed into it. The fact is that to generations of

middle-class Germans a commission in the reserve became a symbol of social elevation, and they prized the social status thus conferred more highly than any equality of political rights or political power. Indeed, in so far as this new bourgeois element introduced new values into the Army, they were not always of the most desirable kind, for the rising bourgeoisie produced its own myth and its own type of self-assertion. Expansionist ideas, such as those of the latter-day Pan Germans, affected the officer corps far less than many foreigners suppose, but in so far as they did so, it was from bourgeois origins that they derived.

The traditionalists were not the only people with whom Scharnhorst had to contend. Reformer as he was, he was also the saviour of the old officer corps. He firmly opposed all plans for the radical democratization of the Army which the example of the French National Guard tended from time to time to inspire. There was a time when he had not been too opposed to the notion of having officers elected by the rank and file. Yet when Hardenberg developed the idea that the troops should elect non-commissioned officers, and these in their turn the subalterns, Scharnhorst saw in it a danger to certain fundamental military values, and persuaded the reorganization commission to reject it. Scharnhorst had passionately defended the idea that the bearing of arms was for every citizen a duty of honour, and it was this conviction that had moved him to bring about the abolition of dishonouring corporal punishments in the Army. Yet he also held that discipline must have a firm moral foundation which, so he thought, a system of elected superiors would not secure.

The essence of Scharnhorst's scheme was, as we have seen, the combination of a standing Army and universal service. The Army, founded on the principle of strict submission to lawful authority, was to be the school of the entire nation, but although Scharnhorst's conception ultimately prevailed, the notion of a less authoritarian organization never wholly disappeared. A militia conceived along less strictly integrated lines, an institution into which a system of elective officers was easier to fit, still remained the idea of all liberal and socialist parties of later years. At the time of the wars of liberation there were several attempts to introduce an elective system in the Prussian *Landwehr*, while the transformation of the standing Army into a "People's Defence Force" later formed an essential point in the German Social Democratic party's Erfurt Programme. During all this time, needless to say, the General Staff threw the whole weight of its influence on the side of a disciplined standing Army.

On the organizational side Scharnhorst's most important measure was the articulation of the peacetime Army into Divisions composed of all arms. Since Prussia's financial position did not permit the upkeep of a numerically large Army, the Divisions were created in skeleton form under the name of Brigades. Every province had one of these Brigades allotted to it, and officers of the General Staff were posted to the Brigade staffs. In this way the foundations of the *Truppengeneralstab* (or Operational General Staff*) were laid. Considerations both of foreign and domestic policy moved the King to continue his objection to universal service, and this posed for Scharnhorst the problem of a reserve. He attempted to build up the number of reservists by having a certain percentage of short service volunteers trained in certain regiments. These so-called *Krümpfer*, who were the forerunners of the *Zeitfreiwillige* of the *Reichswehr* period, formed the foundation of a Territorial Army which, in its turn, acted as a drafting body for the standing Army. The latter was, of course, composed of men who engaged themselves for much longer periods.

We have already alluded to Stein's struggle against the irresponsible *imperium in imperio* of the royal cabinet counsellors and the Adjutant-General's department. We have seen how he sought to replace this by responsible ministerial government on the English model, and had drawn up a plan for three departments which were to function within the framework of such a system. Stein was dismissed by Napoleon's orders, but Scharnhorst was able to continue with his task of transforming the clumsy *Ober-Kriegs-Kollegium* into a Ministry of War which would have supreme authority in military affairs. It was a matter of some consequence that he should have bestowed on this matter the attention which he did. Napoleon, who had at first omitted to limit Prussia's forces, thinking that the country's bankrupt condition would keep her innocuous, now had his suspicions aroused and insisted on the reduction of the Army to 42,000 men. This meant that the new Ministry was called on to play a decisive part, for it was only among officers of high rank, such as Grolman, Gneisenau, Boyen and Scharnhorst himself, all of whom were now in close departmental association, that the cause of radical reform was still kept alive.

The new Ministry was divided into two sections, the General War

* The peculiar organization of the German General Staff into a "Great General Staff" and a *Truppengeneralstab* which worked with the actual armies, corps and divisions, has no exact parallel elsewhere. The term Operational General Staff will be used for *Truppengeneralstab* throughout this book.

Department, which exercised a general direction over the Army, and the Department of Military Economy, which dealt with administrative matters. The War Department consisted of three "Divisions". The first Division, under Grolman, had taken over the functions of the old military cabinet and the Adjutant-General's department, and in particular all business connected with officers' records. The second Division formed the General Staff, its direction being put in Boyen's hands. The old Quartermaster-General's staff was abolished. Scharnhorst, however, characteristically accorded this second Division a somewhat special place, for he considered it the intellectual centre of the Army and the school for higher officers. The third Division, that of weapon inspection, was placed under Gneisenau, who was also head of the Engineer Corps. It is an indication of the precarious nature of the reform party's position that Scharnhorst was not made Minister for War, though that might reasonably have been expected and was, no doubt, what Scharnhorst expected himself. That post, however, went to Count Lottum, a confidant of the King. Scharnhorst only obtained the General War Department, a heavy disappointment for him, in so far as the War Minister was *ipso facto* head of the General Staff.

Choosing Captain von Clausewitz as manager of his office, Scharnhorst threw himself into his task. His aim remained unchanged and it must be noted that throughout this time military and political reform were merely two aspects of the same problem and were inseparable from one another. The fusion of Army and nation, the transformation of the subject into the citizen who must not only defend his country but may, as of right, through his elected representatives, decide its fortunes—these were the great ends to be pursued. Gneisenau and Boyen urged the creation of a representative assembly and did so with all the passion of which they were capable, and they did this not from internal political considerations alone, for they saw in such *Reichstände* the moral basis of an uprising against Napoleon's tyranny. It is significant that Grolman himself became an active member of the *Tugendbund*, a secret organization which combined the object of just such a national uprising with the aspiration towards more liberal institutions at home.

Different men had different views as to the pattern of future events. Some thought there should be a *levée en masse* of the kind the French had successfully used against the coalition in 1792. Others looked back on the Vendée's bitter fight against the Revolution. A third party, which was also the most numerous, fixed its eyes on the fight

of the Spanish people in 1808 against Napoleon's occupation, the war which the "Junta", the Spanish National Assembly, had waged by means of national levies and volunteers.

While Gneisenau stressed the political line of attack, Scharnhorst devoted himself quietly to the work of education. Three military schools were now to ensure a supply of officers who had been scientifically trained. A military academy for officers was created in Berlin. A Central Office for Military Education took charge of all such institutions. It was again not the "Jacobin" Scharnhorst, but a martinet of the old school, Major-General von Diercke, who was entrusted with the ultimate supervision of this work and was made responsible for military education as a whole. Curiously enough, the top class of the new Military Academy which was founded in 1810 was given the designation of "General Staff", despite the fact that all such matters really pertained to the second Division of the War Department. This merely shows how imperfectly this concept had been defined. As against this, it was an indication of what Scharnhorst understood by this same term of General Staff, that he should have kept this top class or "Selecta" under his personal charge.

VII

It was precisely because honest Liberals like Boyen and Gneisenau were keenly conscious of the social and ethical implications of their reforms, and strove so vigorously to realize them, that they came at a very early stage into conflict with the King. The King was a sober minded, unemotional and somewhat unimaginative man who viewed the reformers' ideas regarding a sort of People's War against Napoleon with profound distrust. Like Stein, Boyen and Gneisenau tended to think in German rather than in Prussian terms. The King, however, had only one aim in view—the preservation of his dynasty.

When Austria, having found the terms of the Peace of Pressburg unendurable, again took up arms against Napoleon in 1809, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau believed that the hour for action had come, and when the King very definitely refused to share this view Grolman resigned and went to Austria, and later to Spain, where he fought against Napoleon in the *Tercio Etranjero* or Foreign Legion. Gneisenau similarly resigned, but remained in Prussian service as a secret agent and went to London and St. Petersburg to gather information about the possibilities of resisting Napoleon. The King thought—and the fair-minded critic will hardly blame him—that an attempt

by Prussia to give Austria armed support while French forces were still occupying Prussian territory would amount to political and military suicide.

Most certainly the precipitate Prussian patriots were wrong. The time was not yet ripe for what they wanted. Yet though the reformers often came near to losing their patience, the reports that began to circulate of an intended insurrection in which even Scharnhorst was said to be implicated, were groundless. It is true that a certain Major von Schill, commanding a regiment of Brandenburg Hussars, took up arms on his own initiative, a venture that ended pitifully within the walls of Stralsund, but the case was an isolated one. Nor need we attach too much weight to Gneisenau's repeated declaration that if the King persisted in refusing the reformers' demands he would have to be replaced by his younger brother, Prince Wilhelm. Such outbursts singularly failed to issue in any action, and indeed, any thought of a military *coup d'état* was not Utopian but inconceivable. Prussian officers felt themselves bound by their military oath to the sovereign, whatever might be their personal opinion of his acts. Even Schill, who had hoped by his action to force the King to fall in with him, found no imitators, but paid the penalty of his courage by suffering expulsion from the Army. Prussia was not Spain.

One result of the chatter about a Jacobin revolution, however, was that Scharnhorst really did lose a great deal of his influence, a process that was accelerated by the fact that he had become suspect to Napoleon. He was removed from his post as Chief of the General War Department and relegated to the direction of the General Staff in the second Division. Even so, Count Hake, his successor, one of those submissive and dutiful officials that found special favour with the King, received instructions to keep Scharnhorst informed on all important decisions. Actually, Hake thought the whole business of reform was already over and done with.

The following year, 1811, was critical. The Czar had refused to take part in the blockade of the Continent against British goods, and Napoleon decided to bring Russia under his power. The deployment of the Napoleonic armies against the huge Russian domain was at the time the greatest military undertaking known to the history of Europe. Italians, Portuguese, Dutchmen, Germans of all kinds were now united under the French flag in a crusade against the East. Hardenberg had become Chancellor again in 1810 and was now confronted by Napoleon's demand for an alliance and an army

For a time neither was forthcoming. Instead, Scharnhorst went to St. Petersburg to negotiate an alliance with Russia, and Prussia made secret preparations. Now for the first time the King declared that if the international situation permitted it he was prepared to agree to universal service. Meanwhile, however, Austria, now after her defeats at Wagram and Aspern once more Napoleon's ally, had also been asked for an army corps, and, what is more, had undertaken to provide it, and this meant that in the event of resistance, Prussia would simply be delivered up to a vast superiority of force. The King and Hardenberg therefore decided to accede provisionally to the French demands, and so when Scharnhorst returned to Prussia after excellent progress at St. Petersburg, he was confronted with a *fait accompli* and a disavowal of his acts, a development which led Boyen, who, since 1810, had been directing the first Division of the War Department, to protest and resign. Clausewitz and a considerable number of other Prussian officers refused to fight under the French flag and took service with the Russians. Scharnhorst was virtually deprived of all function and was ultimately sent to Silesia as Inspector of Fortresses. Here, incidentally, Blücher was living in unobtrusive exile. Napoleon had had him dismissed from his post as commander in Pommerania on the alleged ground of secret rearmament activity. Colonel von Rauch now became Chief of Staff.

General Yorck, that dour representative of the old Prussian tradition, had been put in charge of the army corps Prussia was supplying to France. After Napoleon's failure in Russia, when in the last days of 1812 his once proud regiments were streaming back in disorder through the icy storms of a Russian winter, Yorck made his historic decision. He entered into a convention with the enemy commander, von Diebitsch (von Diebitsch's adjutant was none other than Clausewitz), whereby he undertook to break off his connection with the French and place his troops at the Czar's disposal. Thus began that close Prusso-Russian co-operation which determined the shape of European politics for three generations and laid down the essential pattern of the *Reichswehr's* policy after the First World War.

Yorck's action opened the way for an uprising of Prussia. Nor was the King any longer obdurate now that Yorck had built the bridge and co-operation with the Russians was assured. He had himself gone to Breslau where the patriots and reformers had their abode, and he was now prepared to yield to their demands. The proclamation of universal service in March and the organization of a *Landwehr* were the measure of Scharnhorst's triumphs.

Meanwhile, the General Staff had been very quietly created. In 1813, the wars of liberation were to put it to the proof. Commanders of Prussian armies in Brandenburg and Silesia now for the first time receive authoritative advice from a Chief of Staff. It is characteristic for this new service that so long as a strong self-reliant personality has the command of an army in hand, staff officers remain in the background. Scharnhorst himself obeyed this unwritten law of anonymity, though since he himself ardently desired the supreme command in the field, he did so with an aching heart. Despite his own feelings on the subject, however, he suggested Blücher as commander in Silesia. Blücher's speech and manner were very much "of the people", and this made him a more popular man than Scharnhorst, and since he was also a commander of considerable natural gifts, it was Blücher that Scharnhorst chose. Scharnhorst himself was content to serve as Chief of Staff, while Gneisenau, who had returned from London, took over the post of so-called "Ia" or first General Staff officer. Beside Blücher's racy and somewhat elemental personality, with its impetuous will to attack, the figure of Scharnhorst, the quiet man of learning, made a strange contrast, for Scharnhorst was in a way the perfect exemplar for all Chiefs of Staff, he was *par excellence* the man who stands in the background, advises, warns and guides.

In close co-operation with Gneisenau, Scharnhorst drew up the plan of operations for the Prusso-Russian armies for the spring of 1813. The deployment plan provided for a main army and two flanking armies. The first of these flanking armies, under the command of the Russian General, Count Peter Wittgenstein, was to advance from Pommerania over Berlin towards Magdeburg. The second was to move forward from Silesia over the Lausitz toward Saxony, and was to occupy Dresden. The main army in the centre was to remain about three days' march behind the two flanking armies. Should matters appear to be working towards a decisive engagement, it would then be able to give its support either to the one or to the other, as necessity might dictate. The principle of having separated elements advance concentrically for combined action was also to mark Gneisenau's plan for the autumn campaign. The application of this principle in the circumstances prevailing at that time was particularly daring. Bad roads and inadequate transport made any division of forces a dangerous expedient. It was only the advent of the railway age (by which this danger was considerably diminished) that made possible the full development in Moltke's plans of the principle of "marching separated, fighting united".

Staff to the Duke of Württemberg, Colonel von Lützow, who was Chief of Staff to the Cavalry Corps of Count von der Pahlen, and Clausewitz, who acted as liaison officer for the Russian command at Blücher's headquarters.

Gneisenau's strategic thinking, which has strong political implications, may be roughly summarized as follows: ruthless exploitation of the national potential—Gneisenau sought to carry this into effect in his organization of the *Landwehr* during the armistice; search for a decision with the object of annihilating the enemy force, all available means being used to this end; application of the strategy of encirclement to all operational plans. A survey of these conceptions makes it clear that we should think of Gneisenau not only as the man who found the answer to Napoleon's strategy of the mass and of the offensive, but as the spiritual father of the battle of encirclement, an idea which comes out ever more strongly in the General Staff's strategic thought till it results in the Cannae conception of Schlieffen.

Neither Gneisenau nor Boyen nor Grolman nor Rauch, however, were mere one-sided military specialists. That human type had not yet been born. They were highly individual personalities who were closely bound up with the spiritual life of their time. In their eyes war in its new form of a people's war could only be justified if it led to the moral and political freedom of the peoples who waged it. Gneisenau quite deliberately distinguished between the *Kabinettskrieg*, waged by the absolute rulers of the eighteenth century, and the modern war of nation states. It was not for nothing that he numbered Stein among his friends. In his eyes it was essential that the present war should become a war of liberation for all the nations of Europe, and from it the spirit of European progress must proceed. As to the parliamentarizing of the Hohenzollern monarchy, his ideas were much more radical than Stein's (for Stein was still to some extent mentally a prisoner of the old order); he was even more radical than Scharnhorst, who had never had a really burning interest in domestic politics. Indeed, Frederick William III must have found Gneisenau something of a trial.

Gneisenau's history was curious enough. He came from a noble but impoverished family in Upper Austria, which had taken its name from the fortified castle of Gneisenau, near Efferding. Gneisenau's father served as a lieutenant in the Saxon artillery. His mother, the daughter of an artillery officer (a commoner), accompanied her husband during the Seven Years' War and died during the retreat from Torgau immediately after giving birth to her son. Gneisenau's father

subsequently engaged in a variety of schemes and professions, including those of surveyor and architect. At length, he entered on a new marriage and passed his declining years as a building inspector in Erfurt. The orphaned boy, who was entirely without means, grew up in abject poverty among some humble folk until some wealthy Würzburg relatives took him under their wing. After serving for a short while in an Austrian regiment of Hussars, he went in 1782 to Canada, as a lieutenant of Chasseurs in an Ansbach contingent. The Peace of Versailles, however, put an end to the American war before he had an opportunity of serving in the field.

Gneisenau now obtained employment in the Prussian service, hoping for a post on the Quartermaster-General's staff. In this last, however, he was disappointed, for he was kept for twenty years in wretched Silesian garrisons as an ordinary company officer, and it was as a company commander that he took the field in 1806. It was only in 1807 that the successful defence of Kolberg against the French laid the foundations for his advance. Some time after this we find him on the military reorganization commission and in the War Department, tilting at the windmills of Prussian reaction. Then came his mission to England from which he returned a firm believer in English liberalism and in the principle of constitutional monarchy, having added the advantages of military experience to the unusual combination, which we have already observed, of high military gifts with political insight.

IX

The general strategic plan of the autumn campaign of 1813 and the winter campaign of 1814 are largely Gneisenau's work. His strategic abilities are clearly apparent in the operations plan for the autumn campaign. The problem which the Allies had to face was this. Napoleon had taken up a position along almost the whole line of the Upper Elbe with his right wing resting on the fortress of Königstein and the mountains of Northern Bohemia, while his left extended past Leipzig, through the fortresses of Magdeburg and Wittenburg to Hamburg itself. In the middle lay the entrenched camp of Dresden. This immense interior line was in the nature of a shield from the effect of which mortal blows might be directed against either Vienna or Berlin, and Napoleon had the best part of half a million men to accomplish this task.

Theoretically, his communications were over-extended, and his marshals sought to persuade him to choose not the Elbe but the line

of the Saale or the Rhine, but Napoleon's judgment in this matter was probably good. He said, 400,000 men resting on a system of strongholds, on a river like the Elbe, cannot be turned. This was true. His line was, for those days, at any rate, so immensely long (and strong) that his enemies could not outflank him (even though they could have passed in between his fortresses) without incurring far greater risks from over-extended communications than he was running himself. At least they could not do this while Napoleon was compact and strong.

Napoleon knew well enough how difficult was the problem he was posing for the Allies. These were of necessity extended over a long arc, and it was not unreasonable on his part to suppose that sooner or later he would catch them in a false move and destroy them piecemeal.

The Allies had organized their forces in three armies: a northern army, commanded by the Crown Prince of Sweden, consisting of Prussian and Swedish troops, was based on Brandenburg and Pommerania; the Silesian army, consisting of Prussians and Russians, was under the command of old Blücher; while the main army—Prussians, Russians and Austrians—was in Bohemia and commanded by the Austrian von Schwarzenberg.

As so often happens in the forces of a coalition, there were wide divergencies of view between the different commanders. The Crown Prince of Sweden was inclined for political reasons to hang back, and the Austrian commander was a stickler for the strategic proprieties of the old school. This made it most desirable for Gneisenau to ensure for his own army, the Silesian one, a considerable measure of operational freedom. In this he succeeded, despite marked resistance at headquarters on the part of the allied monarchs, and despite the fact that both the Czar and von Schwarzenberg claimed the right to an overriding control of operations. It was a fortunate move, for it ensured to Gneisenau and Blücher an elasticity which they would not otherwise have enjoyed.

There was only one strategy for the Allies to pursue, and it is a tribute to Gneisenau's genius that his grasp of that strategy is evident in every move he made. Clearly their only hope was to make Napoleon uncover himself at some point so that they could strike home concentrically for the kill, but before this could be done there would necessarily be a period of feint and manoeuvre, a period in which they had to dodge their enemy's blows and at the same time if possible turn and make those blows as costly to him as possible.

This was the strategy pursued by Blücher. When Napoleon struck at him at Löwenberg, Blücher withdrew towards Silesia, and then reposed brilliantly on the Katzbach, where his enemy was extended and far from his base. As August drew on to September, the Allies had in several cases followed these tactics successfully, so much so that on the periphery Napoleon had suffered a number of defeats. At the core, however, he held firm and returned better than he received, and when Schwarzenberg struck at Dresden, Napoleon defeated him by a miracle of speedy concentration.

Then two things happened. A feat of great tactical brilliance at Kulm by a Prussian force commanded by Kleist saved the beaten Schwarzenberg from what might have been an overwhelming defeat, and so blunted Napoleon's strategy. The other was an excellently-timed movement carried out at Gneisenau's suggestion whereby a southern force moved through Napoleon's right flank to Leipzig, while a strong northern force, led by Blücher, crossed the Elbe at Wittenberg. With his own forces now increasingly committed, with time working for his enemy, whom he had failed to destroy and who was now daily gathering strength, Napoleon immediately reacted to the menace which was now inherent in that move. He fell back on Leipzig where the Allies, reinforced now by Bavaria, which had defeated the Emperor (the Saxons were to follow suit in a matter of days), closed in on him in what was very nearly (though not quite) the perfect battle of encirclement.

X

Frederick William wished to limit his demands to the liberation of Germany from French power as far as the Rhine. Metternich again developed his idea of a European balance of power, a conception to which a France of moderate strength was integral. The war threatened to peter out. Gneisenau now came forward (despite passionate opposition from old Blücher) as the advocate of military annihilation of Napoleon, a policy for which the occupation of France was essential. Schwarzenberg, still thinking in terms of strict military orthodoxy, held that France could and should be forced to surrender through the occupation of strategic points such as the plateau of Langres. Gneisenau, however, demanded a march on Paris, and the root and branch abolition of the Napoleonic régime. Gneisenau won the point, thanks to support by the Czar—Stein was acting as the latter's adviser—nor did he allow some quite definite reverses in

France, occasioned by a too hasty advance, to deter him from his purpose. For the first time in that century Prussian troops marched into Paris in March 1814, and Napoleon abdicated. This last was a triumph for Prussian inflexibility. It was also without any doubt an unavoidable necessity. How very much alive in Gneisenau's mind was the notion that this war had been a crusade for European freedom is shown by his idea that Napoleon should be brought before a world court and shot for crimes against law and justice. He further demanded that the peace should be dictated in Paris, a notion that was profoundly at variance with the late tradition in such matters and with the principle of solidarity between crowned heads.

A congress was called in Vienna to consider the reordering of Europe and the re-erection of a German Federal State. Meanwhile, Napoleon was exiled to Elba. From that place, however, he made one more attempt to seize power. That this attempt was defeated within one hundred days is again largely Gneisenau's doing. Gneisenau had once more become Chief of Staff under Blücher—and had complained bitterly because he had been denied the supreme command. On the evening after Ligny, Blücher had disappeared. His horse had been hit, and the old man severely bruised. It was Gneisenau who made the epoch-making decision ordering his horribly mangled Prussians to retreat towards Wavre. This meant that Napoleon had failed—despite the slaughter inflicted. He had failed in his strategic objective of driving a wedge between Blücher and Wellington. A defeated army would have taken the road due east. It was Gneisenau who determined that they were not defeated, that they could maintain their touch with the British according to the original plan. It was by carrying out that plan and making their magnificent counter thrust on to the French flank at Waterloo that Gneisenau enabled Blücher to turn the scale, made victory possible and encompassed Napoleon's ruin.

Again the Prussian Army marched into Paris. Yet the second Peace of Paris brought Gneisenau the heaviest disappointment of his life. His political programme envisaged, as did Stein's, a German Federal State with a strong centralized authority to govern it. That programme had already been rendered futile by the Vienna Congress, which in June 1815 had proclaimed a loose confederation of separate states. In external matters Gneisenau wanted a decisive weakening of France through the cutting-off of Alsace Lorraine (which would be made over to the South German states) and through the creation of a strong Belgium as a buffer state in the north. Both demands arose

from the anxiety which the peculiar geographical position of Prussia, with a ring of stronger powers around her, tended to arouse in a soldier's mind. Such views, however, did not correspond with the policies of Austria and Russia, both of which saw in the latent Prusso-French antagonism a means of weakening both those powers.

At home, Gneisenau had hoped that victory would bring recognition of the forces of freedom and of the growing feeling of nationhood, forces which the defeat of 1806 had so unmistakably released. Prussia had received large accessions of territory through the decisions of the Vienna Congress. She had had Westphalia and Posen returned to her, also Eupen and the western part of the kingdom of Saxony. In Gneisenau's eyes this made the proclamation of a proper constitution by which all these territories would be united, absolutely indispensable. The enthusiasm with which youth from every section of society had, at the King's call, rushed to the colours in 1813, had not been nourished by patriotic fervour alone. It was fired by certain political hopes. In particular, young university students cherished the expectation that, as a result of the war, peace would bring them a voice in public affairs and powers of political decision. It was, of course, the educated middle class that tended to look upon the wars of liberation in this way. In Pommerania, East Prussia and Brandenburg, the rural population, who had only just received their freedom, were moved by a habit of traditional solidarity with their superiors, and, when universal service was proclaimed, simply followed the example of their landlords. As against this, in the most indigent parts of Silesia the indescribably poor weavers and other poor working folk had often to be brought to the colours in chains by the police. They simply could not understand what all this fighting was about. The King was not altogether without comprehension of the meaning of these aspirations for freedom, and in May 1815 he solemnly promised the proclamation of a constitution and the creation of a popular assembly.

XI

After the second Peace of Paris, Gneisenau held that the hour had come for these promises to be honoured, but the hour passed and not liberalism but reaction gained ground. After the war, Grolman was made Chief of the General Staff: Gneisenau was considered by the court too liberal—and too obstinate. He was sent as commanding general to the newly-created province of the Rhine, whose seat was

at Coblenz. From the neighbouring Nassau Stein would sometimes make a visit and talk over the old wonderful plans of reform. Stein had also fallen out of favour, and people in Berlin would speak, half anxiously and half amused, of Gneisenau's circle of friends as "Wallenstein's camp". Nothing could be more childish than the secret fear behind this attitude. To think of Gneisenau marching on Berlin was ludicrous. What Stein and Gneisenau most probably discussed—for at this time the matter moved Gneisenau very strongly—was a reform of the nobility. He wanted to see the old, impoverished, place-hungry Junkerdom replaced by a nobility of property and achievement on the English model. At that time a somewhat different ideal of nobility was being proposed. Friedrich von der Marwitz, spokesman for old Prussia, was advocating the transformation of the nobility into a warrior caste. All those who were physically unfit, or had scientific or cultural inclinations, were to lose their patent of nobility.

In 1816, the embittered Gneisenau resigned. True, he had, like Yorck, Bülow and Kleist, been made a Count and had been rewarded with the estate of Sommerschenburg. In 1825, on the anniversary of Waterloo, he was raised to Field-Marshal's rank, but no employment could any longer be found for him in the public service. Only in 1831, when the outbreak of the Polish revolution against Russia endangered Prussia's Polish possessions, was Gneisenau again remembered and made Commander in Chief of the army which protected the eastern frontiers. He chose Clausewitz as his Chief of Staff and set up his headquarters in Posen. There, on August 21st, he died of the cholera which was sweeping over Europe from the east. Like Scharnhorst, he died in something like ill repute because he was a liberal at heart, and the Prussia of the era that succeeded the wars of liberation was anti-liberal and hostile to progress. Stein's generation had acted on the old Prussian substance, that strange mixture of warlike efficiency and servility, like a cataclyst. That was why it had been eliminated.

Because of Gneisenau's great military gifts, the Prussian General Staff had survived its first great test. It is well to remember that what safeguarded its infancy and gave it its first vigour was Gneisenau's self-reliance and independence of thought. The General Staff had become a superb instrument of potential leadership, yet even now its constitutional and functional position, and in particular its relation to the War Minister, the Adjutant-General's department and the reviving military cabinet of the King, was controversial and ill-defined. For all that, the General Staff now remained in being within the War Ministry even in peacetime.

It is in the nature of every human institution to strive for expansion and for the extension of its power. The peacetime function of the new instrument of leadership consisted fundamentally in the preparation for the next war. For this it busied itself with the education and scientific training of future higher officers, mapped the entire realm in order to produce serviceable military maps and studied the armies of its neighbours. For this also, irrespective of the international situation prevailing at the time, it prepared plans both for attack and defence for use in any conceivable military eventuality. Such activities are not peculiar to the Prussian General Staff. They became the function of every general staff everywhere in the world. There seemed nothing sinister in this at the time. It was only when a certain tension between the great nation states which the age of the revolution produced that this work of the General Staff appeared to become charged with a peculiar significance and a peculiar danger.

That time, however, had not yet arrived, and though its main function was established, its precise place in the official edifice was not. That naturally was bound up with other constitutional questions dealing with the position of the monarchy and of the relation of the Army, still in theory a purely royal affair, to a constitutional State.

These matters were now to be thrashed out before the Prussian General Staff, a thing born largely out of a political crisis, was to some extent to deny the circumstances of its origin and settle into its stride as that technically efficient and wholly unpolitical instrument which it ultimately became.