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# On The Infantryman's Age In Eighteenth Century Prussia

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**I**N modern times it has been taken for granted that the soldier is by definition a young man and that fighting wars is primarily a task of youth. Youthful enthusiasm has been portrayed as a necessary moral agent in modern warfare: "The grain of heedlessness, a quality peculiar to the freshness of youth, is an excellent incentive to martial achievement. . . . It is only the young that depart from life without pangs. . . . Their love of adventure rouses their eagerness for battle. Rest and enjoyment, the aim and aspiration of riper years are as yet far removed. They advance into battle with joy and lightheartedness, two very necessary qualities for the bloody work before them."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, as in the Vietnam War, the view has been that the youth was being sacrificed to the whims of the "older generation."

The notion that the soldier is or should be a youth is due to the widespread adoption of the "nation-in-arms" principle during the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century most of the European powers maintained their armies by conscripting their young men for short terms of service. In peacetime armies came to be composed largely of twenty to twenty-three year olds. In wartime the younger classes of reservists were the first to be called up. During the two world wars, when older men appeared in combat units it was a sign that nations were scraping the bottom of the barrel for manpower.

By contrast, in the eighteenth century it was by no means the case that the soldier was a young man. Instead of a light-hearted youth, the eighteenth century soldier who advanced into battle, joyfully or not, was likely to be a mature man on the verge of middle age. To underline this sometimes neglected fact and, more important, to explore its practical implications in a specific instance, we propose to analyse the age structure of the Prussian infantry in the eighteenth century. Hopefully, such an analysis can contribute to a more precise understanding of eighteenth century military practice in general, as well as Prussian military practice in particular.

A statistical basis for our study is provided by the "Regimentsbuch" (Regimental Book) of 1783 of Infantry Regiment von Hacke. It includes, besides much other useful data, the com-

plete muster-roll of that regiment for the year 1783. The *Regimentsbuch* was reproduced in the 1890's under the auspices of the nineteenth century descendant of the Hacke Regiment. Since that time this valuable work, made even more valuable by the nearly total destruction of the eighteenth century military archives during World War II, has been largely ignored. The statistics below, unless otherwise noted, are tabulated from the muster-roll in the *Regimentsbuch* (pp. 4-51). There are errors in the data (see note 21), some of which can be eliminated by cross-checking. In a sample of nearly two thousand items, however, we assume that random bookkeeping errors would in sum cancel one another out.<sup>2</sup>

The Hacke Regiment, garrisoned at Stettin in Pomerania, was a typical regiment of the line during the last years of Frederick the Great (1740-86). It was subdivided into two battalions, each of one grenadier and five musketeer companies. Its strength in 1783 was 51 officers, 120 N.C.O.'s, 47 musicians, 324 grenadiers, and 1450 musketeers. Like the other regiments, it was a hybrid unit composed partly of conscripted natives (*Landeskinder*) and partly of enlisted foreigners (*Auslander*). The natives were conscripted by means of the "canton system," whereby each regiment was assigned a permanent recruiting district ("canton"). The eligible youths of the canton were enrolled during boyhood and called up, if needed, when they reached physical maturity. The foreigners included men of many different nationalities, but most were Germans recruited in the other lands of the Holy Roman Empire. In addition, Prussian subjects who enlisted for the bounty were classified as foreigners. There were 48 such "foreigners" in the Hacke Regiment.

Table 1 illustrates a salient feature of the Prussian infantry in the eighteenth century, that is the relative maturity of the privates. In the Hacke Regiment more than half of the privates were above the age of thirty, which represented the maximum age, including reservists, of privates in the first-line units of the German army a century later. The difference between natives and foreigners is also evident. The average foreigner was two years older than the average native.

TABLE 1  
AGE OF PRIVATES IN THE HACKE REGIMENT

Age	Natives	Foreigners	All Privates
Under 20	27	22	49
20-29	373	275	648
30-39	390	352	742
40-49	145	191	336
50-59	11	29	40
60 & over		6	6
Median Age.	31.4	33.8	32.4
Average Age	31.6	34.0	32.8

A similar difference between natives and foreigners is apparent in Table 2, showing the age at the time of recruitment of the enlisted men. It is evident that the average foreign recruit was several years older than the average native recruit. The difference is due to the different methods that were used to acquire natives and foreigners. The natives were called up from the cantons in a systematic fashion. The recruiters tended to select those enrollees who had just reached physical maturity and who gave promise of many years of useful service. Thus the age at which natives were recruited was relatively homogenous (86% between seventeen and twenty-four).<sup>3</sup> In recruiting foreigners, on the other hand, the recruiters could not be as selective, and one finds a greater variation in the age of the recruits. Even middle-aged men were enlisted, providing that they were physically fit. Many of the foreign recruits, to be sure, were already veterans (deserters from other armies) who needed little further training. The usefulness of the natives, on the other hand, was diminished because they were initially raw bumpkins who required, by Frederick's estimate, at least two years to turn them into "more or less" efficient soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 2  
AGE AT RECRUITMENT OF ENLISTED MEN\*

Age at Recruitment	Natives	Foreigners
Under 20	337	161
20-24	578	338
25-29	98	207
30-34	12	92
35-39		69
40 & over		36
Median age at recruitment:	20.9	24.3
Average age at recruitment:	20.9	25.3

\* Includes N.C.O.'s except "free corporals."

There was no formal age limit for recruits until 1787. The recruiting regulation of that year specified that no man over thirty was to be enlisted if not clearly "strong and healthy . . . and with good teeth." In no case was a man over thirty-five to be enlisted. This should not be taken to indicate a dawning conviction that young men made better soldiers, but merely as recognition of the obvious: young recruits were more economical in the long run, since one could expect longer terms of service from them.<sup>5</sup>

Table 3 shows the length of service of the privates in the Hacke Regiment. It illustrates the typically long service of soldiers and a further difference between natives and foreigners. The natives averaged longer terms of service than the foreigners, even though their average age was less. The difference is partly explained by Table 2. Since the foreign recruits, on the average, were older than the natives, their service potential was proportionately smaller. In addition, the more frequent desertions among the foreigners made it necessary to replace them more often, thus lowering their average term of service.

In any case, the turnover of personnel in peacetime was not large. Few replacements were required annually, since the term of service was indefinite for both natives and foreigners.<sup>6</sup> In the Hacke Regiment, for instance, there were only 50 native and 37 foreign recruits (4.5% of the enlisted strength) in 1783. It was especially the indefinite term of service that accounted for the relatively advanced age of Prussian soldiers. It was royal policy to keep men in service for as long as possible. In 1732 Frederick William I (1713-40) ordered that "in the future no old soldier is to be discharged until he is no longer able to march."<sup>7</sup> Frederick the Great adhered to the same principle.<sup>8</sup>

The outcome was a permanence in the manpower of the regiments that would have been inconceivable in an army composed of short-service draftees. In 1783 there were still 230 enlisted men in the Hacke Regiment who had served during the Seven Years' War (1756-63), including 35 who had taken the field with the regiment in 1756. Almost half (47.5%) of the privates had served ten or more years; over sixty percent had taken part in the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-79).<sup>9</sup>

The officers shared the maturity and experience of their subordinates. In 1783 the average age of the senior officers was 59.4, of the captains 46.4, of the first lieutenants 38.9, of the second lieutenants 27.1. Only the ensigns, with an average age of 21.5, approached the stereotype of "beardless subalterns." Due to the requirement that officer candidates serve for a time as teenage "free corporals" (*Gefreyter-Corporals*), even the ensigns had several years' service behind them; the older officers' service was measured in decades. One fifth of the officers had taken the field with the regiment at the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Over one third of them had served during that conflict. All but the three youngest ensigns had taken part in the War of Bavarian Succession.

The long service of both officers and soldiers was regarded by contemporaries as a primary ingredient of regimental *esprit de corps*, an especially important matter in a force composed of such disparate elements as the old Prussian army. Even among the natives, who still tended to think of themselves as Pomeranians, East Prussians, Brandenburgers, etc. first, and "Prussians" second, there was no uniform patriotism in the eighteenth century. Frederick, significantly, looked less to patriotism or dynastic loyalty than to village or family ties to inspire a sense of duty among his native cantonists: "Relatives and friends who fight shoulder to shoulder will not lightly forsake one another."<sup>10</sup> Among the foreigners, patriotism or dynastic loyalty was not to be considered at all. In place of patriotism, however, the eighteenth century soldier could substitute *esprit de corps*. This was less a conviction that his regiment was irresistible, than it was a sense that it was a home or, better put, an extended family, because of the long familiarity of the soldiers with one another and with their officers.

In some respects the foreigners rather than the natives constituted the nucleus of the regiments. In peacetime the natives were furloughed for five sixths of the year, but most of the foreigners remained on duty at all times. Even after the Stein-Hardenberg reforms had created a short-service citizen army, a veteran of Frederick's time could write that the older foreigners, "since they remained on duty in the garrisons, year in, year out, achieved a degree of training and, most important, soldierly habits of thought that made them the real backbone of their units." Old soldiers who found a "fatherland in the army," he concluded, were "doubtless to be preferred" to any others.<sup>11</sup>

The rootedness of the veteran foreigners in their regiments served as a hedge against desertion. It was self-evident that the older foreigners were more reliable and less likely to desert than the younger ones. Not only had they become habituated to their regiments, but also they were likely to have found wives and to have become relatively assimilated to Prussian society. Similarly, it was taken for granted that old soldiers presented fewer

disciplinary problems than young ones. The harsh discipline of the Prussian army was directed especially at the younger and presumably more obstreperous foreigners.<sup>12</sup>

Part of the foreigners were excused from peacetime duty and allowed to support themselves by fulltime activity in business or the trades. In peacetime these so-called *Freiwächter* were indistinguishable from the civil population of the garrison towns. The more prosperous *Freiwächter* were described as “capitalists.” Their affluence and settled character were looked on as moral assets in wartime: “According to the testimony of old officers who have commanded them in wartime, one can accomplish great things with such men, since awareness of the prosperous homes that they have to defend makes them fight doubly hard against the enemy.”<sup>13</sup> During the nineteenth century, by contrast, the perspective came to be reversed. One of the justifications for the controversial demotion of the reserves (*Landwehr*) to second-line status by William I and Roon in the 1860’s was “the humane principle . . . that the younger men of the standing army should go into battle before the older, mostly married and settled men should be called to do so.”<sup>14</sup>

A further reason that made it desirable to retain experienced soldiers for as long as possible was the nature of eighteenth century tactics, which required the steadiness and experience of veterans rather than the headlong courage of youth. The machinelike tactics of the infantry battalion placed a premium on the mechanical performance of close-order drill and the manual of arms, but minimized the importance of individual enthusiasm. As put by an unwilling participant in the battle of Lobositz (1756): “Up to now I had hoped to sneak away before it came to a battle. Now I could see no way out, neither to the right nor to the left, neither to the front nor to the rear. We had to keep on advancing . . . ever forward.”<sup>15</sup> Ideally, the soldier’s individuality was totally submerged in the collectivity of the battalion. In such a context, the seasoned veteran possessed an inherent superiority over the recruit, not matter what the latter’s spirit might be. Only “time” could shape a “finished soldier” wrote Lossow, and that was why “one loved old soldiers.”<sup>16</sup>

TABLE 3

LENGTH OF SERVICE (1 OR MORE YEARS) OF PRIVATES

Years' Service	Natives	Foreigners	All Privates
1-5	284	328	612
6-10	153	174	327
11-15	176	145	321
16-20	169	149	318
21-25	95	33	128
Over 25	20	8	28
Median Service	11 4 years	7 0 years	9 9 years
Average Service	11 3 years	8.9 years	10 2 years

There were, to be sure, more mundane reasons that made it desirable to prolong the service of soldiers. The longer that the natives served, the less it was necessary to withdraw hands from the peasant work force; the longer that the foreigners served, the fewer were the enlistment bounties that had to be paid to new recruits. Each soldier represented a substantial investment of effort for his training and, in the case of a foreigner, money for his bounty. The longer he served, the better was the return on the investment.

Despite these important realities, it should not be assumed that the affection for old soldiers was merely a rationalization of economic necessity. As indicated earlier, there were also purely military considerations that encouraged this attitude. That old soldiers were considered inherently superior to young ones is clearly illustrated by Tables 4 and 5, which compare the age and length of service of the grenadier and musketeer privates of the Hacke Regiment. The median age of the grenadiers, that is the elite manpower of the regiment, was almost forty. On the aver-

age they were eight years older than the musketeer privates and had nearly twice their service. With the exception of two fifers, not one of the grenadiers was under twenty-five.

TABLE 4  
AGE OF GRENADIER AND MUSKETEER PRIVATES

Age	Grenadier Pvts.	Musketeer Pvts.
Under 20	1	48
20-29	22	626
30-39	156	586
40-49	137	199
50-59	16	24
60 & over	2	4
Median Age:	39.3	30.9
Average Age:	38.9	31.4

TABLE 5  
LENGTH OF SERVICE (1 OR MORE YEARS)  
OF GRENADIER AND MUSKETEER PRIVATES

Years' Service	Grenadier Pvts.	Musketeer Pvts.
1-5	28	584
6-10	35	292
11-15	81	240
16-20	116	202
21-25	62	66
Over 25	12	16
Median Service:	17.1 years	7.3 years
Average Service:	15.7 years	8.8 years

The two grenadier companies were composed of selected men drafted from the ten musketeer companies. They were not, as sometimes stated, exceptionally tall. Their average height was the same as that of the musketeers, 5'6". In terms of physique, wiry active men of middle height were preferred as grenadiers. Their primary characteristics, however, were maturity and demonstrated reliability. In wartime the grenadier companies of the infantry regiments were combined into autonomous grenadier battalions. They constituted the shock troops of the Prussian infantry. At Torgau (1760), to cite a famous example, the heroic assault on the heights of Suptitz was delivered by ten grenadier battalions. Two thirds of Frederick’s grenadiers, it can be noted, would have been too old for the draft in the United States during World War II.

In the two world wars, when older classes of reservists had to be called up to replace losses, the armies grew older as the fighting continued. In Frederick’s army the reverse was true; it was a sign of losses and deterioration when younger men began to fill up the ranks. It was perhaps this consideration, rather than any commitment to a “strategy of annihilation,” that inspired Frederick’s well-known maxim that Prussia should fight only short wars.<sup>17</sup> A long war, such as the Seven Years’ War, used up his veterans and forced him to rely on the callow myrmidons so much admired by nineteenth century military theorists. “Recruits,” he wrote after the Seven Years’ War, “can replace the numbers lost, but not their quality,” and given a long war, “one commands in the end nothing more than a band of badly drilled and badly disciplined rustics.”<sup>18</sup>

In modern conflicts, when older men have had to perform front-line service, it is a staple of patriotic literature to point out that they performed (given their inherent limitations) as well as their juniors. In this respect, too, the eighteenth century Prussian perspective was precisely the reverse. It was necessary to apologize for the younger soldiers. As put by Tempelhoff: “Many of the eighteen year old Brandenburg and Pomeranian peasant lads called up from the cantons [in 1760] had not yet heard a shot fired in anger. Nevertheless, they were not lacking in courage, and on every occasion they acquitted themselves as well as the

oldest warriors.”<sup>19</sup> Frederick did not share Tempelhoff’s enthusiasm for young heroes. He lamented the necessity to call up “weakly boys” from the cantons during the last years of the Seven Years’ War.<sup>20</sup>

The reference to “weakly boys” should not be taken as evidence that many boys in their early teens served in Frederick’s army. Although young boys constituted an important part of the work force in civil trades, they could not do so in the army. The physical requirements of the manual of arms made all but a few boys unsuitable for service in the infantry. They were either too weak or too short to handle the musket properly. An examination of the age at which the enlisted men of the Hacke Regiment were recruited indicates that only 2.5% were less than seventeen at the time of recruitment. Only 1.1% were less than sixteen.<sup>21</sup> There is evidence that promising boys who were still too puny to handle the musket properly might be temporarily assigned as drummers.<sup>22</sup> In general, though, the “drummer boy,” as a distinct type, did not exist in Frederick’s army. The musicians of the Hacke Regiment, on the average, were only slightly younger (29.6) and averaged only slightly shorter terms of service (9.4 years) than the rest of the privates. Of the three oldest privates in the regiment, one was a sixty-four year old fifer.

Only the free corporals were invariably boys. They, however, were Junker officer candidates who were required to serve as N.C.O.’s before receiving commissions as ensigns. The career N.C.O.’s were much older. As shown by Table 6, they were uniformly mature men with extensive service. Regulations prescribed that no private with less than four years’ service should be promoted to N.C.O.<sup>23</sup> In reality, in peacetime, promotion was still slower. In the Hacke Regiment the youngest N.C.O., in terms of service, was Corporal Neustadt of the *Leib-Compagnie*, a prodigy with nine years’ service. Aside from him, there was not an N.C.O. with less than twelve years’ service.

TABLE 6  
AGE AND LENGTH OF SERVICE OF N.C.O.’S\*

Age	No.	Years’ Service	No.
30-39	30	6-10	1
40-49	57	11-15	6
50-59	17	16-20	39
60 & over	3	21-25	35
		26-30	15
		Over 30	11

Median Age 44.0                      Median Service 22.0 years  
Average Age 44.0                      Average Service 22.7 years

\* Excludes free corporals

Since N.C.O.’s were expected to be able to read and write, it had been common in the early eighteenth century to accept young clerks or ex-students as N.C.O.’s. That was forbidden by Frederick William I. As N.C.O.’s he preferred veteran soldiers, crude as their command of the three R’s might be, to what he described as “quill-pushers.”<sup>24</sup> Frederick the Great held similar views: “A brave, battle-hardened old soldier is inherently able to elicit the respect of the men, whereas a quill-pusher possesses neither physical stamina nor necessary qualities of leadership.”<sup>25</sup> At inspections, Frederick is reputed to have arbitrarily demoted N.C.O.’s who appeared to be too young and to have promoted old soldiers in their places, a procedure which he recommended to his successor in the Testament of 1752.<sup>26</sup> Considering the maturity and experience of the privates, such an attitude is understandable; the older soldiers really were more likely to hold a fellow veteran in respect. Similarly, a recruit coming from the patriarchal circumstances of his village would also look to an older man as his logical “preceptor.”<sup>27</sup> Ulrich Braeker’s famous autobiography has recorded a young recruit’s

first impression of his sergeant-major, “an old, gaunt chap, . . . who, as I soon perceived, must be more than a private.”<sup>28</sup> As in the case of the privates, it was royal policy to extend the service of the N.C.O.’s for as long as possible. “The older they are, the better they are,” said Frederick William I.<sup>29</sup> In the same vein, Frederick the Great advised a regimental proprietor “to keep the old N.C.O.’s with the regiment for as long as possible and not discharge them, for they constitute the *base* of the companies.”<sup>30</sup> Even an apologist for Frederick’s military system admits that the N.C.O.’s, “for the most part, [were] well-advanced in age, often practically old men, who either hoped for a post in the civil service, or who simply wanted to remain with their regiments for as long as possible, to live and die as soldiers.”<sup>31</sup> A less flattering portrait is provided by Laukhard who describes his N.C.O.’s as “Oriental eunuchs,” psychologically emasculated by long years of servitude, harassed by their superiors, and correspondingly abusive to their charges.<sup>32</sup>

Aging soldiers and N.C.O.’s found themselves confronted by uncertain prospects for their old age. Until 1787, regulations guaranteed only that “discharged men shall keep their coats, waistcoats, and breeches, and not be dismissed naked.”<sup>33</sup> As early as the time of Frederick I (1688-1713) it had been recognized that to discharge “invalids” without pensions not only added to the number of beggars in the kingdom, but also discouraged potential recruits who witnessed the sobering sight of aged or disabled veterans begging on streetcorners.<sup>34</sup> The *Invalidenhaus* at Berlin, opened by Frederick the Great in 1748, was designed to accommodate deserving veterans, but relatively few could be taken in there. Others were paid a small pension, the so-called *Gnadenthaler*, but that was insufficient for survival, and only part of them received even that. Ex-N.C.O.’s, if possible, were assigned to small posts in the civil service, but not all could be cared for that way. Frederick, in a rare moment of sentimentality, stated that “old soldiers who have served the Fatherland with their blood, must not be cast off.”<sup>35</sup> For fiscal reasons, however, that was often the case. Despite the efforts to provide care of some sort, there were, by an official count, still 6,382 “uncared-for invalids” in 1786.<sup>36</sup> Even Lossow, hardly a reckless critic of the old Prussian army, had to admit that “the way invalids were discharged often bordered on cruelty.”<sup>37</sup>

In lieu of paying adequate pensions to discharged soldiers, the tendency was to keep men in service to a point where their experience and loyalty could no longer compensate for physical deficiencies. “Time,” of course, could shape a soldier who was “finished” in a less desirable way than that suggested by Lossow. Simple “old age” is given as the reason for invalidity of almost forty percent of the invalids of the Hacke Regiment by the *Invaliden-Liste* of 1783. More specific reasons are incurable infirmities: gout, dropsy, rheumatism, failing eyesight, etc.<sup>38</sup> The regiments always carried some men on the rolls who were properly invalids. They were retained either because royal guidelines inhibited their discharge or because humane commanders hesitated to turn loose their old soldiers unless they could be guaranteed a pension or a post in the civil service. In addition, each regiment included a number of superannuated privates and N.C.O.’s who, if not strictly invalids, at least were no longer fully effective soldiers. Such old soldiers were not as harshly disciplined as young ones, but they might be subjected to special hardships. For instance, captains sometimes required aging soldiers to perform double drill each day so that their “joints would not become completely stiff.”<sup>39</sup>

Paradoxically, “mobilization” for Frederick’s army meant that part of its manpower had to be discharged, since invalids and semi-invalids could not take the field. Those who were fortunate enough to be able to perform limited service would be transferred to one of the garrison regiments.<sup>40</sup> The balance would be turned loose, usually without a pension because of wartime financial stringency. In the words of an eighteenth century chronicle: “In

those days [during the Seven Years' War] beggary had once again gotten the upper hand in Berlin and was magnified by a horde of invalids and crippled soldiers who could not be cared for and who asserted a right to support themselves in this fashion."<sup>41</sup> Many soldiers, then, had to fear war not because they would face death on the battlefield, but because they would not; they would be left behind to face an inglorious life of beggary.

The Recruiting Regulation of 1787, to be sure, finally promised pensions to all needy veterans. It alleviated some problems, but it did not check the tendency to keep men in service until they were ready to drop from old age. The costly pension policy aggravated the chronic financial problems of the state during the 1790's and early 1800's, and fiscal prudence continued to dictate the retention of soldiers on active duty for as long as possible. Thus the army that bit the dust at Jena and Auerstedt in 1806 exhibited the same age structure as the army that triumphed at Rossbach and Leuthen in 1757. In fact, it probably had some of the same personnel. As late as 1802 there had been 585 enlisted men in the Prussian army who had served during the Seven Years' War, including three who were also veterans of the Second Silesian War (1744-45).<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth century, numerous older men of questionable physical stamina served in the field during wartime. Whatever the tactical and moral advantages conferred by the experience, maturity, and *esprit de corps* of the soldiers, it seems logical to conclude that there were also limitations imposed on the Prussian army by the circumstance that many of its men were past their physical prime.<sup>43</sup> Frederick was intolerant of disciplinary failings in his soldiers, but he seems to have been willing to tolerate physical failings. He is reported to have summarily cashiered a subaltern for abusing an "old grenadier" who

had collapsed from exhaustion on the march to Kolin in 1757.<sup>44</sup> He was careful of the physical condition of his men in the field. This meant housing them under shelter at night, providing regular meals, detailing special wagons to carry those who fell out on the march, and avoiding excessive physical demands on them.

Possibly the limited mobility of the Prussian army, and other eighteenth century armies, is attributable not only to large baggage trains and the practice of marching as a unit, but also to the inability of the older men to make strenuous forced marches. Similarly, the superior mobility of the French Republican armies of the 1790's vis-a-vis their conventional opponents may be due as much to the *levée en masse* as it was to the elimination of excess baggage and the dispersal of marching columns made possible by the divisional organization. The *levée en masse* produced a uniformly youthful army which, presumably, could simply out-march its rheumatically opponents.

The attitude that old soldiers, despite some obvious drawbacks, were better than young ones persisted to the end of the old Prussian army in 1806. Even during the reform period that followed, when a short-service army was created, there seems to have been no conviction that youthful draftees were necessarily better than mature professionals. One of the principal arguments in favor of short-service soldiers was fiscal rather than military: the state would be spared the burden of paying so many pensions, because draftees would still be young when they were discharged.<sup>45</sup> The conviction that young men made inherently superior soldiers was a product of the later nineteenth century. The young regular army produced by the Boyen Law (1814) was sanctified by practice and by changes in military science and military thought which gave enhanced importance to "the freshness of youth."

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Dr. Willerd R. Fann is a UC Berkeley graduate who has been teaching at the University of New Orleans since 1964. He specializes in the Prussian army of the 18th Century. This article was accepted in October 1976.

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3. Before the creation of the canton system, when press gangs recruited at large, the parameters were more widely spaced. For instance, the native recruits of the Dohna Regiment in 1701 ranged from fifteen to fifty years old. Kopka von Lossow, *Geschichte des Grenadier-Regiments König Friedrich I (4. Ostpreussischen) Nr. 5* (Berlin: 1889-1901), I, 156.

4. *Friedrich der Grosse. Militärische Schriften*, ed. by A. v. Taysen (Berlin: 1883), 3.

5. Werbe-Reglement, 1 Feb. 1787, in Eugen v. Frauenholz, ed., *Entwicklungsgeschichte des Deutschen Heerwesens* (München: 1935-41), IV, 305. A later instruction of 12 Aug. 1799 merely required that the "average" age of recruits should be twenty-seven. Jany, *Preussische Armee*, III, 437. Frederick's order of 31 Dec. 1773, significantly, had set a minimum age of twenty (for native recruits), but no maximum age. *Ibid.*, III, 52.

6. The Canton Regulation of 1792 finally fixed a "normal" term of service for natives at twenty years. Frauenholz, *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, IV, 322.

7. Werbe-Reglement f. d. Infanterie, 13 Sept. 1732, in Oelsnitz,

*Geschichte des ersten Infanterie-Regiments*, 368.

8. See *Fr. d. Gr. Milit. Schriften*, 492, 494, 573, 582. In 1749 Frederick upbraided the proprietor of a hussar regiment (Ruesch) for discharging too many old soldiers: "I am very much dissatisfied about this, and I cannot understand why you release so many old soldiers without even consulting me. Only completely invalid hussars are to be discharged; the rest are to remain with the regiment as long as they are capable of any service at all." Kurt v. Priesdorff, ed., *Soldatisches Führertum* (Hamburg: 1936-40), I, 375.

9. *Regimentsbuch*, 65-68.

10. *Die politischen Testamente Friedrichs des Grossen*, ed. by G. Volz (Berlin: 1920), 139.

11. [Matthias v. Lossow], *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Charakteristik der Preussischen Armee unter dem grossen König Friedrich dem Zweyten* (Glogau: 1826), 6, 214.

12. *Ibid.*, 6, 205.

13. [Anton König], *Versuch einer historischen Schilderung der Hauptveränderungen, der Religion, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Künste, Wissenschaften u. der Residenzstadt Berlin* (Berlin: 1792-99), IV:2, 219.

14. Alfred Borbstaedt, *The Franco-German War*, tr. by F. Dwyer (London: 1873), 149. Goltz was brutally frank: "Older men... have become absorbed in their civil avocations, and, when summoned again to the standard at the outbreak of war, will be found to be entire strangers to the soldier's life. They have, in many cases, experienced the care and care of life, and often have to leave their home affairs in a disordered condition. All this in no wise enhances their inclination to face death for the Fatherland." *Nation in Arms*, 27.

15. Ulrich Braeker, *Lebensgeschichte und natürliche Abentheuer des Armen Mannes im Tockenburg* (Bern: n. d.), 117-118.

16. Lossow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 202. How different was the attitude a century later: "Experience in the short wars of our day plays but an insignificant role in regard to the private soldier. Our ideas of the value of veterans date from the time of 'professional' armies... and our military system rightly excludes old soldiers from the field army. Upon courage experience may often work in even an injurious manner. Those who have not yet realized

danger are generally the bravest soldiers." Goltz, *Nation in Arms*, 27.

17. *Fr. d. Gr. Milit. Schriften*, 86.

18. *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand* (Berlin: 1846-57), IV, xviii. See also *ibid.*, V, 219; VI, 91.

19. G. F. Tempelhoff, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges in Deutschland* (Berlin: 1783-1801), IV, 12.

20. *Oeuvres*, V, 219.

21. This figure is partly due to bookkeeping errors by the company clerks. For instance, Johann Barckow of Major von Arnim's company is listed as being twenty-eight, with nineteen years' service! *Regimentsbuch*, 13.

22. See Friedrich Beeger, *Seltene Schicksale eines alten preussischen Soldaten* (Ueckeründe: 1850), 18-19.

23. *Reglement vor die Königl. Preussische Infanterie* (Potsdam: 1726 [Reprint; Osnabrück: 1968]), 548; *Reglement vor die Königl. Preussische Infanterie* (Berlin: 1750), 444. Hereafter: *RI*, 1726 or 1750.

24. *RI*, 1726, 548-549.

25. *Politische Testamente*, 84; cf. Ferdinand Ledebur, *Die Geschichte des deutschen Unteroffiziers* (Berlin: 1939), 98.

26. Lossow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 14; *Politische Testamente*, 84.

27. Lossow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 218.

28. Braeker, *Lebensgeschichte*, 91.

29. "Vom Offizier und Unteroffizierkorps Friedrich Wilhelms I," *Militär-Wochenblatt*, LXXVI (1891), 2081.

30. To Markgraf Carl, 9 Aug. 1747, in J. D. E. Preuss, *Friedrich der Grosse. Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Berlin: 1832-34), I Urkundenbuch, 75. For similar sentiments see Frederick to Gen. v. Holtzendorff, 21 June 1783, in Ledebur, *Unteroffizier*, 104.

31. Lossow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 217.

32. Friedrich Laukhard, *Magister F. Ch. Laukhards Leben und Schicksale von ihm selbst beschrieben*, ed. by V. Petersen (Stuttgart: n. d.), I, 245-246.

33. *RI*, 1726, 567; *RI*, 1750, 466.

34. Jany, *Preussische Armee*, I, 553-554.

35. *Acta Borussica*, "Die Behördenorganisation und die allgemeine Staatsverwaltung Preussens im 18. Jahrhundert," (Berlin: 1894-1936), IX, 611.

36. Jany, *Preussische Armee*, III, 64.

37. *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 9.

38. *Regimentsbuch*, 89-93.

39. [A. W. L. v. Rahmel], *Ueber den Dienst* (2nd ed.; Boston [Bäeslau]: 1784), 28.

40. The garrison regiments, intended for static defense of fortresses, were composed of overage or undersized men. In 1725 Frederick William I established the policy that "no soldier is to be discharged who is still capable of service in the garrisons." *Acta Borussica. Ergänzungsband*, "Die Briefe König Friedrich Wilhelm I. an den Fürsten Leopold zu Anhalt-Dessau, 1704-1740," (Berlin: 1905), 326.

41. König, *Residenzstadt Berlin*, V:1, 204-205.

42. See Frauenholz, *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, IV, 300; Jany, *Preussische Armee*, III, 448-449; cf. the "Altersliste" of the Diericke Infantry Regiment for 1805, in Kopka von Lossow, *Geschichte des Grenadier-Regiments Nr. 5*, III, 140\*-141\*.

43. According to the "personal observation" of an English military writer who attempted to explain the decline and fall of the Old Prussian army, this problem was compounded by a hint of racial inferiority: "The Prussian, and indeed the German, ages much more rapidly than the Englishman . . . Very few Germans indeed, even nowadays, maintain their figures and activity over forty." A conclusion, no doubt, that would have surprised "Old Fritz" and at least half of his grenadiers. See F. N. Maude, *Cavalry: Its Past and Future* (London: 1903), 114.

44. *Anekdoten und Charakterzüge aus dem Leben Friedrich des Zweyten* (Berlin: 1787-88), XI, 45-46.

45. See Hardenberg's "Riga Memorandum," 12 Sept. 1807, in Georg Winter, ed., *Die Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates unter Stein und Hardenberg. Part I: Allgemeine Verwaltungs- und Behördenreform*. Publikationen aus den Preussischen Staatsarchiven, vol. 93 (Leipzig: 1931), 330; and Scharnhorst et al., *Immediatbericht der Militär-Reorganisationskommission*, 30 Nov. 1807, in Rudolf Vaupel, ed., *ibid.* Part II: *Das preussische Heer vom Tilsiter Frieden bis zur Befreiung, 1807-1814*. Publikationen aus den Preussischen Staatsarchiven, vol. 94 (Leipzig: 1938), 182.

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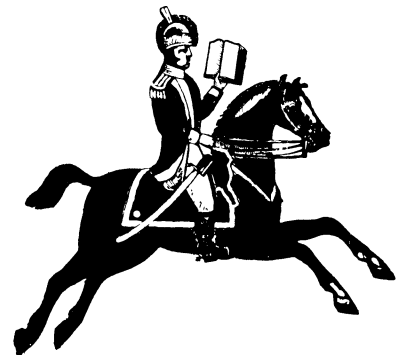
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