

**John Moncure.** *Forging the King's Sword. Military Education between Tradition and Modernization: The Case of the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps, 1871-1918.* New York: Peter Lang, 1993. Pp. 323.

Originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation at Cornell University, this book is published as part of the American University Studies' Series IX (History). The author is currently Professor of Military Studies at Davidson College, North Carolina, and a former graduate of the United States Military Academy of West Point, where he also taught European history. Moncure's biographical background helps to explain his scholarly interest in the Prussian Cadet Corps. Since virtually all the major world powers have established specific training institutions for their military officers, an examination of the once-renowned Prussian officer corps and its education and training might provide clues as to the causes of the successes and failures of the Prussian and later German armies.

In the first chapter, the author provides some historical information on the Prussian army and its officer corps prior to 1871, followed by a systematic analysis of the social origin of the cadets, the admission criteria and selection procedures for the cadet schools, and the daily routines behind the walls of the training institutions. The remaining chapters discuss the education process as such, in particular the academic curricula, the screening process of the future military officers, and the military training of the cadets. Finally,

Moncure examines the outcome of the entire training process in terms of the career paths of the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps' graduates.

The book impresses by its painstaking documentation from the primary and secondary sources which form the backbone of the study. In addition to the textual analysis of records, guidelines, and regulations of the various preparatory schools (*Voranstalten*) where the young cadets spent the first four years of their education, and of the central training facility in Berlin (*Hauptkadettenanstalt*), Moncure also includes the memoirs and biographies of former cadets. Additional sources are scholarly books written by European and North-American researchers on the Prussian and German armies.

One might speculate as to the intended audience of the book. As an historical study, the book certainly offers a wide range of details and interpretations which are of interest to military historians. But in order to understand fully the complexity of the issues raised, the reader not only has to possess a solid background in German history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but also a considerable familiarity with the structure of the German secondary education system, especially of the *Gymnasium* as the pivotal educational institution for the social and academic elites of the country. A reader lacking this knowledge might encounter difficulties in fully appreciating Moncure's effort to compare the academic characteristics and experiences of the boys between the ages of ten and nineteen who attended the "civic" *Gymnasium* in

preparation for their university studies and of their peers who attended the cadet schools in preparation for their careers as army officers.

Whereas before 1871 there was a distinct qualitative difference in favour of the Gymnasium, this gap between the two institutions gradually diminished after the *Abitur*, the leaving certificate which qualified Gymnasium graduates for university entrance, became a prerequisite also for future officers. Beyond the *Abitur*, the most promising cadets completed their education in the *Selekta*: they stayed for an additional year at the cadet school mainly for the study of military subjects, and the *Selekta* graduates eventually provided the pool for the army's senior officers and generals.

Attempts to raise the scholastic standards of the cadet schools constitute one of the major themes recurring throughout the book. The other significant focus is on the changing social background of the cadets. Initially, the vast majority of the new recruits came from the ranks of the nobility who, for various reasons, considered a military career for their sons as being an inalienable right, and the close link between the monarchy and the Prussian aristocracy ensured that this privilege was preserved. In later years, however, meritocratic considerations opened the doors for an increasing number of "bourgeois" applicants, a process that permanently changed the composition of the German officer corps.

These two themes converge, in that towards the end of the nineteenth century the middle class became involved in providing a well-educated

leadership cadre for the army. On the other hand, the nobility's traditionally unswerving loyalty to the crown had now to be instilled in cadets who came from heterogeneous origins and who might see their military service as a professional career rather than a patriotic duty. Thus, the authorities responsible for the cadets' training and education programme had to pursue three important objectives. First, the academic requirements had to be rigorous enough to attract the best candidates who would be able to meet the demands of an increasingly mechanized and technologically sophisticated army. Second, the political socialization of the cadets had to go beyond instilling loyalty to the monarch; it had to include such aspects as unconditional support for the existing socio-political order and an almost instinctive rejection of any republican or socialist ideas. Third, these future officers had to be imbued with the ethos of a privileged social class which saw the army as the "School of the Nation" and its officers as the guardians of an institution that would eventually instill the "proper" values in all of its conscripts.

Coming from a military-historical perspective, Moncure does not address the underlying educational rationale and implications of military education in general. But since all modern states, regardless of ideological persuasion, have assumed responsibility for the education of their citizenry, schools have as much a socio-political as an academic function, which is naturally magnified in military or quasi-military educational institutions. Furthermore, the state's security needs are assigned

to institutions such as intelligence services, the police, and the military, whose primary mandate of protecting the state against external as well as internal threats engenders a politically conservative mentality at least among the higher echelons of these institutions. This argument, then, raises the question of whether or not military education by its very objectives is more akin to indoctrination than is the education provided by public school systems. Seen in this light, the military education of the Prussian Cadet Corps was highly effective and probably quite similar to equivalent cadet schools or military academies in other countries, although there were certainly differences in emphasis. In other words, the essentially coercive rather than humanistic rationale of these military educational institutions necessitates that their students develop a world view and identity that is distinctly different from the philosophical foundations of "ordinary" educational institutions, whatever the publicly stated objectives of military schools may be. Although Moncure briefly alludes to comparable institutions such as West Point (United States), St. Cyr (France), and Sandhurst (Britain), a comparative study of past and present forms of military education is needed to assess the full impact these institutions have on their respective societies and how the concept of military education fits into an overall theory of education.

However, these critical comments go beyond the task that Moncure had set for himself. As an historical study, *Forging the King's Sword* is a valuable scholarly contribution to the reader's

understanding of Prussian (and German) social and military history. The book is an excellent example of military historiography, the writing style is clear and to the point, and the extensive bibliography in itself will help to enhance the study of Prusso-German military history.

Werner Stephan  
The University of Saskatchewan

**Service d'histoire de l'éducation (Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, Paris). *Rapports Scientifiques. I: 1989-1992; II: 1992-1994.* Paris: Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique/Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1992, 1994. Pp. 110, 107. No charge.**

The Service d'histoire de l'éducation is the single most productive institution engaged in research on the history of education. These two biennial reports help to show how and why it leads the world.

The service opened in 1970 with the appointment of a permanent "Commission" and a small staff—nine persons by 1973. It began by cataloguing work in the field across France, finding and listing relevant archival collections, and sponsoring or undertaking lengthy projects on sports history, the medieval university, literacy and schooling, and a complete atlas of French *collèges* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By 1975, this loose institutional arrangement no