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# Forging the King's Sword. Military Education between Tradition and Modernization: The Case of the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps

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All of the chapters are profusely illustrated with line drawings (most, unfortunately, with no indication of scale) and reprints of contemporary drawings, photographs, and comparative tables. Some of the latter provide a statistical summary of steamships relevant to each particular chapter, while others compare such important details as engines, voyages, areas of service, and a host of other data. Each chapter is footnoted and supplemented by an excellent selected bibliography; the index is accurate and useful. Robert Gardiner, the consultant editor of this series, has thoughtfully provided a brief glossary of naval terms and abbreviations, and a preface.

Given the number of contributors, one is surprised by the degree of agreement regarding the main themes: the surprising staying power of sail-powered vessels; the relatively slower adoption of steam by merchant companies, as opposed to navies; and steam's long gestation period in the American inland and the British coastal waters. According to the editors, all three points can be explained by cost-accounting methods—the rate of return offered by sailing ships and steamships—a factor that national navies could afford to ignore, because their prime goal was not the pursuit of profit. Regarding the final theme, because of the very nature of their technology, the early steamships were originally confined to coastal and river areas; steamships only supplanted sailing ships when they became ocean-capable and more profitable. The slow improvement in the technology of engines, propellers, and hulls (iron and steel) had a gradual

rather than a revolutionary effect on shipping. This partially accounts for the fact that wind-driven merchant ships survived well into the first half of the twentieth century.

Overall, Conway has again provided us with an outstanding reference work that will benefit all but the most dedicated specialist. It is a welcome addition to this series and is highly recommended to readers with an interest in the history of these ships.

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Moncure, John. *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. 323pp. \$58.95

The Prussian Cadet Corps was founded by King Frederick William I in 1717 and was abolished in March 1920 under Article 176 of the Treaty of Versailles. In time, a system of eight preparatory schools fed into the Central Cadet School at Berlin-Lichterfelde, which annually supplied about 250 officers (or one-third of commissions) to the regular army. Because of the destruction of the cadet corps records during the Second World War, Moncure meticulously used fragmentary evidence to reconstruct a data base on 11,157 cadets for the years from 1871 to 1918.

Cadets entered schools at age eleven (much younger than their counterparts at St. Cyr, Modena, West Point, or Sandringham), and the cost of their

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education was about 6,000 marks (three times the annual income of a skilled industrial worker). By and large, the cadets were Protestants (a baptismal certificate was required), came from the traditional old provinces of Prussia, and were the offspring of military, bureaucratic, and landowner families. Homogeneity was thus assured. While the Prussian nobility provided 62 percent of cadets in 1871, that figure slipped to 23 percent by 1918. Hazing was a fact of life. Homosexuality must surely have existed, though it is relegated here to a footnote. Education was rudimentary and not too demanding. General Emory Upton in the 1870s discovered that the three-years of mathematics offered at Lichtenfelde were taught at West Point in a single year. In the Prussian Army, formal education lagged far behind building "character." Finally, commissioning into a regiment depended less on merit than on blood and influence: Moncure discovered that the officer corps of no less than ninety regiments remained exclusively noble during this time. Put differently, commissioning into a regiment was undertaken primarily "to protect the social position of the nobility" and to "assure the identification of that group to the crown."

Moncure concludes that the cadet schools produced "doers" rather than thinkers and that their graduates offered skills on the battlefield rather than in a military, strategic, or personal political-ethical context. Throughout this period, the cadet schools faced a constant conflict between the forces of tradition and the dictates of the military profession. Moncure argues that they did

about as well as their equivalent in the West.

I have two criticisms, one minor, one more serious. This book is a revised version of the author's 1991 Cornell University dissertation and could have benefited from another critical revision. The bibliography especially needs work to bring it up to professional standards. On a more substantive note, Moncure alludes to the historiographical debate over whether the army imposed its traditions and mentality on the middle-class cadets that it accepted (see Craig, Meier-Welcker, and Kehr) or whether those bourgeois recruits reformed the very institution that had attracted them (Eley, Blackburn). Unfortunately, Moncure offers no insight into this critical question.

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Trulock, Alice Rains. *In the Hands of Providence: Joshua L. Chamberlain and the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1992. 569pp. \$34.95

In the spring of 1862 that most quintessential of Yankee volunteer regiments, the 20th Maine, left Portland to join the Union Army. Its lieutenant colonel, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, had a few weeks before been a thirty-four-year-old professor of rhetoric and oratory at Bowdoin College. A year later, Chamberlain and the 20th Maine would win immortality at Gettysburg's Little Round Top.

Chamberlain, who was a Maine-bred theologian, academic, and citizen-soldier, led his regiment through the