

# Gerhard Scharnhorst: What U.S. Military Patriots Must Know

by Steven Douglas

The political, military, scientific, and intellectual accomplishments of Gen. Gerhard Johann David Scharnhorst, the founder of the Prussian General Staff during the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon during the early 19th Century, constitute an excellent point of orientation for the many patriotic members of the American military who are seeking to defeat those philosophical descendants of Napoleon today known as the “chicken-hawks” of U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney. The complexity and the gravity of the strategic situation which Scharnhorst had to address, mirror in many ways the challenges that confront the “traditionalist” layers of the U.S. military, now. Just as Rumsfeld’s chicken-hawks are committed to the establishment of a world empire under the auspices of U.S. military might, so was Napoleon committed to the establishment of a world empire, based upon French military might. Indeed, Rumsfeld’s chicken-hawks, like their predecessor Adolf Hitler, aspire to imitate the designs of Napoleon.

Scharnhorst served at the pleasure of King Friedrich Wilhelm III, who, at best, was ambivalent toward Napoleon and the mortal threat that the French Emperor represented against civilization. Because he was so intellectually weak, the King was susceptible of being influenced, or even completely captured at any given time, by one of several politically contradictory influential factions. The American military serves a Commander-in-Chief in the person of “Dubya” Bush, who also suffers from grave intellectual shortcomings. President Bush’s intellectual weakness makes him exceedingly vulnerable to the machinations of the chicken-hawks in his entourage.

So, for example, the same President who showed real, mature, statesmanlike qualities with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the immediate aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, only months later, in early 2002, capitulated to the incessant lobbying and machinations of his Chicken-hawk Vice President, Dick Cheney. Cheney’s office was using falsified intelligence documents to instigate the chicken-hawks’ much-desired war against Iraq, which was supposed to be the beginning of



General Scharnhorst (right), who called himself “Napoleon’s most active enemy,” helped secure the French dictator’s defeat: a lesson for American military patriots who confront the new Napoleons in the Bush Administration. Left: Napoleon meets “General Winter” in Russia—falling into the trap set for him by the Prussian Reformers.

a permanent Clash of Civilizations. Just as the Prussian King was captured and thoroughly controlled for a period of time by a pro-Napoleonic empire faction led by one of his own Cabinet ministers, so President Bush has been, at least temporarily, captured by the Chicken-hawk empire faction led by Rumsfeld and Cheney.

Scharnhorst found himself pitted against a deeply entrenched, stultified military bureaucracy which was enamored of its supposedly perfected military theories, to the exclusion of any hints of reality to the contrary. Rumsfeld’s “transformation of the military” fanatics evince a similar type of militant, academic sterility today.

The key to Scharnhorst’s success was that he, as Prussia’s pre-eminent military figure, *acted politically as a nation-builder*. He did not confine his responsibilities or actions to the battlefield, narrowly defined. He understood the military to be an instrument of nation-building, and he acted accordingly. He saw that his ability to save Prussia from Napoleon, was dependent upon his capability to effect a transformation in the people’s legal, political, and psychological relationship to the Prussian state. To the extent that every Prussian subject had a stake in the state, the entire population could be mobilized as a single citizenry in *strategic defense* of the state. Scharnhorst functioned as a leading member of the Prussian Reform movement, which was led by Cabinet Minister Freiherr Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom Stein, as he worked to advance the cause of the political and intellectual liberation of all the people of Prussia.

## Schaumburg-Lippe and Strategic Defense

Scharnhorst was born on Nov. 12, 1755 in a small village near the city of Hanover. In 1773 he entered the extraordinary military school that was established and run by Wilhelm Graf zu Schaumburg-Lippe, a friend and philosophical collaborator of Moses Mendelssohn, the German-Jewish philosopher known as “the Socrates of Berlin.”<sup>1</sup> Schaumburg-Lippe’s ideas made a profound, life-long impression on Scharnhorst. Schaumburg-Lippe emphasized the moral superiority of *defensive* over offensive military actions. He wrote a book entitled *Mémoires pour Servir à l’Art Militaire Défensif* (*Memiors To Serve the Art of Military Defense*), which elaborated on the moral, military, and political significance of strategic defense. Schaumburg-Lippe wrote, “No war other than a war of defense is legitimate, every aggression is beneath the dignity of an honest man. Man prevents war by means of defense, or at least diminishes it.” The reason to study war and make it a science, is “not the sad business of inventing new forms of weapons that artfully kill, rather it is a matter of service to humanity. The more perfected military science is, the more dangerous it is to start a war, and therefore wars will be conducted less frequently.” And, “Man seems by nature to have an inclination toward war, just as certain beasts have an incli-

1. See Helga Zepp-LaRouche, “What It Takes To Be a World-Historical Leader Today”; Steven Meyer, “Moses Mendelssohn and the Bach Tradition”; and David Shavin, “Philosophical Vignettes From the Political Life of Moses Mendelssohn,” *Fidelio*, Summer 1999.



Wilhelm Graf zu Schaumburg-Lippe, the mentor of Scharnhorst. On the primacy of strategic defense, he wrote: "No war other than a war of defense is legitimate, every aggression is beneath the dignity of an honest man. Man prevents war by means of defense, or at least diminishes it."

nation toward predatory behavior." But just as man can educate himself to overcome his animalistic impulses, so can he educate himself about war, so that in minimizing it, he can develop qualities of bravery, magnanimity, and greatness.

Schaumburg-Lippe observes:

"If the art of resisting is brought to a certain degree of perfection, we ensure the peace of states, not by the calamities of the offensive, that is to say, by attacking the enemy in create own country in order to pre-empt his attack or to make a diversion, but by arranging things such that *the offensive enemy destroys or consumes without effect his own means to offend, like a snake destroying his teeth gnawing a file*. . . . [T]he result is that making war for the offensive party means to serve harmful passions; and to devote oneself to the defensive party is to devote oneself to the welfare of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

As a teacher, Schaumburg-Lippe was dedicated to cultivating the powers of independent thinking, of judgment, among his students. "Drill and grill" had no place in his curriculum. Subjects included theoretical and applied mathematics, geometry, physics, natural history, architecture, economy, history of civilization, military history, drawing, philosophy,

and foreign languages. This approach deeply impressed on Scharnhorst, who later wrote of his mentor: "One will seldom see a man like him, who combined such unconditional good of the heart with so many great qualities of the mind. He was the director, supervisor, and benefactor, the teacher and friend of his officers. He made many young people happy; he was in every respect a great man, of whose legacy Germany can be proud." It was at Scharnhorst's instigation that Theodor Schmalz, Scharnhorst's future brother-in-law, wrote the first biography of Schaumburg-Lippe.

After graduating from Schaumburg-Lippe's military academy, Scharnhorst went on to become a student at the artillery school in Hanover, and serve in the military of Hanover for 23 years, from 1778-1801. That tumultuous period witnessed the success of the American Revolution and the 1789 adoption of the U.S. Constitution, premised upon the revolutionary idea that the nation-state must promote the "general welfare"; but it also saw the failure of the French Revolution to bring about a similar republican transformation in Europe, as the humanist leadership of Jean Sylvain Bailly and the Marquis de Lafayette was swept aside by the Jacobins, and the French Revolution sank into Terror.<sup>3</sup>

Intellectual ferment spread throughout Prussia and the many German-speaking duchies and principalities as the works of Friedrich Schiller, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Carl Friedrich Gauss, Abraham Kästner, Wolfgang Mozart, Franz Josef Haydn, Ludwig von Beethoven, Moses Mendelssohn, Gotthold Lessing, and many other great minds revolutionized the intellectual landscape. Scharnhorst's interface with this world occurred on the field of battle, in the pages of military magazines and gazettes, and various academic venues, including the University of Göttingen. At Göttingen, he became a member of various reading societies and organizations where the latest scientific, economic, political, and cultural issues of the day were debated. Albrecht Ludwig Friedrich Meister, an advisor to the royal family and Professor of Mathematics, Philosophy, and Military Science at Göttingen, invited Scharnhorst to present lectures at the university on military history and policy.

In 1793 Scharnhorst took to the field of battle for the first time, as he deployed as part of an alliance of the royal houses of Europe against the armies of revolutionary France. The commander of the French forces at that time was not Napoleon (who later made himself emperor and dictator in 1799), but rather the great republican and military and scientific genius Lazare Carnot, known as "the Organizer of Victory." Carnot's brilliant mobilization of the cognitive and productive powers of France, by means of his rapid education and deployment of brigades of scientists and engineers, as well

2. *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Art Militaire Défensif*. Par le Comte Regnant de Schaumburg-Lippe, etc. (Buckebourg, 1775). (See Appendix.)

3. Pierre Beaudry, "Jean Sylvain Bailly: The French Revolution's Benjamin Franklin," *EIR*, Jan. 26, 2001; and "Why France Did Not Have an American Revolution," *EIR*, Jan. 18, 2002



*U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the road to world empire: here, in Afghanistan, December 2001.*

as his patriotic appeal to the masses of the French people, produced “miraculous” victories throughout 1793 and 1794 against the royal coalition of attackers.<sup>4</sup>

### Transforming Military Historiography

Scharnhorst was so impressed with the revolution in warfare which Carnot had wrought on the battlefield, that he wrote a book-length treatise on the subject, entitled *The Development of the Universal Causes of the Good Fortune of the French in the Revolutionary Wars, in Particular in the Campaigns of 1794*. Scharnhorst revolutionized the field of military historiography with this work, as surely as Carnot had revolutionized warfare with his concept of strategic defense. He recognized that Carnot had ushered in a new age of warfare, in which the military doctrine of the age-old professional/mercenary standing armies of the absolutist/feudal monarchical states of Europe had been eclipsed by the in-depth mobilization capabilities that were inherent in an aroused citizenry which was fighting in defense of its inalienable rights to freedom and development within its own national boundaries. Scharnhorst understood that political transformation, vectored in the direction of republican empowerment of a nation’s citizenry, went hand-in-hand with the augmentation of a country’s military—i.e., *strategic defense*—potential, and he elaborated that in his essay.

4. See Dino de Paoli, “Lazare Carnot’s Grand Strategy for Political Victory,” *EIR*, Sept. 20, 1996; Andreas Ranke, “Schlieffen, Carnot, and the Theory of the Flank,” *EIR*, Feb. 6, 1998; and Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “How France’s Greatest Military Hero Became a Prussian Lieutenant-General,” *EIR*, Oct. 2, 1998.

Whereas many apologists for the royal houses of Europe sought to attribute the failures of the anti-French coalition to failures of particular generals, treasonous acts of betrayal, mishaps and misadventures, or frictions among the different national sectors of the coalition, Scharnhorst said otherwise: “The source of the disaster which has befallen the allied forces in the French revolutionary wars, must be recognized as being deeply interwoven within the internal conditions of the coalition, as well as those of the French nation.” And by “internal conditions” Scharnhorst meant, “both the physical and the moral conditions.” He said in 1798, “We will only be able to defeat the French, if we have learned . . . how to awaken the public’s spirit, i.e., if we, with the same vigor and relentlessness, mobilize all the nation’s resources, its bodies, its abilities, its spirit of inventiveness, its devotion to its home soil, and last but not least, its love of ideas.” *Only then*, will the French finally be defeated, insisted Scharnhorst.

### Coalition Lies—Then and Now

Scharnhorst sounded much like U.S. Army Gen. William Wallace, who complained, “The Iraqi enemy we war-gamed against, is not the Iraqi enemy that we are encountering on the battlefield.” Scharnhorst reported the ways in which many embittered French exiles had led coalition commanders to grossly underestimate the combat capabilities of the French troops. The “Ahmed Chalabis” of the time were all too numerous. Scharnhorst said of the vengeful French emigrés: “The wrong intelligence, which the emigrés presented about the internal situation in France, and the hatred that the political parties in the Coalition states harbored for one another, given their support or opposition to the French Revolution, contrib-

uted to a circumstance whereby the coalition could not properly judge the necessary means for war, and they did not choose the appropriate measures, accordingly. . . .

“The emigrés had from the beginning, the greatest interest in misrepresenting the situation in France, as if a victory over this nation would involve few difficulties. By this means, they moved the Coalition powers to war. Initially, they called for only a small force of combatants; they realized perhaps as well that, if the small force proved to be insufficient, a larger one would have to be deployed, once the war had finally been started.

“They pretended (or perhaps they even believed it in part), that the French nation had been misled by a small number of men to its new Constitution; the greater number was (supposedly) for the old order and was yearning earnestly to be able to wrest itself from the tyranny of the National Convention. The emigrés spoke of their many ties to the French army and claimed, these (many) French soldiers would come over to the ranks of the Coalition as soon as the Coalition presented itself in combat.”

How many similar-sounding lies were the American people inundated with, prior to the assault on Iraq, courtesy of Rumsfeld’s chicken-hawks and their Iraqi-exile puppets and cocktail partners such as Ahmed Chalabi?

### France’s National ‘Enthusiasm’

Scharnhorst recognized that the French were waging a fight that was informed by both a sense of responsibility for the ennoblement of mankind, and desperation for continued national existence. These drove the French to unparalleled feats of sacrifice and accomplishment:

The French “held themselves alone to be enlightened, wise, free, and happy—all the other nations to be uneducated, brutal, and unfortunate. The happiness of all of mankind would be lost, if they did not preserve themselves against the Coalition armies. They believed themselves to be fighting not just for their own continued existence and fortune, but rather for that of all of humanity. . . .

“The ferocity with which the French nation was treated, accustomed it to death and all the sacrifices which the war required; it gave a greater vivacity to adjustments of all types, and through it man could carry out tasks, that otherwise would have been impossible. Through it one could take bread from the hungry and send it to the army, without thereby causing popular unrest. Through it things went so far that, for a considerable period of time, no one consumed meat anywhere in France, as long as the army lacked meat (the republican fast). This vivacity alone prompted the rich to sacrifice their buried treasures to the cause of the war; only thereby could they save their lives.”

This republican patriotic fervor—or “enthusiasm,” as Carnot (and Scharnhorst) called it—coupled with Carnot’s energetic scientific leadership, made an initially beleaguered



*France’s Lazare Carnot revolutionized the concept of strategic defense, mobilizing the French population for victory against the royal coalition of attackers in 1793-94. He was finally ousted by Napoleon’s lackeys, ultimately seeking refuge in Prussia.*

France invincible by the middle of the 1790s. Political “enthusiasm,” as an expression of republican political progress, always remained the linchpin of Scharnhorst’s concept of strategic defense. As he wrote in the opening lines of his proposal for the establishment of a national militia in April 1806, “When we look through the history of warfare, we find, that throughout all time not only have physical powers been decisive but rather, things have just as much depended upon the moral powers.”

### Scharnhorst’s Military Reform Program

Shortly after he returned from combat against the French, Scharnhorst launched his campaign for military reform. It had become painfully apparent to him that the stale, rigid, linear, mass field maneuver tactics of the 17th and 18th Centuries were woefully outmoded. They were definitely no match for flexible, sharpshooting tactics of the French *tirailleurs* (skirmishers), who could fight in dispersed formations, while taking full advantage of every feature that the terrain might afford.

One major challenge that Scharnhorst confronted in his quest to reform the military, was that the absolute monarchs whom he was serving were loath to concede the types of political reforms and rights to their subjects that he was recommending. Since these reforms constituted the essential philosophical content of “enthusiasm”—i.e., the very basis on which to conduct a fully effective national military mobilization—the monarchy constantly found itself on the horns of a dilemma. The monarchs feared that if they granted the reforms that Scharnhorst advocated, they would be sowing the seeds of their own political demise. Yet at the same time,

the shadow of the general, emperor, and fascist dictator Napoleon loomed ever larger over Europe, threatening to eclipse the political power of those same monarchs, via a different avenue.

A related challenge that Scharnhorst faced was the stubborn resistance of the aristocratic, highly cliquish upper echelons of the officer corps to any change in their encrusted habits. Entrance into the officer corps was based on aristocratic bloodlines, not merit. A number of high-ranking officers were functionally illiterate, and too many lacked a substantial education. Many of those who weren't formally illiterate were academically sterile. For example, a cult of mathematical maneuver had taken root in the wake of the death of Friedrich II (1712-86) (Frederick the Great) of Prussia, the monarch whose military exploits in the Seven Years War had become legendary. Various generals and so-called military experts had professed to have mastered the secrets of Frederick the Great's brilliance, by reducing his most famous battlefield accomplishments to a series of strictly defined linear maneuvers, which, if properly performed, would supposedly automatically force an enemy to surrender—ideally, before the battle ever began!

Furthermore, society at large had an understandably rather low estimation of the military. It tended to view standing armies with suspicion, since they could be used for coercive purposes against the population. Foreign mercenaries often constituted substantial portions of the army; and, the military was an economic burden for an already-impoorished population.

Scharnhorst decided to address all of these problems simultaneously, by means of a throughgoing reform of the officer corps. If, as the saying goes, a fish rots from the head, so does an army. By upgrading and changing the selection and promotion criteria of the officer corps, Scharnhorst intended to radiate change throughout not only the army, but also the nation. He made his initial foray in this realm in an essay entitled, "On the Education of Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers." He recommended establishing officer education and training schools at a distance from major cities, so as to minimize distractions to the students, and he modelled the educational program along the lines that he had received at Schaumburg-Lippe's academy. The purpose of the curriculum was to advance cognitive powers of the participants, such that they could master "the art of outwitting the enemy as the highest expression of the art of military leadership."

He was especially attentive to education of the non-commissioned officers, whom he referred to as "the soul of the armed services." He insisted that general officers treat them with more respect, and act to strengthen their authority, by, for example, refraining from reprimanding them in the presence of the enlisted men. The "young, capable, and inner-directed men" of the French revolutionary army had made a profound impression on Scharnhorst, and he was



*Statue of Frederick the Great (1712-86), in Berlin. His military exploits in the Seven Years War became legendary—but were reduced to rigid formulas by the entrenched aristocratic military bureaucrats whom Scharnhorst confronted.*

determined to educate such a "youth movement" of officers in peace-time, so as to be prepared for the coming conflict with Napoleon.

He also wrote an essay calling for the establishment of a General Staff for the Hanoverian Army. He sharply criticized the contemporary practice, whereby generals chose their top adjutants from among the ranks of their "sons, relatives, and flatterers," so that not infrequently almost nobody but children or "otherwise unusable men," who were half-disabled or retired, stood in positions of the highest command posts. In the place of such "slaves to the moods and whims of their generals" should be "free men" representing "a class of advisory officers," who step forward and assume responsibility. The training of the General Staff officer was to involve the strongest interrelationship between theory and practice. Priority number one was the development of the "powers of judgment" of the General Staff officer, so that that person was able to master any and every unexpected situation. Scharnhorst estimated that 24 such officers would be sufficient to ensure the smooth functioning of the 30-40,000-man Han-

overian Army. The officers were to rotate between staff duty at Army headquarters and duty with the troops in the field, so as to prevent the onset of bureaucratic stasis.

### Service in Prussia

Notwithstanding his growing reputation and acclaim, Scharnhorst was not able to achieve many of his reform objectives in Hanover. So, he jumped at the opportunity to assume a commission in the Prussian military, when it was offered to him in 1801. Prussia, along with France and Austria, was one of the major military powers on the continent.

Upon his arrival, Scharnhorst took up the lion's share of teaching responsibilities at the main military academy in Berlin, as he concentrated on launching a "youth movement" in the Prussian military. He saw, among the most senior officers of the Prussian Army, many men who had served their King and country well during the Seven Years War' (1756-63), but who were largely ignorant of the implications of Carnot's revolution in warfare, and who were, moreover, disinclined to learn anything new. The next generation of officers, who constituted the bulk of the Prussian officer corps, lacked experience in combat, were largely wedded to sterile parade-ground drill routines and exercises, and displayed no interest in reform or upgrading the capabilities of the army. Scharnhorst viewed them as a closed aristocratic society, which sought to exploit their positions for economic gain. Therefore, he addressed himself to the youth at the military academy.

At the same time, he founded a Military Society in Berlin, which rapidly became a principal center for debate of military and political reform for the most influential circles of Prussia. Its stated purpose was, "through reciprocal discussion of intelligence in all branches of the art of war, to encourage the development of a method of instruction, which encourages the exploration of the truth and which seems to be best-suited to set theory and practice into the proper relationship to one another; and to thereby avoid the difficulties and the all too frequent one-sidedness that is inherent in private, individual studies." Scharnhorst's progress in this educational realm was such that, at the end of his first three-year course, the Berlin military academy was reorganized and expanded into an "academy for young officers" that drew its students from throughout Prussia, based upon their cognitive and leadership merits, not mere aristocratic bloodlines. Scharnhorst personally conducted interviews with all the applicants, and had the right to reject anyone whom he deemed inappropriate. One of his first students, who was later to become General von Muffling, described what an interview with "the Professor" Scharnhorst was like:

"With but few questions, which he simply and easily posed, he had determined if a young man, in addition to his knowledge which he pursued with zeal, was equipped with a certain presence of mind. In his judgment of men, he always kept ability more than knowledge in the forefront of his con-



*Freiherr vom Stein, the principal leader of the Prussian Reform movement, was one of Germany's greatest statesmen.*

siderations, because the former subsumed the latter."

In addition to his expanded responsibilities at the revamped academy, Scharnhorst was also assigned to a leading position in the General Staff for the Western Prussia Theater in 1804. This was one of only three Prussian theaters of war, and therefore involved a significant increase in operational responsibility for him.

### Prussian-French Tensions

As Scharnhorst worked to bring about republican policy changes in Prussia, by educating a new generation of military/political leaders, he was acting as a leading member of the Prussian Reform movement that was led by the great Freiherr vom Stein. Vom Stein had become a Minister in the King's Cabinet in 1804, from which position he worked with Scharnhorst and other Reformers to institute a republican transformation of Prussia. But King Friedrich Wilhelm III remained largely a captive of his pro-Napoleon court advisors, most emphatically including his Foreign Minister, Graf Haugwitz, and his circle of collaborators. These Francophile lackeys counselled Prussian non-aggression against Napoleon's France. They advocated that Prussia should refrain from joining England, Russia, and/or Austria-Hungary in any kind of alliance against France. So, after the Peace of Basel which was concluded in April 1795, Prussia had acted, allegedly, as an "armed, independent intermediary" between France and most of the rest of Europe. Napoleon was perfectly happy to make certain "concessions" to Prussia, in order to keep it from combining its forces with the other European

powers against France. So, Prussia either stood by in silence, or acted as a tool and/or beneficiary of Napoleon's expansion of his empire, up through Napoleon's defeat of the Russians and the Austrians at the Battle of Austerlitz in December 1805.

Thereafter, it became apparent that a change in Prussian policy was essential, because Napoleon was clearly about to train his sights on Prussia. But the Prussian King's policy of neutrality/toleration/collaboration had left the country, including the military, ill-prepared to resist the French dictator's onslaught.

In April 1806, vom Stein submitted a memorandum to the King which pointed out in blunt terms, that without a thoroughgoing political reform, Prussia would necessarily be overwhelmed by Napoleon. He recommended the dissolution of the existing Cabinet, and its replacement by a new Ministry with special executive powers, which he himself would lead. He especially attacked the Francophile clique around Foreign Minister von Haugwitz: "The consequence of the regime being led by such people is the discontent of all Prussian subjects. A change is indispensable and (immediately) required. He who reads of the demise of Venice and of the fall of the French and Sardinian monarchies, will recognize in the facts that I have presented, justification for the worst expectations (for Prussia)." Leaders of the Army, including the Duke of Braunschweig, Prince Louis Ferdinand, and others, petitioned the King repeatedly during the Summer for the dismissal of the Francophiles.

In the same vein, a letter to the King dated Sept. 4, 1806, which was co-authored by four princes, vom Stein, and three leading generals, accused the pro-Napoleon clique in the Prussian government of virtual treason: "Based on convictions grounded in notorious facts," we know that "Your Majesty's Cabinet is colluding with Napoleon, in order to buy peace either through the most disgraceful subservience, or to take extremely weak measures in the case of war, or to cripple whatever they haven't otherwise already betrayed of the energetic efforts on the part of your honorable generals to carry out a vigorous fight against the French, if Your Majesty so orders it. Through these means they would bring the greatest misfortune on Your Majesty, the entire royal house, and your faithful subjects. In all that we say of this, we confess that our concerns are no different than those of the Army and the general public." The Francophile faction "has long since forfeited all trust and confidence, especially in matters of state. All the brazen abuse which Napoleon has committed, by taking advantage of Your Majesty's love of peace, is ascribed to you. Public opinion speaks of bribery; we would rather leave that charge uninvestigated, because prejudices and other personal inclinations and relations can lead to actions that are just as bad as those produced by the money of bribery." The King rebuked the princes and generals for their "punishable insolence," and he strongly reprimanded vom Stein. But he could not deny the validity of their statements.



*King Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770-1840) wrestled with a dilemma: Accept Scharnhorst's reforms and allow the "virus" of republicanism to grow; or reject the reforms, and be defeated by Napoleon.*

### **Scharnhorst's Militia Proposal**

It was in this superheated political climate that Scharnhorst authored his famous essay which called for creation of a national militia, and the mobilization of the strategic defense capabilities of Prussia in order to defeat Napoleon. Scharnhorst pointed out that by mobilizing 20 militia men into each company of the standing army, the combat strength of Prussia could be immediately increased by 25,000 men, a not insubstantial augmentation of the 235,000-man armed forces. Moreover, the "logistical tail" of the army's combat troops would not have to be expanded in order to accommodate the deployment of the new combatants, as they would be efficiently absorbed by the pre-existing structure.

But, more importantly, the activation of a national militia would change the character of the conflict, and help to catalyze a total national mobilization for victory: "Beyond this multiplication of the armed forces, the state gains another great and important means for its preservation: *a national militia*. Only by this means, whereby man arms the entire mass of the population, can a small country preserve a kind of equilibrium of power in a defensive war against a larger country, which launches a war of subjugation and attacks the smaller one." Historically, "in France as well as in England, *it was the formation of a national militia that first awakened the military spirit of the nation and produced an enthusiasm for the independence of the fatherland, which did not manifest itself in other nations in such a lively manner.*"

### **Defeat at Jena and Auerstedt**

Unfortunately for Scharnhorst, vom Stein, and the Prussian people, the King did not heed the advice of the Reformers. The results were truly catastrophic. On Oct. 14, 1806, the Prussian Army was crushed by Napoleon in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt. Napoleon marched on to occupy Berlin, and King Friedrich Wilhelm III retreated to the far reaches of eastern Prussia. As Chief of Staff of the Prussian forces at the Battle of Eylau on Feb. 7, 1807, Scharnhorst presided over





*Napoleon's victory at Jena in 1806 was the direct result of King Friedrich Wilhelm III's refusal to accept Scharnhorst's republican military reforms. The results were disastrous for Prussia, with its territory and population cut virtually in half. Finally, the King got the message, and asked for Scharnhorst's help to rebuild the shattered military.*

the first and only significant victory of Prussia over Napoleon's troops during this bleak campaign.

Hostilities were formally brought to a close with the Treaty of Tilsit on July 9, 1807. In that agreement, Napoleon reached an accommodation with the Russian Tsar and imposed horrific conditions of geographic reconfiguration, demographic reduction, reparations, and an oppressive occupation on Prussia. Prussia was virtually cut in half, as it was reduced from 122,025 square miles to 63,028 square miles. Prussia's population was cut by almost 50%, from 9,743,000 people to 4,938,000. A series of amendments to the treaty made withdrawal of French troops from Prussia contingent upon the payment of reparations that were every bit as onerous and unpayable as the Versailles Treaty reparations demands that were imposed upon Germany over 100 years later, at the conclusion of World War I. In addition, Prussia had to foot the enormous cost of feeding, "entertaining," and housing the occupation troops. Whereas the national income of Prussia was 15 million talern (or the equivalent of 56 million French francs) before the conflict began, and the nation had been reduced to half its original size, the French were now demanding 140 million francs in reparation payments! Shades of Versailles! A bad harvest in 1807, coupled with the economic dislocation caused by France's continent-wide embargo against England, and a roughly 50% devaluation of the Prussian currency, created widespread economic misery and chaos. This, in turn, translated into the spread of hunger and

disease. And that then manifested itself in steeply rising death rates, negative population growth, and unprecedented rates of infant mortality. In Berlin alone, over 4,500 of the 5,845 newborn children died within one year!

As for the Prussian Army, it was in a shambles. It stood at only 63,000 men, compared to 235,000 before Jena and Auerstedt, and its morale had been shattered.

### **The Military Reorganization Commission**

On July 25, 1807, the King designated Scharnhorst to be the chairman of the Military Reorganization Commission which he had just created. The disasters at Jena and Auerstedt had finally impressed the need for some sort of change upon the King. Scharnhorst sought to implement the far-reaching type of reforms which he had been advocating for years, while the King hoped to confine the changes to something of a more cosmetic nature. By 1808, Scharnhorst was able to replace two of his conservative opponents on the Commission with former students of his, Majors von Boyen and von Grolman. He also succeeded in installing another of his former students, Capt. Karl von Clausewitz, as the Secretary of the Commission. With their collaboration, and that of another reform-oriented Commission member, Col. August von Gneisenau, Scharnhorst set to work on overhauling and upgrading not only the Prussian Army, but the Prussian Army's relationship to the state and the people of Prussia, and thereby, the nature of the state itself.

The underlying premise of Scharnhorst's view of the relationship of the Prussian people to the Prussian Army and the nation of Prussia was stated simply in the first article of the Commission's Provisional Outline for the Constitution of Provincial Troops, which was submitted to the King on March 15, 1808: "All inhabitants of the state are born defenders of the same." He saw his task as being fourfold, from that standpoint: 1) to upgrade the quality of life and code of conduct of the military, so as to integrate it more with society as a whole; 2) to convince the King of the need for universal military service for all Prussians, irrespective of social standing; 3) to improve the quality of the army as a fighting force, as an instrument of strategic defense for the nation; and 4) to make the social, political, economic, and educational changes that would empower the Prussian people to become citizens who can participate in the development of their nation.

So, one of the first initiatives of the Commission was to eliminate the practice of corporal punishment, and bring the system of military justice more into harmony with that of the civilian system. It also opened up the ranks of the office corps to all Prussians, when it declared on Aug. 6, 1808: "Henceforth, only ability and education shall grant one a claim to the rank of officer during times of peace; in times of war, it is unexcelled courage and competence in capacity of assessment of the totality. Therefore, all individuals from the entire nation who possess these qualities can lay claim to the highest positions of rank in the military. All practice of placement based upon social status is hereby stopped by the military, and every man, without regard to his social background, has equal duties and rights." These two steps taken by the Commission did indeed have a significant positive impact on the way that the Prussian people viewed the military.

But Scharnhorst encountered insuperable opposition from both Napoleon and King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1808, as he fought for universal military conscription. The Prussian King feared that if the entire population were to be armed and trained, they could well revolt against him. Napoleon agreed. So, in the Treaty of Paris in September 1808, Napoleon stipulated that the Prussian Army was not to exceed 42,000 soldiers for the next ten years, and that any form of national militia was strictly forbidden. Scharnhorst masterfully circumvented Napoleon's restrictions with the advent of his *Krümpers* (reserve) system. The idea was to observe the 42,000-person limit on the size of the army, but shorten the training period of many soldiers down to as little as one month! By this means, many more people could be rotated through military training. They could train their fellow Prussians informally, after they left the service, and they would be on standby for mobilization in case of a national emergency. As a direct consequence of this (veiled) practice, the Prussian Army could field almost double the number of troops it had been limited to by Napoleon, at the point where the King was finally persuaded to go to war against the French dictator in 1813. And the fact that the Prussians could mobilize these troops almost instantaneously,

was to prove strategically pivotal during the hectic Spring of that year.

## Educational and Training Reform

In order to upgrade the efficiency of the Prussian military, the Commission insisted upon the creation of a Ministry of War, whose director was to coordinate and oversee all aspects of military planning, and report to the King. The King looked askance at this recommendation, fearing the concentration of so much military power in anyone's hands but his own; but he finally agreed. Still, he couldn't bring himself to appoint a War Minister, so he had Scharnhorst act as provisional head of the new ministry until 1810—when Napoleon insisted upon Scharnhorst's removal.

It was in the realm of educational reform that Scharnhorst was to exercise his most lasting impact. It was there that he sowed the seeds of the General Staff tradition of institutionalized excellence, *Verantwortungsfreudigkeit* (joy in taking responsibility), and *Auftragstaktik* (mission orders/orientation), which were to be the hallmarks of German military accomplishments in the decades to come. The work that he did in this educational realm both complemented, and was substantially amplified by the extraordinary initiatives and accomplishments of Wilhelm von Humboldt. At the instigation of Freiherr vom Stein, von Humboldt had finally become Education Minister of Prussia in February 1809. From that position, von Humboldt conducted a thoroughgoing reform of the Prussian educational system, basing it upon a study and rediscovery of the great intellectual and political accomplishments of Classical Greece. Like Scharnhorst's intellectual initiatives in the military domain, Wilhelm von Humboldt's reforms were designed to increase the cognitive capacities and capabilities for independent thinking of each individual student.

Scharnhorst insisted that, consistent with the individual right and responsibility of each citizen to take personal initiative on behalf of the state, each soldier had a similar type of responsibility to take independent, well-conceived initiative on behalf of the army. As each citizen was properly a law-abiding, independent, thinking being, so was each soldier properly a disciplined, self-activating, thinking being. While such an idea might be considered "radical" today, it was all the more so in Prussia at that time, as the slavery of serfdom had only just been abolished, largely due to the efforts of Scharnhorst's collaborator vom Stein.

In a statement issued by the Military Reorganization Commission on July 16, 1809 with regard to "Instruction for the Training of Troops," it was mandated: "The intelligence of the soldier must be addressed. He who is the best light infantry soldier, is the least like a machine. In the sharpshooting exercises, all formulas must be thrown out the window. For a detachment to disband, means that every single soldier is shifted into a situation in which he should deploy himself according to his judgment of the terrain and the conditions

existing at that moment.”

That kind of thinking gave rise to a regulation which was issued on Jan. 15, 1812, and remained in effect until 1888, when it was modified: “The rifleman is in most cases dependent upon his own judgment, no mechanical mold or procedure can guide him.”

Consistent with that orientation, the “Provisional Instruction” of June 3, 1808 had stipulated that the order to fire in battle should not come from the highest levels, but rather from officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, according to their judgment of the tactical situation.

The roots of this kind of thinking, which places a premium on the development of individual powers of judgment, can be seen in one of Scharnhorst’s early (1782) military essays entitled, “On the Use of Scientific Knowledge, the Prejudices against the Same, and the Common Studies.” In it, he quotes Graf zu Schaumburg-Lippe:

“It is impossible to prescribe regulations and orders for every situation.

“The regulation can only manage an equality of mechanical duties in an army. The officer must therefore know to find within himself the measures in uncertain situations, and choose the best means in all complicated situations, such that they are appropriate to the case.

“Moreover, the insights that a man derives through studies are just as necessary to learn to obey, as they are to command with skillfulness.”

Later in the essay, Scharnhorst quotes his old teacher, again: “Experience has taught me: that in war a false assumption, and an unnecessary fear are usually consequences of ignorance, and that if man is facing a skillful enemy, the ignorance of the remedy is equally lamentable for the brave as well as the cowardly.”

### ‘Auftragstaktik’ and the General Staff

The importance which Scharnhorst attached to the development of the powers of thinking and judgment in every soldier, became institutionalized through the practice that came to be known as *Auftragstaktik*, or “mission orders.” This was the orientation that came to be the hallmark of the German General Staff, as one class after another graduated from the Scharnhorst-inspired War College, schooled in this outlook. When an officer accepted an *Auftrag*, or mission assignment, he accepted not only the responsibility to achieve a particular objective; he accepted the responsibility for understanding the *thinking that gave rise to the assignment*. This meant that, if conditions on the battlefield were to change substantially relative to those originally anticipated at the time the *Auftrag* was assigned, the officer might have to depart from the specific guidelines of his initial orders, in order to fulfill the *intent or thinking that generated the original Auftrag*. So, paradoxically, a *thinking officer*, in certain situations, could only fulfill his *Auftrag*, by (apparently) disobeying his original orders.

The Chief of the German General Staff in the 1860s and 1870s, the great Gen. Helmuth von Moltke (the “Old” Moltke), was fond of recounting an anecdote that spoke to the essence of *Auftragstaktik*. He recounted how, in the war with France, during a visit to the headquarters of Prince Friedrich Charles, the Prince was observed criticizing a major. The major attempted to defend his actions, by claiming that he was following orders, and that as a Prussian officer, he believed that an order from a superior was tantamount to an order from the King. At this, the Prince bristled and declared, “His Majesty made you a major, because he believed you would know when not to obey his orders.”<sup>5</sup>

Moltke placed such a premium on thoughtful initiative, that he inserted the following admonition in the tactical manual for senior commanders: “A favorable situation will never be exploited if commanders wait for orders. The highest commander and the youngest soldier must always be conscious of the fact that omission and inactivity are worse than resorting to the wrong expedient.”<sup>6</sup>

It was apparent to observers around the world from an early point, that this *Auftragstaktik*/General Staff orientation made the Prussian/German Army unique.

The poet Goethe coined an aphorism about the exceptional character of the General Staff when he wrote:

“Let the General Staff take care of things,

And then is the Commander-in-Chief’s status assured.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1890, a British author wrote: “Nowhere in this world is independence of thought and freedom of decision as much groomed and supported, as in the German Army, from the corps commanders down to the last NCO [non-commissioned officer].”<sup>8</sup>

A Russian general who wrote a two-volume study of the Franco-Prussian War, observed: “At the root of the German victory is an unbelievable willingness to act independently, a readiness displayed at all levels down to the very lowest, and displayed on the battlefield, as well as in other matters.”<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, a French lecturer told students at France’s Superior War College: “Common among the [Prussian] officers was the firm resolve to retain the initiative by all means. . . . NCOs and soldiers were exhorted, even obligated to think independently, to examine matters, and to form their own opinions. These NCOs were the backbone of the Prussian army. . . . [T]heir special role, supported by a respect for them unknown in other armies, secured them an honorable and

5. Col. T.N. Dupuy (ret.), *A Genius for War: The German Army and the General Staff, 1807-1945* (Falls Church, Virginia: Nova Publications, 1984), p. 116.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

7. Richard Hoehn, *Scharnhorsts Vermächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard und Gräfe Verlag, 1972), p. 314.

8. Richard D. Hooker, ed., *Maneuver Warfare, An Anthology* (Novata, California: Presidio Press, 1993), p. 241.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

envied position. The Prussian army was proud of them.”<sup>10</sup>

Field Marshal Eric von Manstein, the greatest operational mind and commander of the German Reichswehr in World War II, and one of the architects of the West German Bundeswehr in the 1950s, wrote of the importance of the (Scharnhorst-inspired) leadership principles in the nation’s military, and their role in producing miraculous feats on the battlefield, despite overwhelming odds late in the war:

“The reason why we succeeded, despite a series of crises, in mastering the tasks already outlined is that the Army and Army group staffs adhered firmly to two well-established German principles of leadership: 1) Always conduct operations elastically and resourcefully; 2) Give every possible scope to the initiative and self-sufficiency of commanders at all levels.

“Both principles, admittedly, were greatly at variance with Hitler’s own way of thinking. . . .

“It has always been the particular *forte* of German leadership to grant wide scope to the self-dependence of subordinate commanders—to allot them tasks which leave the method of execution to the discretion of the individual. From time immemorial—certainly since the elder Moltke’s day—this principle has distinguished Germany’s military leadership from that of other armies. The latter, far from giving the same latitude to subordinate commanders on the tactical plane, have always tended to prescribe, by means of long and detailed directives, the way orders should actually be carried out or to make tactical action conform to a specific pattern. On the German side this system was considered a bad one. It would, admittedly, appear to reduce the risk of failure in the case of a mediocre commander. Yet it only too easily leads to the executant’s having to act against the exigencies of the local situation. Worst of all, in its preoccupation with security it waives the opportunity that may occur through the independent action of a subordinate commander in boldly exploiting some favorable situation at a decisive moment. The German method is really rooted in the German character, which—contrary to all the nonsense talked about ‘blind obedience’—has a strong streak of individuality and—possibly as part of its German heritage—finds a certain pleasure in taking risks. The granting of such independence to subordinate commanders does, of course, presuppose that all members of the military hierarchy are imbued with certain tactical or operational axioms. Only the school of the German General Staff can, I suppose, be said to have produced such a consistency of outlook.”<sup>11</sup>

It was this kind of independent thinking and initiative, which was responsible for the extraordinary performance of the German Army during World War II. Hitler hated and feared the “traditional” officers of this Prussian/Scharnhorst

tradition, precisely because they represented an independent, historically grounded republican—i.e., anti-Nazi—tendency.

That Scharnhorst embodied these qualities equally in the political and military realms, can readily be seen in his bold, statesmanlike conduct in the events surrounding Napoleon’s invasion of Russia, as Scharnhorst risked all in order to ensure the fascist dictator’s demise.

## Napoleon Eyes Russia

Napoleon’s defeat in the snowy, freezing depths of Russia in 1812, shattered the myth of Napoleon’s invincibility, just as the Prussian Reformers who designed that campaign intended that it should. Helga Zepp-LaRouche has documented how Friedrich Schiller’s brother-in-law and philosophical collaborator Ludwig von Wolzogen, who was also a member of Scharnhorst’s Military Society, drew up the plan to lure Napoleon into the vast spaces of Russia and destroy him, by waging a flexible, defensive war of attrition.<sup>12</sup>

Scharnhorst and Freiherr vom Stein both played major roles in that campaign, despite the fact that Napoleon had done everything he could to minimize their political influence in Prussia. In 1808, Napoleon had driven vom Stein into exile, seized his estate, and issued a warrant for his arrest, so angry was he at the opposition that vom Stein had organized against him, and the republican reforms that vom Stein had implemented in Prussia, in the aftermaths of the debacles of Jena and Auerstedt. But in 1812, several months before Napoleon invaded Russia, Tsar Alexander I invited vom Stein to assume a major role in his upcoming fight against the French dictator. And so, vom Stein did.

At Napoleon’s insistence in 1810, the Prussian King formally removed Scharnhorst from his principal position at the War Ministry. Late that same year, Napoleon annexed the entire German North Sea coast, as well as the city of Lübeck, and demanded that the Tsar strictly adhere to the Emperor’s continent-wide embargo of England. Tsar Alexander could see the handwriting on the wall, as the agreements which had been reached at Tilsit in 1807 were coming unraveled. So in March 1811, the Tsar approached King Friedrich Wilhelm III for a pledge of Prussian support, should Napoleon attack Russia.

This precipitated a political brawl in Prussia, as Scharnhorst and his Reformers vigorously advocated an alliance with Russia against Napoleon, while Prussian Chancellor Hardenberg advocated a continuing accommodation with Napoleon as “a necessary evil,” which was clearly where the inclinations of the King were located.

Scharnhorst successfully lobbied the King, to a point that the King sent a letter to the Tsar on July 16, 1811, announcing that he was dispatching Scharnhorst as his secret emissary

10. Ibid., p. 241.

11. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1994), pp. 328-383.

12. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, “Schiller and the Liberation Wars Against Napoleon,” *EIR*, Dec 4, 1998.

to Russia, in order to negotiate a mutual assistance pact which would go into effect if Napoleon were to launch a new war. Scharnhorst met with the Tsar on Oct. 4, and discussed with him the strategy otherwise espoused by von Wolzogen, by means of which the Tsar could defeat Napoleon's impending invasion. On Oct. 17, Scharnhorst signed the new mutual assistance pact on behalf of Prussia, and began his secret return trip home.

Scharnhorst was then dispatched on a secret mission to Vienna, where he met with Prince Metternich on Dec. 3 in an effort to induce Austria to join with Russia, Prussia, and England in an alliance against Napoleon. Metternich, playing his cynical "balance of power" game, refused the entreaties of his Prussian emissary.

Diplomatic negotiations were still unresolved when Napoleon abruptly moved thousands of his troops, unannounced, into the Brandenburg and Pomerania regions of Prussia, apparently pre-positioning them for his assault on Russia. Friedrich Wilhelm III feared that Napoleon might opt to expel him, in the same way he had expelled the Spanish royal family in 1807, at the beginning of his invasion of the Iberian peninsula.

In this atmosphere of terror and pressure, the Prussian delegate in Paris signed a new treaty with Napoleon on Feb. 24, 1812, which the Prussian King then ratified on March 5. The conditions of this agreement were totally humiliating. Napoleon secured his march routes into Russia, the Prussians were to pay costs of billeting the French troops, and the Prussians were to furnish a 20,000-man Army Corps—i.e., half of their total military strength—which was to join Napoleon's force in the invasion of Russia! The pact which Scharnhorst had negotiated with the Tsar was rendered null and void.

What a catastrophe for Scharnhorst and the Reformers! Gneisenau, Boyen, and Clausewitz, three of Scharnhorst's closest collaborators, all left the Prussian military service in disgust. Boyen and Clausewitz joined the Tsar's military, in order to continue the fight against Napoleon. Scharnhorst was forced to relinquish his leadership of the General Staff, but he refused to abandon the Prussian service. He departed from Berlin on March 24, two days before Napoleon's army marched through it. He spent the Spring and Summer writing

FIGURE 1

## Napoleon's Empire, About 1810



and looking anxiously to the East, waiting for news of the dramatic military and political events that were unfolding there.

Napoleon launched his invasion on June 22, the same date Hitler would choose 129 years later. He reached Moscow on Sept. 12, 1812, only to see it first deserted and then burned. It was not what he expected, but it was what the Prussian Reformers had planned. The 612,000-man invasion force that had begun the campaign in June had been substantially reduced in size by combat and attrition, but it was still a formidable force, and it was occupying Russia's capital. The Tsar showed signs of wavering, as he entertained the idea of accepting Napoleon's offer of a treaty agreement. It was the steadying influence and wisdom of none other than Freiherr vom Stein, whom Napoleon had personally exiled from Prussia, that convinced the Tsar not to capitulate. Lacking a treaty, lacking provisions, suffering from long, over-exposed supply lines, Napoleon observed the first snowfall of the season on Oct. 15. He abruptly decided to commence his retreat from Moscow on Oct. 19. But on his retreat, he had to contend not only with the armed forces of Russia, but with the deadly Arctic fury of "General Winter," just as the Prussian Reformers had foreseen.

As bad as the military blows that he was suffering on his

retreat were, Napoleon suffered an equally profound political blow on the fields of Taurrogon on Dec. 30, 1812. On that date, General von Yorck, the commander of the Prussian Army Corps that had accompanied Napoleon on his Russian fiasco, concluded a pact of neutrality with the Russian commander in his district. The way for this agreement had been paved by Scharnhorst, who encouraged the conservative Yorck to take that historic, bold step. The King had empowered Yorck to act on his behalf, but Yorck was not entirely sure that this was what His Majesty had in mind when he did so! The Russian commander's two chief adjutants, who conducted the negotiations with Yorck were none other than Karl von Clausewitz, Scharnhorst's pupil and fellow Reformer, and Graf Dohna, Scharnhorst's son-in-law and close friend! Scharnhorst's spirit and political design triggered and pervaded all aspects of the negotiations.

The news of Napoleon's catastrophic loss of over 550,000 men in Russia, and of General Yorck's historic initiative, electrified the population of Prussia. In late January 1813, Freiherr vom Stein arrived in Prussia, *as a representative of the Tsar*, to discuss a new treaty agreement with the King. The Austrian representative who was in Breslau, where many of the negotiations were taking place, described the situation as follows: "The spirits are in a state of ferment which is difficult to describe. General Scharnhorst exercises unlimited influence. The military and leaders of various groups have, under the mask of patriotism, fully seized the reins of political power."

It was in that climate that Prussian Chancellor Hardenberg signed a new treaty of alliance with Russia on Feb. 27. On March 17, Prussia announced that it was dissolving the treaty it had entered into with France in February 1812. And on March 27, Prussia formally declared war on France.

All of the laws and measures which Scharnhorst and his collaborators had been fighting for, with regard to universal military conscription, the establishment of a national militia (Landwehr), etc., were enacted promptly. This meant that Prussia was able to field an army of 280,000, including 120,000 militiamen, by the Autumn of 1813. All the years of work that they had spent in preparation for this moment were not in vain.

Scharnhorst recognized that there were still difficult days ahead, but he also knew that, given the political transformations that had already occurred, victory over Napoleon and his empire was, at long last, assured. He wrote as much in a letter to his daughter on April 28:

"We believe that we are still quite weak in comparison to the enemy. He has used all available means to convince us of his superior strength and we could therefore be mistaken in our estimation about this. Even should he still be superior, even should he still now win great victories over us, the overall contours of the war are such, that neither superiority nor victory can escape us in the course of this campaign. I am strongly convinced of this, and you well know, that I am

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The principal sources for the quotations from Scharnhorst and his contemporaries, unless otherwise noted, are Klaus Hornung, *Scharnhorst: Soldat-Reformer, Staatsmann, Die Biographie* (Esslingen: Bechtle Verlag, 1997), and Hansjürgen Usczek and Christa Gudzent, *Scharnhorst: Ausgewählte militärische Schriften* (Berlin: Militär Verlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1986).

more inclined to see things in pessimistic terms rather than optimistic ones. . . .

"... should I not live to see the end of this campaign, then I will die with the firm conviction, that this time freedom and independence for Prussia and Germany shall triumph. My last visit to headquarters has convinced me of this."

Unfortunately, Scharnhorst did not survive the campaign and live to see the full fruits of his labor. He was wounded in the Battle of Grossgörschen on May 2, and died of blood poisoning on June 28, 1813.

His letter to his daughter proved to be prescient. His forecast of victory was borne out at the all-important Battle of Leipzig that was fought on Oct. 13-16, 1813. This was the battle that drove Napoleon from the fields of Central Europe back into the borders of France, never to return. Scharnhorst, although not physically present, played a big role in the battle. His close collaborators Gneisenau, Grolman, Boyen, and Clausewitz acted as chiefs of staff in key positions in each of the four allied armies that were arrayed against Napoleon at Leipzig, and did a brilliant job of conducting and coordinating military operations in the allied coalition as a whole. Had they not worked together so well, based upon the General Staff training that they had received under Scharnhorst's tutelage, the outcome of the battle, and the overall campaign against Napoleon, could well have been different. But Scharnhorst had no doubt taken just such factors into account in his April 28 letter to his daughter.

### 'Napoleon's Most Active Enemy'

In a letter to his daughter in 1806, Scharnhorst had proudly referred to himself as "Napoleon's most active enemy." He characterized himself in a similar fashion on a number of occasions thereafter. His passion for defeating Napoleon was an expression of his passion for nation-building. He recognized that the Prussian people would never be able to defeat Napoleon without changing their self-conception, and their sense of their involvement in and relationship to the state. In that sense, the work he did to upgrade the Prussian military

was a subsumed feature of the necessary intellectual and political transformation of Prussian society.

The “traditionalists” in the U.S. military are confronted with a similar type of challenge today, as they battle Napoleon’s Chicken-hawk descendants that are grouped around Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. That is, they face a political fight whose outcome will be determined by axiomatic changes that either do or don’t occur in the American people’s way of thinking.

The German General Staff and military leadership made the mistake of ignoring the lessons of Scharnhorst’s statesmanship in 1933 and 1934, as they neglected to challenge the axioms of popular political thought and the political apparatus that brought Hitler to power. They confined their activities to the military sphere, narrowly defined, and the whole world paid a horrible price as a consequence.

To defeat the political and philosophical descendants of Napoleon today, the “traditionalists” in the U.S. military would be well-advised to rally around “Napoleon’s Most Active Enemy” today—Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. It is uniquely LaRouche who has both pinpointed the Napoleonic/fascist roots of the chicken-hawks, and who at the same time, has laid the intellectual groundwork for an axiomatic revolution in American political thought, by reviving the American intellectual tradition of Gottfried Leibniz, Benjamin Franklin, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Were but a handful of senior military figures to make a bold, Scharnhorst-like move and publicly embrace LaRouche’s candidacy now, the political effect would be comparable to the political shock-wave that was generated by General Yorck’s courageous political move at Taurrogin in 1812.

While the German military leadership performed miracles on the battlefields of World War II as they drew upon the *Auftragstaktik*/German General Staff tradition of Scharnhorst, it is likewise tragically true that they condemned tens of millions of people to suffer death needlessly in World War II, because they lacked the courage and the intellectual guts to act in the *political nation-building* tradition of Scharnhorst when, in 1933-34, they didn’t mobilize *politically* to crush Hitler while he was still vulnerable.

Let the patriotic “traditionalists” in the American military establishment not make the same mistake. Let them learn the lessons of Scharnhorst. Let them mobilize with LaRouche,

and restore the American intellectual tradition of Lincoln and FDR in practice, as they crush the Chicken-hawk/Napoleonic threat while those chicken-hawks are yet vulnerable.

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## Appendix

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### Schaumburg-Lippe on Strategic Defense

*Here is Part 1, Section 1 of Wilhelm Graf zu Schaumburg-Lippe’s Mémoires pour Server à l’Art Militaire Défensif (Memoirs To Serve the Art of Military Defense) (Buckebourg, 1775). The document was translated for EIR by Jean-Philippe Lebleu.*

The following reflections provided grounds for this work.

1. Objects which obviously (that is, that the help of ingenious reasoning is not required) tend to increase happiness or diminish the evils of humanity, are without doubt worthy of occupying our reflections; and our efforts to this end, be they like those of the fly trying to make the carriage leave by buzzing around its wheels, are, at least in this situation, well-meaning as to intention. Perhaps the intention to *do the good* in general does not extend beyond *wishing the good*.

2. Among the evils afflicting the human condition, those that men mutually inflict upon themselves occupy a considerable portion, and among these, war stands above all by its brightness and the scope of its calamities.

3. The real source of wars lies in the harmful passions of the human heart. It is useless to flatter oneself in this respect. There are in men’s hearts the inclination to do good, as well as passions or at least germs of passions that can only be satisfied at the expense of another’s happiness.<sup>A</sup>

4. Since the inclinations that drive men to offend others reside in the heart, all they require is the occasion and the

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A. The wisest and most moderate are compelled perpetually be on guard and frequently make an effort, whether to resist passions whose character belongs to a dangerous tendency, or to suppress the impulses from the first moment. And even if we could agree that all inclinations are innately innocent, the general tendency to pervert one’s passion so easily produces the same effect as if they were of the opposite. By taking into account that many animal species no doubt have many innate instincts to uselessly harm themselves, that makes the analogy quite probable that many of man’s harmful inclinations are (beyond our intelligence) caused by a natural maliciousness or tendency. Both horses and dogs often fight and quarrel among themselves for no apparent reason, other than their pugnacity; the wolf rips the throat of every ewe in the sheeps’ pen, even though it will scarcely devour one; the mink devours all the pigeons of the pigeon coop, etc., etc. Dogs even rip the throat of animals they won’t feed upon, out of mere irritability.

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means to develop (to be reduced to action), that is, to become offensive, which, between states or between nations, is called *launching war*.

5. When reason has overcome men's passions, the enlightenment of philosophy and morality will suffice to maintain concordance among them; and whatever the innate principles that agitate them, they will be so oriented as to make men use their faculties for mutual happiness and not to satisfy passions incompatible with the general felicity.

6. Until that is so, the best thing we could do is to put up against the offensive some means of resistance that reduces the former to inaction, i.e., to apply the art of war to prevent war, or at least to diminish its evil.

7. The more the means of resistance are purely reactive, the better it will be. Defensive wars today still partake too much in the offensive ones; they are, therefore, not only more deadly for nations, but the truly offensive ones have the opportunity to take cover behind the mask of defense. It is the imperfection of *the art of resisting* which is its cause.

8. If the art of resisting is brought to a certain degree of perfection, we ensure the peace of states, not by the calamities of the offensive, that is, by attacking the enemy on his own territory, in order to pre-empt his attack or to create a diversion, but by arranging things such that the *offensive enemy destroys, or consumes without effect, his own means to offend, like a snake destroying his teeth gnawing a file, or that he should withdraw and be still*.

9. The superiority in number and power naturally supplies the superiority of means to satisfy passions that provoke the offensive, and this superiority invites man to make use of it. The condition of the weakest is the defensive; and to make up for superiority, it is particularly vital that he draw from the resources of art. The defensive is the single cause that makes war scientific; it forces the offensive, by counterstrikes, to contemplate, to be circumspect, to study, and to consequently moderate in a certain way the development of the very passion that incites him to do harm, which then tempers its impetuosity.<sup>B</sup>

10. From what is demonstrated in paragraphs 2 and 4, the result is that, for the offensive party, making war means to serve harmful passions; and to devote oneself to the defensive party is to devote oneself to the welfare of humanity.

11. Those for whom war is not a simple profession, but who, conscious of military virtues, reflect on different degrees of the eminence and purity of those virtues, will also see that.

12. The defensive is the theater for exertion of those virtues that are the most exempt from being diluted by combination.

13. It does not appear, that war offers occasions in which it is imperative for the cause for which one is fighting, to attack (to act offensively) with absolute certainty that one will die; but occasions quite often arise, when it is of the utmost

importance that the defenders persist in defending the attacked post, even though their death is absolutely certain. Consequently, the offensive only requires the degree of courage necessary *to expose oneself to danger*, but the defensive fighter must have the courage to test *certain death*.

14. The offensive fighter determines as he pleases the time and extent of attack; thus, he risks what he pleases, when he pleases. The defensive fighter must always be ready and prepared without break or rest to face the risks of the defense. Then the offensive only needs that there be but a few moments of exertion, meaning brief moments of ephemeral courage born of fleeting passions; the defensive requires a sustained character of fearlessness that never allows a moment of weakness. But from this comes the advantage for the offensive combatant to obtain more easily the acclamations of the greatest majority. An offensive action is an event, a period; this animated moment when the attacker seems to seek and confront danger becomes acknowledged. No one is impressed by the steadfast behavior of the defensive soldier who, resolved to fulfill his duty, really sought and challenged the *ongoing* danger and often renounced even the possibility to escape it. The brightness of repute and fame usually called glory, are needles that act naturally more efficiently on the offensive soldier. Since the defensive soldier who fulfills his vocation cannot expect an equitable reward in this respect, he is less excited by such motives; it is the *conviction* of his duty, of the desire to *do good* rather than to *look good*, which drives him.

15. To endure constant woe and suffering is a virtue that the defensive condition offers more occasion to practice.

16. The attacker's operations are of such nature that the timid one finds, by agitation and affection of the soul, a physical or animal relief to overcome fear or to numb himself with it. The more stable situation of the defensive soldier demands that he surmount fear by control of the soul, and for those who run the defensive, the soul's peace is again particularly necessary; surrounded constantly by dangers, the defensive nevertheless requires that the leaders have their eye on everything and expect anything.

17. The occasions to enrich oneself from the remains of others by looting them triggers tendencies to excite the acts and false courage of the offensive, and the spirit of pillage that tarnishes human worth and talents by unjust, sordid and inhuman sentiments. The defensive properly stated, does not present temptations of such a nature.

18. The purpose of the tactic of *carrés à feux de profondeur* [long-range fire in all directions] and the project for *contrées fortifiées* [fortified townships], which makes up the second part of these *Mémoires*, is to reinforce the art of resistance, and even though the *carrés à feux de profondeur* is suited in general to bring the fighting to a higher efficiency, and thus appears to be useful for the offensive, one should take note that this increase in efficiency is not proportional to the number, that it consequently favors the weakest, and that the condition of the weakest is naturally the defensive.

B. War is conducted with more ferocity in proportion to the population's lack of wisdom. This is a truth confirmed by the experience of all nations.