

## CHAPTER 3. Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War

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THE period from 1740 to 1815, opening with the accession of Frederick the Great as king of Prussia, and closing with the dethronement of Napoleon as emperor of the French, saw both the perfection of the older style of warfare and the launching of a newer style which in many ways we still follow. The contrast between the two styles is the main subject of this chapter. Much of the old, however, was continued in the new. The underlying ideas sketched in the two preceding chapters were not outdated and they remain today essential to the theory of war. Machiavelli had made the study of war a social science. He had dissociated it from considerations of ethical purpose and closely related it to constitutional, economic, and political speculation. He had tried, in military matters, to enlarge the field of human planning and to reduce the field of chance. Vauban had opened up to military men the resources of natural science and technology. The government of Louis XIV, while enlarging armies beyond precedent, had advanced the principles of orderly administration and control. It had put a new emphasis on discipline, created a more complex hierarchy of tactical units, clarified the chains of command, turned army leaders into public officials, and made armed force into a servant of government. All these developments were accelerated and elaborated in the period of change with which this chapter deals.

The significant innovations concerned the constitution and the utilization of armies, i.e. man power and strategy. Citizen armies replaced professional armies. Aggressive, mobile, combative strategy replaced the slow strategy of siegecraft. Both had been anticipated by Machiavelli, but neither had been realized on a large scale since 1500. Together, after 1792, they revolutionized warfare, replacing the "limited" war of the Old Régime with the "unlimited" war of subsequent times. This transition came with the shift from the dynastic to the national form of state, and was a consequence of the French Revolution. War before the French Revolution was essentially a clash between rulers. Since that event it has become increasingly a clash between peoples, and hence has become increasingly "total."<sup>1</sup>

The dynastic form of state set definite limits to what was possible in the constitution of armies. The king, however absolute in theory, was in fact in a disadvantageous position. Every dynastic state stood by a precarious balance between the ruling house and the aristocracy. The privileges of the nobility limited the freedom of government action. These privileges included the right not to pay certain taxes and the right almost to monopolize the commissioned grades in the army. Governments, with their taxing power restricted, could not

<sup>1</sup> For the contemporary literature of the subject see M. Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften vornehmlich in Deutschland* (3 vols.; Munich, 1891), Vol. III.

draw on the full material resources of their countries. Nor could they draw on their full human resources. Officers must come from a hereditary class which rarely exceeded two per cent of the population. Between populations as a whole and their governments little feeling existed. The tie between sovereign and subject was bureaucratic, administrative and fiscal, an external mechanical connection of ruler and ruled, strongly in contrast to the principle brought in by the Revolution, which, in its doctrine of responsible citizenship and sovereignty of the people, effected an almost religious fusion of the government with the governed. A good government of the Old Régime was one that demanded little of its subjects, which regarded them as useful, worthy, and productive assets to the state, and which in wartime interfered as little as possible with civilian life. A "good people" was one which obeyed the laws, paid its taxes, and was loyal to the reigning house; it need have no sense of its own identity as a people, or unity as a nation, or responsibility for public affairs, or obligation to put forth a supreme effort in war.

The army reflected the state. It was divided internally into classes without common spirit, into officers whose incentive was honor, class-consciousness, glory or ambition, and soldiers enlisted for long terms who fought as a business for a living, who were thought incapable of higher sentiments, and whose strongest attachment was usually a kind of naive pride in their regiments. The armies of Russia, Austria and Prussia were composed largely of serfs. Prussia and England used large numbers of foreigners. The Austrian forces were linguistically heterogeneous. In all countries the tendency was to recruit men who were economically the most useless, which is to say the most degraded elements in the population. Civilians everywhere kept soldiers at a distance. Even in France, which already had the most national of the large armies of Europe, cafes and other public places put up signs reading, "No dogs, lackeys, prostitutes or soldiers."<sup>2</sup>

To make armies of such motley hosts, of soldiers who were almost social outcasts and of officers who were often only youthful aristocrats, some kind of common purpose had to be created. For this end the troops had few moral or psychological resources in themselves. Governments believed, with good reason in the circumstances, that order could be imposed only from outside and from above. The horrors of an ungoverned soldiery were remembered, especially in Germany after the Thirty Years War. The enlightened monarchies of the eighteenth century tried to spare their civilian populations, both for humane reasons and as sources of revenue. To promote civil order, and to build morale among troops who could not be appealed to on a level of ideas, governments increasingly took good physical care of their men, quartered them in barracks, provided them with doctors and hospitals, fed them liberally, and established great fixed permanent magazines for their supply. It was feared that soldiers would desert if left to forage in small parties, or if not furnished with a tolerable standard of living, since to make a living, not to fight or die for a cause, was the chief aim of the professional soldier. And in truth, in the

<sup>2</sup> M. Weygand, *Histoire de l'armée française* (Paris, 1938), p. 173.

eighteenth century, both officers and men passed from one army to another, in war or in peace, with a facility inconceivable after the French Revolution.

Along with good care went a strict attention to discipline and training, also handed down from above. Only iron rule could make into a unified force men who had no cohesion in themselves. Rulers and aristocrats scarcely expected to find moral qualities in the lower classes who made up the soldiery—neither courage, nor loyalty, nor group spirit, nor sacrifice, nor self-reliance. Nor were these qualities in fact developed in the troops of the time, who, like the peoples in general of the dynastic states, felt little sense of participation in the issues of war. Soldiers could not be trusted as individuals, or in detached parties, or out of sight of their officers. Technical considerations also discouraged individuality. The poor state of communications and low quality of scouting (due in turn to the ignorance and unreliability of individual soldiers) made it more than ordinarily hazardous to divide an army in the field. The inaccuracy and short range of muskets made individual firing relatively harmless. As a result the ideal of military training was to shape a spiritless raw material into machinelike battalions. When engaged with the enemy each battalion stood close to the next in a solid line, the men being almost elbow to elbow, usually three ranks deep, and each battalion constituting a kind of firing machine, delivering a volley at the word of command. To achieve tactical alertness, long and intensive training was necessary. Two years were considered scarcely sufficient to turn a ragamuffin into a good professional soldier.

The constitution of armies strongly affected their utilization. For the governments of the Old Régime, with their limited resources, the professional armies were expensive. Each soldier represented a heavy investment in time and money. Trained troops lost in action could not easily be replaced. The great magazines of munitions and foodstuffs, which, in the poor state of transportation, had to be kept near the expected scenes of action, needed protection. In addition, in the latter part of the seventeenth century scientific progress improved the art of fortification, and a great revulsion spread through France and Germany against the chaotic and roving warfare of the so-called wars of religion, by which productive civilian life had been much impaired. The net result was to concentrate armies in chains of heavily fortified positions. Armies, and fragments of armies, were immobilized near their bases, from which they were not supposed to depart by more than five days' march. Even with magazines close behind them, they carried long baggage trains, so that a day's march was very short. Nor could the baggage trains be easily reduced: in most armies the aristocratic officers traveled in style, and the troops, fighting without political passion, would lose morale if their food supply became uncertain or if operations became distastefully strenuous.

A large-scale pitched battle between complete armies was in these circumstances a rare occurrence. It was not easy for a commander to establish contact with an unwilling enemy. Even with two armies face to face, to draw up a battle line took time, and if one side chose to depart while the other formed, no complete engagement would ensue. Battle was a tremendous risk. A margin of

advantage gained on the battlefield could not easily be widened, because the technique of destructive pursuit was undeveloped. Military thinkers held that a state might suffer almost as much by victory as by defeat. Quick and decisive political results were in any case not expected from battle. Here the contrast between eighteenth-century and Napoleonic battles is especially clear. After Blenheim, Malplaquet, Fontenoy or Rossbach, the war dragged on for years. After Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Wagram or Leipzig, peace overtures began in a few months.

To sum up, many factors combined before the French Revolution to produce a limited warfare, fought with limited means for limited objectives. Wars were long, but not intense; battles were destructive (for the battalion volleys were deadly), but for that reason not eagerly sought. Operations turned by preference against fortresses, magazines, supply lines and key positions, producing a learned warfare in which ingenuity in maneuver was more prized than impetuosity in combat. War of position prevailed over war of movement, and a strategy of small successive advantages over a strategy of annihilation.

All this was changed in the upheaval which shook Europe after 1789. The "world war" of 1792-1815 was, except in the earliest years, and except for the struggle between France and Great Britain, a series of short wars each of which was promptly decided on the battlefield and concluded by the imposition of peace. Authorities agree that these wars marked a major turning point, closing a period which had begun about 1500, and opening a period from which we have not yet clearly emerged. Most writers attribute the change to the French Revolution, with the consequent nationalizing of public opinion and closer relations between governments and governed. This interpretation was established half a century ago by Jähns and Delbrück. There has been some evidence of a "revisionist" tendency, as in the writings of General Colin, who looked for a more material or at least technical explanation, and found it in the great improvements in the latter half of the eighteenth century in artillery, army organization, road building, and cartography. The burden of informed opinion, while recognizing the importance of technical progress, still considers the effects of the political revolution to have been more profound. As Delbrück said, the new *politisches Weltbild* of the French Revolution produced "a new constitution of the army, which first brought forth a new tactics, and from which a new strategy would then grow."<sup>3</sup>

The transition is evident in the works of the three writers treated below. Each of the three represents a significant stage in the history of military thinking. Frederick the Great embodied the utmost in military achievement that was possible in Europe in the conditions prevailing before the French Revolution. Guibert was a conscious disciple of Frederick, but he forecast more clearly than Frederick some of the transformations that were to come. Bülow, a contemporary of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, gradually perceived many of the lessons that they offered. Of the three, only Frederick was an

<sup>3</sup> H. Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst* (7 vols.; Berlin, 1900-1936), IV, 363, 426; J. Colin, *Education militaire de Napoléon* (Paris, 1900).

experienced practical commander. His writings describe the actual warfare of the day. Guibert and Bülow, though army officers by training, commanded no armies; they were notable as critics, prophets and reformers. Frederick reveals a mind completely master of its subject. Guibert and Bülow, writing less from experience, aiming to go beyond existing conditions, were much less steady in their grasp. With their fluctuating and partial insights they may be taken to illustrate the difficulty, familiar in all ages, with which military theory adjusts itself to shifting realities in the world of fact.

## II

Frederick the Great, invading Silesia without warning in 1740, gave Europe a taste of what later was to be called blitzkrieg. In three Silesian wars he managed to retain the coveted province, whose acquisition almost doubled the size of his small kingdom, and he proved himself, fighting at times against incredible odds, to be incomparably superior as a general to any of his opponents. His Prussia, in addition, possessed to the point of exaggeration the main features of the dynastic state. Of the chief states of Europe Prussia was the most mechanically put together, the most ruled from above, the least animated by the spirit in its people, and the poorest in both material and human resources. Frederick was also a voluminous and gifted writer. In the writings of such a king of such a kingdom, the generalities outlined in the section above take on definite and concrete form.

Frederick's first military work of importance was his *Principes généraux de la guerre*, written in 1746, and embodying the experience of the first two Silesian wars. It was circulated confidentially among his generals. The capture of one of these generals by the French in 1760 led to its publication. The king further developed his ideas in a *Testament politique* composed in 1752 for the private use of his successors to the throne. To this testament the *Principes généraux* was attached as an appendix. In 1768, when his wars were over and his ideas somewhat modified, he drew up a *Testament militaire* for his successors. To his generals in 1771 he issued his *Eléments de castramétie et de tactique*. Continuously throughout his reign he composed special instructions for various branches of the army, which were brought together and published with his other writings in 1846. Among works which he made public are a didactic poem, *L'art de la guerre*, a number of political essays that touch on military questions, and the various histories and memoirs of his reign, together with their prefaces. In these writings contemporaries tried to discover the secrets of his generalship. His works were all written in French, except for the technical instructions which he wrote in German. His literary career reached over more than forty years. In general he adhered to the same ideas in army organization and tactics, but in the strategy and politics of war he moved from the sharp aggressiveness of 1740 to a philosophy of relative inactiveness.

The organization of the army was an old concern of the rulers of Prussia. In 1640, exactly a century before Frederick's accession, his great-grandfather, the Great Elector, came to the throne in the full fury of the Thirty Years War.

There was then no kingdom of Prussia, only parcels of territories along the flat north German plain, swarmed over and ravaged by the brutal mercenaries of every contending power. The Great Elector founded an army. To support this army he virtually founded a new polity and a new economy. With his reign began the distinctive features of Prussia. First, Prussia owed its existence and its very identity to its army. Second, military science, politics, and economics merged inseparably into a general science of statecraft. Third, Prussia, made by the Hohenzollern dynasty, was a triumph of careful planning. By the time of Frederick's father, Frederick William I, the king of Prussia was commonly considered one of the hardest working men in Europe. He directed the state in person, all threads came together in his hand, and the only center of unity was his own mind. Order, in Prussia, had not come from free discussion and collaboration. As Frederick the Great once observed, if Newton had had to consult with Descartes and Leibnitz, he would never have created his philosophical system.

A king of Prussia, in Frederick's view, must, to have an army, hold a firm balance between classes in the state, and between economic production and military power. He must preserve the nobility by prohibiting the sale of noble lands to peasants or townsmen. Peasants were clearly too ignorant to become officers;<sup>4</sup> to have bourgeois officers would be "the first step toward the decline and fall of the army."<sup>5</sup> Rigid class structure—with noble persons and inalienably "noble" land—was necessary to the army and to the state. A brave colonel, says Frederick, makes a brave battalion; and a colonel's decision in a moment of crisis may sway the destiny of the kingdom. But the king must make sure (so new, disjointed and artificial was the state) that these aristocrats have the desired spirit. In his first political testament Frederick confides to his successors that, during the first Silesian wars, he had made a special effort to impress upon his officers the idea of fighting for the kingdom of Prussia.<sup>6</sup>

For common soldiers Frederick often expressed a rough respect, as for men who risked their lives in his service, but his real interest in them was almost entirely on disciplinary and material questions. The peasant families (i.e. serfs, east of the Elbe) must be protected; their lands must not be absorbed by bourgeois or nobles; only those not indispensable in agriculture, such as younger sons, should be recruited. By and large, the peasants and townsmen are most useful as producers. "Useful hardworking people should be guarded as the apple of one's eye, and in wartime recruits should be levied in one's own country only when the bitterest necessity compels."<sup>7</sup> Half the army or more might be filled with non-Prussian professionals, with prisoners of war or with deserters from foreign armies. Frederick praises the Prussian canton system, by which, to equalize the burden of recruiting, specific districts were assigned to

<sup>4</sup> *Politisches Testament von 1752*, in *Werke Friedrichs des Grossen* (10 vols.; Berlin, 1912-1914), VII, 164.

<sup>5</sup> *Exposé du gouvernement prussien, des principes sur lequel il roule* (1775) in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand* (30 vols.; Berlin, 1846-1856), IX, 186.

<sup>6</sup> *Pol. Test. 1752*, in *Werke*, VII, 146; *Oeuvres*, XXIX, 58.

<sup>7</sup> *Militärisches Testament von 1768*, in *Werke*, VI, 226-227.

specific regiments as sources of man power. By this system (and by the use of foreigners), he observed with satisfaction in 1768 that only 5000 natives of Prussia needed to be conscripted each year. Yet he was aware of the value of patriotic citizen forces, which he thought that the cantons produced by putting neighbors beside each other in war. Our troops, he wrote in 1746, recruited from "citizens," fight with honor and courage. "With such troops one would defeat the whole world, were victories not as fatal to them as to their enemies." Later on Frederick, like other *philosophes*, placed even higher theoretical value on patriotism. But he never did anything about it, nor could he, without revolutionizing his kingdom. In practice he assumed that common soldiers were without honor, and he died in the belief that to use foreigners to do one's fighting was only sensible statecraft.<sup>8</sup>

Frederick's soldiers felt no great inward attachment to him. Desertion was the nightmare of all eighteenth-century commanders, especially in disorganized Germany, where men of the same language could be found on both sides in every war. In 1744 Frederick had to stop his advance in Bohemia because his army began to melt away. He drew up elaborate rules to prevent desertion: the troops should not camp near large woods, their rear and flanks should be watched by hussars, they should avoid night marches except when rigorously necessary, they should be led in ranks by an officer when going to forage or to bathe.<sup>9</sup>

Working with untrustworthy material Frederick insisted on exact discipline, to which the Prussian armies had been habituated by his father. "The slightest loosening of discipline," he said, "would lead to barbarization."<sup>10</sup> Here again the army reflected the state. The aim of discipline was partly paternalistic, to make the soldier a rational being by authority, through preventing such offenses as drunkenness and theft. But the principal aim was to turn the army into an instrument of a single mind and will. Officers and men must understand that every act "is the work of a single man." Or again: "No one reasons, everyone executes"; i.e. the thinking is done centrally, in the mind of the king. All that can be done with soldiers, he said, is to give them *Korpsgeist*, to fuse their personalities into their regiments. As he grew older and more cynical, he observed that good will affected common men much less than intimidation. Officers must lead men into danger; "therefore (since honor has no effect on them) they must fear their officers more than any danger." But he added that humanity demanded good medical care.<sup>11</sup>

Made amenable by discipline the troops were to be put through careful training. Prussia was famous for its drillfields, where, to the admiration of foreign observers, battalions and squadrons performed intricate evolutions with

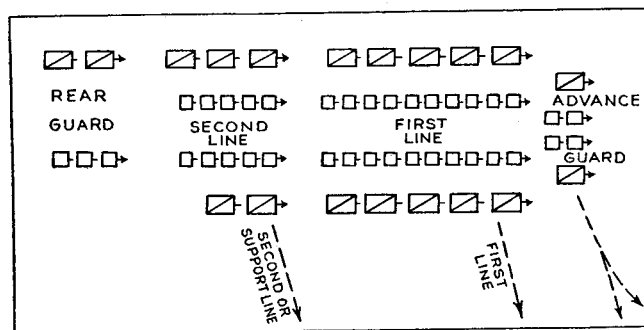
<sup>8</sup> *Principes généraux de la guerre* (1746) in *Oeuvres*, XXVIII, 7; *Lettres sur l'amour de la patrie* (1779), *ibid.*, IX, 211-244.

<sup>9</sup> *Prin. gén.*, *ibid.*, XXVIII, 5-6; *Ordres für die sämtlichen Generale von der Infanterie und Cavalerie, wie auch Hussaren, desgleichen für die Stabsofficiere und Commandeurs der Bataillons* (1744), *ibid.*, XXX, 119-123; *Règles de ce qu'on exige d'un bon commandeur de bataillon en temps de guerre* (1773), *ibid.*, XXIX, 57-65.

<sup>10</sup> *Pol. Test.* 1752, in *Werke*, VII, 172.

<sup>11</sup> *Mil. Test.* 1768, *ibid.*, VI, 233, 237; *Oeuvres*, XXVIII, 5.

high precision. The aim was to achieve tactical mobility, skill in shifting from marching order to battle order, steadiness under fire, complete responsiveness to command. An army so trained, Frederick repeatedly said, allowed full scope to the art of generalship. The commander could form his conceptions in the knowledge that they would be realized. With all else shaped to his hand, his presiding intelligence would be free. Frederick therefore never tired of urging his generals to ceaseless vigilance over drill, in war and in peace. "Unless every man is trained beforehand in peacetime for that which he will have to accomplish in war, one has nothing but people who bear the name of a business without knowing how to practise it."<sup>12</sup>



Frederick the Great's Order of March. By Turning His Column to the Right, He Could Execute "Left Wheel" by Platoons and Be in Battle Formation

Battle, with troops so spiritually mechanized, was a methodical affair. Opposing armies were arrayed according to pattern, almost as regularly as chessmen at the beginning of a game: on each wing cavalry, artillery fairly evenly distributed along the rear, infantry battalions drawn up in two parallel solid lines, one a few hundred yards behind the other, and each line, or at least the first, composed of three ranks, each rank firing at a single command while the other two reloaded. Frederick never departed from the essentials of this battle formation, though like all good generals he allowed himself liberty in adapting it to specific purposes. Battle order tended to determine marching order: troops should march, according to Frederick, in columns so arranged that by a quick turn the columns presented themselves as firing lines with cavalry on the flanks. Battle order was also the end object of severe discipline. It was not easy to hold men in the lines, standing in plain sight, elbow to elbow, against an enemy only a few hundred yards away. But orders were strict. "If a soldier during an action looks about as if to flee, or so much as sets foot outside the line, the non-commissioned officer standing behind him will run him through with his bayonet and kill him on the spot."<sup>13</sup> If the enemy fled, the victorious

<sup>12</sup> *Pol. Test.* 1752, in *Werke*, VII, 173-175; *Prim. gén.* in *Oeuvres*, XXVIII, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Disposition, wie es bei vorgehender Bataille bei seiner königlichen Majestät in Preussen Armée unveränderlich soll gehalten werden* (1745), in *Oeuvres*, XXX, 146.



line must remain in position. Plundering the dead or wounded was forbidden on pain of death.

Frederick set a great value on cavalry, which constituted about a fourth of his army, but he used it in general only for shock action in solid tactical units. His scouting service was therefore poor; in 1744, with 20,000 cavalry, he could not locate the Austrians. Nor was he successful in the use of light infantry for skirmishing and patrolling. The Austrians had many light troops, mounted and foot, in their Croats and Pandours; the French were to make use of light infantry in the untrained levies of the Revolution. Frederick hardly knew what to do with such troops, which, dispersed and individualistic, could not be extensions of his own mind.<sup>14</sup>

The middle years of the eighteenth century saw a more rapid increase in the use of artillery, in proportion to other arms, than any other period from the sixteenth century to the twentieth.<sup>15</sup> The Austrians, after their humiliating loss of Silesia, turned especially to artillery to meet the menace of Frederick's mobile columns. The French were the most progressive artillerists of Europe. Frederick often bemoaned this development, for Prussia of all major states could least afford an artillery race. The new vogue for artillery, observed the king in 1768, was a veritable abyss to the state's finances. Yet he joined the scramble; it was Frederick, with his appreciation of speedy movement, who introduced horse-drawn field artillery for shift of position during battle. He continued to insist that artillery was not an "arm" but only an "auxiliary," inferior to infantry and cavalry, but he gave increasing thought to its use, and one of his last writings, an *Instruction* of 1782, seems to show the influence of the French artillery theorists from whom Bonaparte was to learn. Frederick

<sup>14</sup> Delbrück, *op. cit.*, IV, 327-328.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. column II of the following table, which, compiled from data in G. Bodart, *Militär-historisches Kriegswörterbuch* (Vienna, 1908), pp. 612, 784-785, 816-817, shows the mounting intensity of war since 1600.

	I	II	III	IV
Thirty Years War	19,000	1.5	1	.24
Wars of Louis XIV	40,000	1.75	7	
Spanish Succession				.77
Wars of Frederick II	47,000	3.33	12	.82
Austrian Succession				1.40
Seven Years War				
Wars of French Revolution	45,000	—	12	3.0
First Coalition				4.4
Second Coalition				7.0
Wars of Napoleon	84,000	3.5	37	11.0
Third Coalition				5.2
War of 1809				1.0
War of 1812				9.0
American Civil War	54,000	3.0	18	1.0
War of 1870	70,000	3.3	12	9.0
Russo-Japanese War	110,000	3.75	3	1.0

Explanation of columns:

- I. Average size of an army in battle, computed where possible from thirty battles in each war.
- II. Number of cannon per 1000 combatants.
- III. Number of battles in which the opposing armies together numbered over 100,000.
- IV. Average number of battles per month.

here orders his artillery officers to avoid firing simply to satisfy the infantry or cavalry, to educate themselves in the discriminate use of ball and canister, and to concentrate their opening fire on the enemy's infantry in order to smash a hole in the enemy line and help their own infantry to break through.<sup>16</sup>

The use of the long unbroken battle array, since a frontal clash of two such solid lines would be butchery, caused Frederick to prize the flank attack, for which he designed his famous "oblique order," the advance of one wing by echelons with refusal of the other. Omitting tactical details, it may simply be said that Frederick's purpose in favoring this type of battle was, in case of success, to gain a quick victory by rolling up the enemy's line, and, in case of failure, to minimize losses, since the refused wing maneuvered to cover the withdrawal of the wing engaged. Frederick's superior mobility and coordination gave a special effectiveness to these flanking movements, which in themselves were of course among the oldest expedients of war.<sup>17</sup>

On these matters of army organization and tactics Frederick never seriously altered his opinions. He changed his mind on the larger issues of strategy. At first he seemed to introduce a new spirit, but in the end he accepted the limitations imposed by the political order, on questions of under what circumstances wars should be fought, and where and when battle should be joined.

His lightning attack on Silesia startled Europe. This first Silesian war (1740-1742) was a desperate gamble, played for what to a king of Prussia were very high stakes. In the second Silesian war (1744-1745, forming like the first a part of the War of the Austrian Succession) he aspired for a while even to the total destruction of the Hapsburg monarchy. The project failed, but Frederick retained Silesia. Thereafter his war policy became less ambitious. In the Seven Years War (1756-1763), after the battles of Rossbach and Leuthen, which probably saved Prussia from extinction, he was reduced to maintaining a brilliant defensive against the combined powers of France, Austria, and Russia, each of which had a population at least four times his own. Frederick's last war, that of the Bavarian Succession (1778-1779), dragged itself out in bloodless military demonstrations and promenades.

In the *Principes généraux de la guerre*, we find him calling for a strategy of blitzkrieg, though he did not use that term. The wars of Prussia, he says, should be "short and lively"; Prussian generals should seek a speedy decision.<sup>18</sup> These were in fact the principles on which he at first acted. It is notable, however, that the reasons given for these dashing operations were much the same as those which in later years made him increasingly cautious. A long war, he said, would exhaust the resources of Prussia and break down the "admirable discipline" of the Prussian troops. From preferring a short quick war it was no great distance to preferring either no war at all, or a longer war of low intensity in expenditure of men and material. In any case the governing condi-

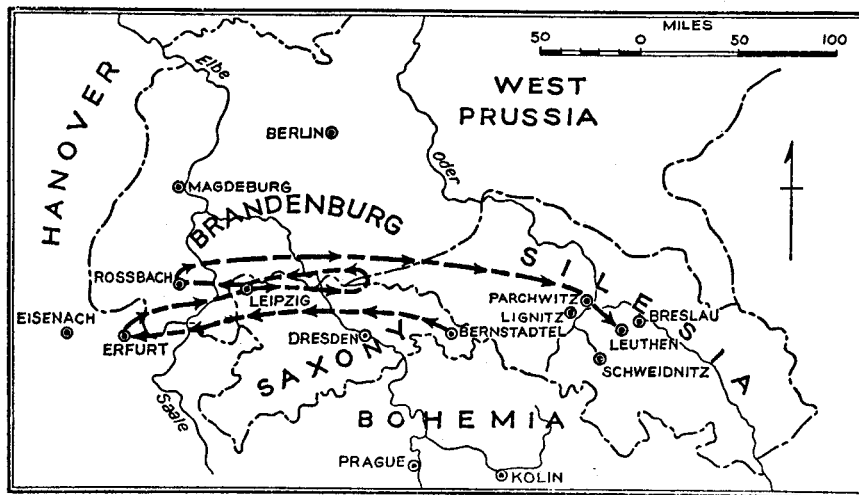
<sup>16</sup> *Mil. Test.* 1768, in *Werke*, VI, 228 ff.; *Mémoires depuis la paix de Hubertsbourg*, in *Oeuvres*, VI, 97; *Eléments de castramétie et de tactique* (1771), *ibid.*, XXIX, 42; *ibid.*, XXX, 139-141, 391-396.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIX, 25; Delbrück, *op. cit.*, IV, 314-322.

<sup>18</sup> *Prin. gén.* (1746), in *Oeuvres*, XXVIII, 84.

tions were the same: the limited resources of the state, the dependence of armies on fixed magazines prepared beforehand, and the use of soldiers who, however well drilled, had no inward conviction to sustain them in times of trouble.

None of these conditions could Frederick overcome. He could not make Prussia a wealthy state; he could only economize its resources. He could not, like the governments of the French Revolution, let his armies live on occupied countries, although he recommended this procedure. His armies would melt away if dispersed to seek subsistence, and lose morale if they were not regularly supplied. Nor could he count on any welcome in occupied territories. His efforts to build a "fifth column" in Bohemia repeatedly failed. And he could not com-



Frederick's Marches and Countermarches, Autumn Campaign, 1757

municate moral enthusiasm to his troops without changing his whole system and view of life.

In addition, when the Austrians strengthened their artillery and their fortifications after the loss of Silesia, they added technical hindrances to the development of aggressive strategy by Frederick. The old king, in his last years, repeatedly observed that conditions had changed since his youth—that henceforth Prussia could fight only a war of position. He himself, with his great permanent magazines and vulnerable frontiers, set a high value on fixed fortifications. Forts, he observed, were "mighty nails which hold a ruler's provinces together." To besiege and overwhelm such fortresses became a main object of warfare. The conduct of sieges had been a science since Vauban. Frederick carried on in this tradition. Even his concept of battle was colored by it. "We should draw our dispositions for battle from the rules of besieging positions." The two lines of infantry in battle order, he said in 1770, corresponded to the parallels formed by a besieging force. Even in occupying villages these prin-

ciples should not be lost from mind. Nothing could be further from the direction in which military practice was to move. Napoleon was to conduct only two sieges in his whole career.<sup>19</sup>

Again unlike Napoleon, Frederick, though a successful battle general, was not fond of full-size battles, i.e. showdown clashes between the main forces of the belligerents. To his mind the outcome of battle depended too much upon chance and chance was the opposite of rational calculation. The supreme planning intelligence, the power of command to elicit obedience, which to Frederick were the first premises of scientific war, could not be relied on in the heat of a major engagement. "It is to be remarked in addition that most generals in love with battle resort to this expedient for want of other resources. Far from being considered a merit in them, this is usually thought a sign of the sterility of their talents."<sup>20</sup>

To annihilate the enemy's main combat force was thus not Frederick's usual strategic objective. He indeed realized that, if battle is fought, the winner should attempt a destructive pursuit of the enemy. But destructive pursuit was not easy to a Frederician army: the cavalry, trained for shock action in solid units, inclined to desert if scattered, fired neither by the half-barbaric ferocity of Croatian irregulars, nor by the political passion of more modern troops, was not suited to pursue a fugitive and broken army. Nothing like Napoleon's cavalry action after the battle of Jena would have been possible to Frederick. In effect for Frederick the purpose of battle was to force an enemy to move. "To win a battle means to compel your opponent to yield you his position."<sup>21</sup>

So Frederician war became increasingly a war of position, the war of complex maneuver and subtle accumulation of small gains; leisurely and slow in its main outlines (though never in tactics), and quite different from the short sharp warfare recommended in 1746. "To gain many small successes," he wrote in 1768, "means gradually to heap up a treasure." "All maneuvers in war," he added in 1770, "turn upon the positions which a general may occupy with advantage, and positions which he may attack with the least loss." He concluded also, from unfortunate experiences in Bohemia, that an army could not successfully operate far beyond its own frontiers. "I observe," he wrote in 1775, "that all wars carried far from the frontiers of those who undertake them have less success than those fought within reach of one's own country. Would this not be because of a natural sentiment in man, who feels it to be more just to defend himself than to despoil his neighbor? But perhaps the physical reason outweighs the moral, because of the difficulty in providing food supplies at points distant from the frontier, and in furnishing quickly enough the new recruits, new horses, clothing and munitions of war." Bonaparte, who could win battles in places as far from France as Austerlitz and Friedland, would

<sup>19</sup> *Mil. Test.* 1768, in *Werke*, VI, 247, 257; *Pol. Test.* 1752, *ibid.*, VII, 176; *Eléments de castramétrie et de tactique* (1771) in *Oeuvres*, XXIX, 4, 21, 38.

<sup>20</sup> *Reflexions sur Charles XII* (1759), in *Oeuvres*, VII, 81; *Essai sur les formes du gouvernement* (1777), *ibid.*, IX, 203.

<sup>21</sup> *Mil. Test.* 1768, in *Werke*, VI, 246-249; *Pol. Test.* 1752, *ibid.*, VII, 174.

have smiled at such maxims of caution, though Borodino came to remind him of their force. For Frederick the rule held good.<sup>22</sup>

But although Frederick's strategic thinking remained within the old limits of the war of position, and although he remained disinclined to serious battle (it was his advisers who pressed for action in the year of Rossbach and Leuthen), he never favored passivity in operations. He continued to insist on the importance of surprise. He was prepared, in the years of peace after the Seven Years War, to spring at a moment's notice into Saxony or Bohemia, equipped with detailed maps and exact information, and with new ten-pound howitzers and new kinds of cavalry charges kept as a state secret. He favored offensive strategy in the field, as permitting more freedom of initiative; but would willingly fight on the defensive, as he often had to, when less strong than his enemy or when expecting to gain an advantage by time. It must however be an active and challenging defensive, which, while based on fixed fortifications, freely assaulted enemy positions and detachments. A commander, he said, "deceives himself who thinks he is conducting well a defensive war when he takes no initiative, and remains inactive during the whole campaign. Such a defensive would end with the whole army being driven from the country that the general meant to protect."<sup>23</sup>

Of the gains to be expected from war, under conditions then existing, he became increasingly dubious. Having made his debut by achieving the most successful revolution in the balance of power effected on the continent of Europe in his lifetime, he became with the acquisition of Silesia a man of peace, and ended by believing firmly in the value of the European balance now that Prussia was one of its main components. For Prussia he envisaged eventual expansion in Poland, Saxony and Swedish Pomerania; but (except for the first partition of Poland, which was accomplished without war and without disturbance to the balance of power, to the great satisfaction of diplomats) he was willing to leave this eventual expansion to his successors. He was a dynast, not a revolutionary or an adventurer; he could leave something to be done by others than himself. In 1775 he stood for the military status quo. "The ambitious," he wrote, "should consider above all that armaments and military discipline being much the same throughout Europe, and alliances as a rule producing an equality of force between belligerent parties, all that princes can expect from the greatest advantages at present is to acquire, by accumulation of successes, either some small city on the frontier, or some territory which will not pay interest on the expenses of the war, and whose population does not even approach the number of citizens who perished in the campaigns." Nor did he fear being crushed by his huge neighbors. "I perceive that small states [meaning Prussia, with its 5,000,000 inhabitants] can maintain themselves against the greatest monarchies [meaning France, Austria and Russia with their some 20,000,000 each], when these states put industry and a great deal

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 248; *Oeuvres*, XXIX, 3; *Histoire de mon temps*, preface of 1775, *ibid.* II, p. xxviii.

<sup>23</sup> *Mül. Test.* 1768, in *Werke*, VI, 253, 260-261; Jähns, *op. cit.*, III, 2027.

of order into their affairs. I find that the great empires are full of abuses and confusion; that they maintain themselves only by their vast resources and by the intrinsic force of their mass. The intrigues of these courts would ruin less powerful princes; they are always harmful, but do not prevent the keeping of numerous armies on foot." He seems never to have considered what would happen to the "equilibrium of Europe," should the greatest of the monarchies throw off its abuses and confusion, break down the limits set by the dynastic-aristocratic regime, and introduce into its affairs some of the attention to business already familiar in Prussia. He did not foresee the French Revolution.<sup>24</sup>

### III

In France, however, the foundations of Napoleonic warfare were already being laid. The humiliating peace of 1763, by which France lost its empire overseas and its prestige in Europe, was followed by serious military thinking. Gribeauval revolutionized artillery by introducing the principle of interchangeable parts, improving the accuracy of fire, and heightening the mobility of guns through reducing weight. His reforms created the types that remained standard until the 1820's. The marshal de Broglie and the duke de Choiseul, in the 1760's, introduced a new and larger unit of army organization, the division. Developed gradually, the division came to be defined as a distinct, permanent, more or less equal part of an army, commanded by a general officer, and strong enough to engage the enemy successfully until other divisions reached the scene of action. Large armies ceased to be a single mass forming an unbroken front in battle; they became articulated wholes, with detachable and independently maneuverable members. Great new strategic and tactical possibilities were opened for a commander-in-chief, and at the same time, as divisional commanders, subordinate generals achieved an importance never enjoyed under Frederick. The revolutionary wars were the first in which the division was important. Napoleon and his marshals were the outcome.<sup>25</sup>

Along with practical innovations, after 1763, went a great deal of theoretical writing. Among the theorists was a young nobleman, the count de Guibert, who in 1772 published his *Essai général de tactique*. He was only twenty-nine, but his book made him a celebrity at once. He became a lion of the salons, fell in love with Mlle. de Lespinasse, wrote three tragedies in verse, served for a while in the War Office, and in 1789, at one of the district assemblies called to elect members to the Estates-General, he was liquidated from the incipient revolution by a combination of the reactionary, the disgruntled and the jealous. He died in 1790, crying on his deathbed: "I shall be known! I shall receive justice!"<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Pol. Test. 1752, in *Werke*, VII, 158; *Histoire de mon temps*, preface of 1775, in *Oeuvres*, II, pp. xxviii-xxx.

<sup>25</sup> E. Picard, *L'artillerie française au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1906); J. Campana, *L'artillerie de campagne, 1792-1901* (Paris, 1901); Weygand, *op. cit.*, p. 192; J. Colin, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-85.

<sup>26</sup> Editor's introduction, written in 1790, to Guibert, *Journal d'un voyage en Allemagne* (Paris, 1803); P. de Ségur, "Un grand homme des salons: le comte de Guibert, 1743-1790," in *Revue de Paris*, II (1902), 701-736; P. Vignié, "Un Montalbanais célèbre; le comte

Guibert was an unstable person, vain, unpredictable and brilliant, a *littérateur* and a *philosophe*, regarded by contemporaries as the embodiment of genius. He was inconsistent, overemphatic, swayed by the enthusiasm of the moment. When he wrote the *Essai* he had served as an officer in Germany and Corsica. Like other *philosophes* he warmly admired Frederick, who stood in their eyes for modernity and enlightenment. The great Frederick, according to rumor, was so annoyed to find his secrets divined by this impertinent youngster, that reading the *Essai* threw him into fits of rage. Whether the book divined old Fritz's secrets we cannot know; that it sometimes went beyond Frederician warfare is certain.

Two themes pervaded the *Essai général de tactique*. One demanded a patriot or citizen army. The other sounded the call for a war of movement. Both fell within Guibert's conception of *tactique*. The word at this time usually meant the maneuvering of troops, including under "grand tactics" what we call strategy, and under "elementary tactics" what we call tactics. This meaning Guibert rejected as too narrow. Tactics to him meant virtually all military science. It had two parts: first, the raising and training of armies; second, the art of the general, or what people then called tactics, and what we call tactics and strategy. Tactics, in his own enlarged sense, the young author wished to raise to the level of universal truth. "It becomes," he said, "the science of all times, all places and all arms . . . in a word the result of everything good which the military ages have thought, and of what our own age has been able to add."<sup>27</sup>

The theme of the citizen army was a common doctrine in *philosophe* circles. Montesquieu, Rousseau, Mably, and the host of lesser figures who by the 1770's made up liberal opinion maintained that, as a safeguard against tyranny, the citizens of a country must be trained to arms. A contributor to Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, J. Servan, who became war minister during the Revolution, published in 1781 a book on the citizen soldier. Guibert was riding the crest of a mighty wave. His *Essai*, dedicated "*à ma patrie*," proposing "to erect both a military and a political constitution" in which all Frenchmen, noble and commoner, king and subject, should glory in the title of "citizen," can be regarded as the leading *philosophe* work devoted to military science.

The present governments of Europe, Guibert begins, are all despotic machines. All peoples would overthrow them if they could. No people will fight for them. No government is really interested in military science. Even in Prussia discipline is purely external, the inhabitants are mostly unmilitary, and youth is not trained to warlike and Spartan habits. In France, where the king is not a soldier, conditions are even more relaxed. Peoples are indifferent to the fortunes of war, because prisoners are no longer slaughtered in cold blood,

de Guibert," *Bulletin archéologique de Tarn-et-Garonne*, LII (1924), 22-43; Guibert, *Précis de ce qui s'est passé à mon égard à l'Assemblée de Berry* (Paris, 1789); Jähns, *op. cit.*, III, 2059-2072.

<sup>27</sup> *Essai général de tactique* (1772) in *Oeuvres militaires du comte de Guibert* (5 vols.; Paris, 1803), I, 136-141. In his *Défense du système de guerre moderne* (1779), *ibid.*, Vols. III and IV, Guibert introduces the term *la Stratégique*.

and the civilians of a conquered province suffer no inconvenience except to pay a tribute often no heavier than their old taxes. In short, all the peoples of Europe are soft, and all the governments are weak. "But suppose," he says, "that a people should arise in Europe vigorous in spirit, in government, in the means at its disposal, a people who with hardy qualities should combine a national army and a settled plan of aggrandizement. We should see such a people subjugate its neighbors and overwhelm our weak constitutions like the north wind bending reeds."<sup>28</sup>

This remark has often been quoted out of context as a prophecy of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. It was no such thing. No such vigorous people, says Guibert, will arise. Russia under Peter might have become such at the beginning of the century, but even Russia is now too westernized, too habituated to "luxury" and the refinements of civilization. But though Guibert expects no change adequate to his theories, he observes that, in so effete a world, the country which reforms itself only slightly will have a great advantage over others. This much he hopes for France.

By introducing the vigor of its people into its army, France may develop a more decisive, swifter and more crushing kind of war. But even this much, though he hopes for it, he scarcely expects. The "vices" of modern warfare, he says, are incorrigible without political revolution. Revolution is out of the question—Guibert, like other *philosophes*, had little notion that revolutionary thinking might be followed by revolutionary behavior. What we must do, he says, "since we cannot have citizen troops and perfect troops, is to have our troops at least disciplined and trained." So, after the fanfare of general principles, as he works into his subject, Guibert arrives about where the great Frederick had started, at the idea, expressed by Frederick in 1746, that citizen soldiers were indeed the best, but that since most soldiers were not citizens they must be rigidly disciplined and trained.<sup>29</sup>

The second theme of the *Essai*, the demand for a war of movement, is accordingly far more developed than the theme of a citizen army. Through this second theme, as through the first, runs the same strain of primitivism, the same feeling that the culture of the eighteenth century is too complex and sophisticated, the same idealizing of rude and Spartan virtues. Guibert hopes to make war more mobile and decisive by simplification of its elements. He thinks the armies of his day too big, artillery overvalued, fortifications and magazines overgrown, the study of topography overdone. The European peoples, in his opinion, having no force of spirit, proliferate themselves in material objects and empty numbers. Lacking valor, they rely on money.

In his views on the size of armies and quantity of artillery, both of which were in the ascendant, reaching at Leipzig in 1813 the highest point attained in battle until the twentieth century, Guibert saw no further than his master Frederick, and remained within the school of limited war. However partial to citizen troops, he was no prophet of mass armies. Huge armies he regarded as

<sup>28</sup> *Essai général*, in *Oeuvres*, I, 1-23.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-151.



signs of the ineptitude of men in authority. A good general, he said, would be encumbered by an operating force of more than 70,000. On the contemporary artillery race he echoed Frederick's lamentations. Like Frederick, he regarded artillery only as an auxiliary, not as an "arm." The technical innovations of Gribeauval had, as usual, produced a wide split among experts. In a smaller way artillery was then in somewhat the position of aviation in our time. Guibert took a middle ground, favorable to Gribeauval, but he never fully appreciated the work of contemporary artillery theorists, such as du Teil, who were using the new mobility of guns to achieve heavy concentration of fire, and whose teaching shaped the mind of that most successful of all artillery officers, Napoleon Bonaparte.<sup>30</sup>

Guibert departed further from Frederick, and approached nearer to the practice of the world war which was soon to come, in his low opinion of fortifications and magazines. Armies, he thought, should live by requisitions on the countries they occupied. War must support war, as in the best days of Rome; troops should be frugal, have few needs, carry short baggage trains, endure scarcity and hardship without complaint. The present French system, he says, by which civilians accompany an army to supervise its provisioning, is ruinous, for military decisions come to depend on the consent of civil officials who care more about protecting supplies than about fighting the enemy. An army which travels light, living on the country, will gain new mobility, range of action and power of surprise.<sup>31</sup>

The art of fortification, Guibert thought, had been greatly overvalued since Vauban. Fortresses would become less necessary with the abolition of the large magazines which it was one of their functions to protect. Building chains of forts made war more costly than necessary. Dispersing the troops in garrisons made armies larger than necessary. The turning of military operations into a series of sieges made wars needlessly long. Nor would Guibert admit that fortified points had any real defensive value against a highly mobile army of the kind he envisaged. "As if," he wrote, "bastions alone could defend the cities which they surround, as if the destiny of these cities does not depend on the quality and vigor of the troops which defend and support them; as if, in short, fortresses poorly defended would not turn to the exhaustion, disgrace and certain enslavement of the conquered peoples who were their builders and masters." Forts, he concluded, should be few, very strong and entirely auxiliary to strategic movement.<sup>32</sup>

To accelerate movement Guibert had available the recent invention of the division. The divisional principle had not been carried very far in 1772, and Guibert failed to distinguish clearly between the new divisions in the French army and the temporary division of forces practiced by Frederick the Great. His doctrine, however, is clear, and marks an advance beyond Fredericks. Frederick's usual aim was to divide his army on the march in such a way that,

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 97, 445-472.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 254-307.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 208-220.

upon reaching the enemy, the parts would fall into place in a battle line planned in advance. The army marched as it intended to fight. Guibert emancipated marching order from this dependency on battle order. In marching, according to Guibert's conception, each division constitutes a column. These columns, in separating on the march, move more rapidly, cover a wider theater, and force the enemy to turn in a desired direction; for battle they concentrate, never having lost the higher unity which makes them a single army. The commander-in-chief, going ahead, surveys the field of prospective battle, determines his battle tactics in the light of what he sees, and arranges the placing of his divisions as they arrive upon the field. Battle becomes more flexible than before, more exactly adapted to terrain and circumstance, more susceptible to guidance by the commanding general after the armies are committed. Guibert credits Frederick with having used such a system at Hohenfriedberg, but in truth the idea was more Napoleonic than Frederician.<sup>83</sup>

The net message of the *Essai général de tactique*, in a sentence, was to call for a new kind of army, ideally a people's army, but in any case an army made more mobile by living on the country, more free to act because released from fortified points, more readily maneuverable because organized in divisions. With such an army the old war of position would yield to a war of movement. "In proportion as we fought more a war of movement, we should get away from the present routine, return to smaller and less overburdened armies, and seek less for what are called 'positions,' for positions should never be anything but a last resource for a mobile and well commanded army. When an army knows how to maneuver, and wants to fight, there are few positions that it cannot attack from the rear or cause to be evacuated by the enemy. Positions, in a word, are good to take only when one has reason not to try to act." And he sketches the lightning war which Bonaparte was to practice. A good general, he says, will ignore "positions" in the old-fashioned sense. "I say that a general who, in this matter, shakes off established prejudices will throw his enemy into consternation, stun him, give him no chance to breathe, force him to fight or to retreat continuously before him. But such a general would need an army differently constituted from our armies today, an army which, formed by himself, was prepared for the new kind of operations which he would require it to perform."<sup>84</sup> The Revolution was to produce this new kind of army.

Unfortunately for his reputation as a prophet, Guibert's only other completed work on military science, the *Défense du système de guerre moderne*, published in 1779, explicitly repudiated the main ideas of the *Essai*. "When I wrote that book," he said, "I was ten years younger. The vapors of modern philosophy heated my head and clouded my judgment."<sup>85</sup> In addition, after becoming famous by the *Essai*, he had met great Frederick, traveled through Germany, broken into society, been hailed as an expert, and become more contented with the world.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 15-88.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 249-254.

<sup>85</sup> *Défense du système de guerre moderne, ibid.*, IV, 212.

The "modern system" which the *Défense* tries to vindicate is simply the warfare of the day as contrasted with the warfare of classical antiquity. It is the conservative military technique of 1779. The body of the book deals with only one aspect of this "modern" war: the relative merits, debated for a generation, of column and line in the combat tactics of infantry. Guibert took the conservative side, defending the line, or principle of fire power, against the column, or principle of shock assault. To the body of this discussion Guibert added a final chapter, "The present system of war examined in relation to politics and administration." Here came the great recantation.

He will now have none of the idea of a citizen army. Citizen forces, while Guibert wrote, were fighting British and Hessian professionals in America. Many European officers watched the spectacle with interest; Lafayette, Berthier, Jourdan, Gneisenau were to bring back from America some favorable ideas on patriot soldiers and open fighting formations. Guibert insists that ex-civilians can never stand against professionals, and attributes the successes of the Americans entirely to the incompetence of the British. No modern state, he says, could possibly take the risk of using citizen levies, which were all very well for the ancients, among whom maneuvers were simple and firearms unknown, but which every nation of Europe has outgrown and discarded, except Turkey and Poland—and Poland is in ruins. In these contexts the word "citizen" meant hardly more than "inhabitant."<sup>86</sup>

Guibert also praises "modern," i.e. professional, war for the mild and even innocuous character which in the *Essai* was a main charge against it. Nowadays, he observes, a conquered country escapes the horrors of revenge and destruction, but "any country defended by its inhabitants must inevitably experience this kind of calamity." It is more humane for peoples to remain spectators to warlike violence. The emphasis on fortified positions, with all the subtleties of formalized maneuver, "may be an abuse . . . but certainly results advantageously for the tranquillity of nations and security of empires." The relative equality of training, discipline, resources, and talent among the military powers creates a salutary balance. So much the less, therefore, "will wars be decisive and consequently disastrous to the nations; the less possibility will there be of conquest, the fewer subjects of temptation for ambitious rulers, and the fewer revolutions of empires." Thus ends the thought of the *Défense*. It is scarcely distinguishable from that of Frederick the Great.<sup>87</sup>

Guibert, in both his books, glimpsed the difference between limited and unlimited war, or between the clashes of professional soldiers and the destructive struggles of peoples. He saw the close relation between warfare and the structure of government. His inconsistency was not logical but moral, an inconsistency of attitude, not of analysis. At twenty-nine, he looked upon the ideas of national armies and blitzkrieg strategy with favor. At thirty-five he looked upon these same ideas with disapproval. At neither time did he show much practical foresight, as distinguished from lucky predictions, or any sense that

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 219-231.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 263-275.

the ideas which he favored in 1772, and rejected in 1779, would become realities for the generation then alive.

Before concluding the *Défense* Guibert took a parting shot at the *philosophes*, who sometimes showed pacifist inclinations, or at least objected to the wars fought by governments then existing. "To declaim against war," he said, ". . . is to beat the air with vain sounds, for ambitious, unjust or powerful rulers will certainly not be restrained by such means. But what may result, and what must necessarily result, is to extinguish little by little the military spirit, to make the government less interested in this important branch of administration, and some day to deliver up one's own nation, softened and disarmed—or, what amounts to the same thing, badly armed and not knowing how to use arms—to the yoke of warlike nations which may be less civilized but which have more judgment and prudence."<sup>88</sup> Here too was a prophecy for France. It was a warning not needed in the eighteenth century, however, for of the ideas of the *philosophes* it was not pacificism that was to prevail.

#### IV

In 1793 the revolutionary French Republic faced a coalition of Great Britain, Holland, Prussia, Austria, Sardinia and Spain. Of peoples living under one government the French were the most numerous and perhaps the most wealthy. A Committee of Public Safety, to meet the crisis, exploited their military potentialities in a way never possible under the Old Régime. Freed from the old special rights, local and class privileges, internal barriers and exclusive monopolies which had encumbered the monarchy, the Committee created a war economy by dictatorial methods, stimulated the national self-consciousness of the population, and introduced the principle of universal military service in the *levée en masse*. In this, the political side of warfare, the revolutionists were conscious of bringing about a new military order. They were less conscious of innovating in technical and strategic matters. Carnot's strategic ideas were rather old-fashioned.<sup>89</sup> Yet in leaving their armies to be supplied by requisitions rather than magazines the Republicans effected a revolution in logistics, and in throwing their half-trained troops into battle in rushing columns or in fanned out lines of *tirailleurs*, men who fought, fired and took cover as individuals (a practice suggested by the War of American Independence), they broke away from the Frederician system of solid battalions, and gave impetus to a revolution in tactics.

By 1794 the French took the offensive. In 1795 Prussia, Holland, and Spain withdrew from the war. In 1796 Bonaparte dropped into Italy out of the mountains. By 1797 the continent was at peace, and England negotiated. In 1798 war was resumed with the Second Coalition. In 1799 Bonaparte became autocrat of France. In 1800 he destroyed the Second Coalition, winning, again

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 213.

<sup>89</sup> R. Warschauer, *Studien zur Entwicklung der Gedanken Lazare Carnots über Kriegführung* (Berlin, 1937).

by lightning operations in Italy, the first of his great, quick, decisive "Napoleonic" battles—Marengo.

A revolution had occurred in the art of war. Its significance dawned only gradually on observers. Certain civilians, Mallet du Pan and Gentz, for example, perceived some of the deeper causes sooner than professional soldiers. This is because the most fundamental change was in the political premises of military organization, in that new *Weltbild* whose coming, according to Delbrück, was necessary to the revolutionizing of warfare. In France the professional soldiers in these years were too busy in action to write treatises on what they were doing. In Germany Scharnhorst edited a journal and published piecemeal studies of events, and Gneisenau in a Silesian garrison town applied his American experiences to the training of troops; both were reeducating themselves in their profession, and both came forward after 1806 to rebuild the Prussian army. The military writers most in the public eye, in the years just before and just after 1800—Behrenhorst, Bülow, Hoyer, Venturini—seemed for a while to learn nothing from the facts before them. It is most instructive to dwell upon Bülow.<sup>40</sup>

Freiherr Dietrich von Bülow, like the count de Guibert, was a minor aristocrat with a modicum of experience in the army. To earn a living he wrote books on many subjects. He proved to be as erratic as Guibert, and even more pathologically egotistical. He repelled everyone by his claims to unrecognized wisdom, offended the Russians during the period of the Prusso-Russian alliance, was adjudged insane, and died in 1807 in confinement at Riga. He has since been called everything from a conceited crank to the founder of modern military science.<sup>41</sup>

His first military treatise, the *Geist des neueren Kriegssystems*, appeared in 1799, won great favor, and was soon translated into French and English. Geopoliticians today see in it a step in the development of their subject. Bülow concluded his book with reflections on political "space." He declared (contrary to Frederick) that, because of the modern military system, the age of small states was over. He held that state power tended to fill a certain area, and beyond that area to be ineffective; hence each power had natural frontiers; the attainment of these frontiers would produce a political balance and lasting peace, since each power would then have reached the natural limits of its action. There would be, he said, about a dozen states in Europe: the British Isles; France extending to the Meuse; a north Germany gathered around Prussia, reaching from the Meuse to Memel; a south Germany looking to Austria, which in turn would extend its borders down the Danube perhaps to the Black Sea; a united Italy; a united Iberian peninsula; Switzerland; Turkey; Russia; Sweden; and probably, though not necessarily, an independent Holland and an independent Denmark.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> J. Mallet du Pan, *Considérations sur la nature de la révolution de France* (London, 1793); F. Gentz, *Von dem politischen Zustande von Europa vor und nach der französischen Revolution* (1801); and see Jähns, *op. cit.*, under the names cited.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 2133-2145.

<sup>42</sup> R. Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics: the struggle for space and power* (New York, 1942), pp. 14-21; Bülow, *The spirit of the modern system of war* (London, 1806), pp. 187-285. The German original of this work seems to be unobtainable in the United States.

This was a surprisingly good anticipation of the map of Europe as it came to be by 1870. It was scarcely grounded on an accurate perception of the military situation in 1799. *Der Geist des neueren Kriegssystems* showed no real understanding of the wars of the Revolution. Only in the new open formation of *tirailleurs*, i.e. only in infantry tactics, did Bülow find any significant innovation.<sup>43</sup> He is credited with clarifying terminology, by giving currency, as words of distinct meaning, to the terms "strategy," "tactics" and "base of operations," though his definitions were not generally accepted. But the thesis of his book was a codification of obsolescent ideas.

Bülow's "modern system," like Guibert's, was simply the system developed since the seventeenth century. He claimed, however, to have discovered the true key to this system in the concept of the base of operations. He held also (as if they were new) to old notions of the geometry of war. The "base of operations" in his system must be a fortified line of prepared magazines; the two "lines of operations" projected from the ends of this base must converge upon the point under attack at an angle of at least ninety degrees. The attacking army must not move by more than three days' march from its magazines. The general should have as his principal objective, not attack on the enemy force, but the security of his own service of supply; and in offensive operations he should concentrate not against the enemy army, but against the enemy's supplies. Fighting should be avoided. A victorious general should refrain from pushing his advantage, "stopping judiciously in the midst of triumphs." Modern battles decide nothing; an enemy defeated on the battlefield can always attack again in a few days.<sup>44</sup>

The unreality of these conceptions had been shown as early as 1794, when the French cavalry rode into Amsterdam on the ice. The battles of Hohenlinden and Marengo, a few months after the publication of Bülow's book, came as an answer to his "system." This campaign opened his eyes. He wrote a book on it, perversely insisting that the French victories gave proof of his doctrine but in reality contradicting much of what he had said before. He learned, but he learned very reluctantly.

Marengo, said Bülow, in less than a month "has decided the destiny of the French Revolution and hence of humanity in Europe." Mobility is the secret of French success. Before a mobile army most fortifications are shown to be useless. Mobility and audacity are made possible by reduction of baggage trains and emancipation from magazines. Bonaparte, he observes, crossed the Alps with no food but biscuit, a compact, durable, portable nutriment that needs no cooking; and he arrived in Italy with a hungry army, planning to live on the country. How all this harmonized with the theory of the "base of operations" with its comfortable ninety-degree angle, Bülow failed to make clear, though he argued the matter at great length. He noted, as a source of the new boldness of action, the new type of personnel in the French army. The Austrian officers, he said, owe their positions to seniority. Their talents are

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109 ff.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*, but see pp. 1-25, 81-82, 108, 183-184.

average. "With the fermentation inseparable from revolution there have appeared in France men who in time of calm would not even have suspected what they were capable of. This sudden deployment of transcendent abilities is one of the first causes to which the marked superiority of the French in this war must be ascribed."<sup>45</sup>

Even with these explanations Bülow could not understand a blitzkrieg which astounded Europe. He called the French victory a portent, a miracle, a message from Providence. He became Bonapartist and pro-French. This made his position increasingly awkward as the national movement swept over Germany, and no doubt accentuated his paranoid inclinations.

Then came the campaign of 1805. In that year Austria and Russia joined with Great Britain in the Third Coalition. The two continental powers moved large armies westward. In these armies centered the highest hopes of aristocratic Europe. Seldom has disappointment been so swift. Bonaparte in a few days marched several army corps from coastal points to South Germany. There, at Ulm, he forced General Mack, reputed to be a master strategist, to surrender 30,000 men without serious fighting. Moving on to Vienna and into Moravia, he found the combined Austro-Russian forces eager to attack. He routed them at the village of Austerlitz.

Bülow immediately wrote a two-volume work on the campaign, published in the anxious months after Austerlitz, during which the Prussian state, having conducted a two-faced diplomacy, moved as if hypnotized toward the disaster of Jena. Bülow had to publish this work privately. It was too dangerous for anyone to touch but himself and it led to his own ruin. A strange and contradictory book, it reflected both his own mental unbalance and the general bewilderment of Europe. He wrote as one convinced that he alone saw the truth, that ignored though he was he must in duty give everyone advice, impelled by Kant's categorical imperative—metaphysics and military thought have gone together in Germany. He announced that he was destined to create a new theory of war, to be known as *Bülowisch*, by which all future officers would be formed. He berated Frederick the Great and the Frederician system, demanding the kind of regeneration which until Jena Prussia was not willing to undergo. Yet he said, too, that reform was hopeless, that Napoleon was about to unify Europe by war, and that the continental powers should accept his supremacy. Austerlitz, said Bülow, was the modern Actium.<sup>46</sup>

Bülow saw in the French victory of 1805 a proof of the doctrine of Guibert. He used a metaphor from business. The great art in war, he said, is to get the most out of one's capital, not to scatter an army in garrisons but to keep the whole of it constantly in circulation. Napoleon, more than others, "keeps his capital active." This was to recognize the obsolescence of the old war of position. At Ulm Mack had a strong army in a powerful position. Napoleon

<sup>45</sup> *Histoire de la campagne de 1800 en Allemagne et en Italie* (Paris, 1804), pp. 4-5, 16, 90, 92, 142 ff., 183. The German original, *Der Feldzug von 1800* (Berlin, 1801) is difficult to obtain.

<sup>46</sup> *Der Feldzug von 1805, militärisch-politisch betrachtet* (2 vols.; auf Kosten des Verfassers [Leipzig], 1806), I, pp. i-lxxvi, II, p. 158.

nevertheless forced him to surrender. He did it by applying Guibert's principles: skillful manipulation of the divisions (facilitated by the Napoleonic innovation of the army corps); physical dispersal of these divisions for speed in marching, and to cover a larger theater of action, without loss of unity of conception; simultaneous reconcentration at the objective with adoption of battle positions in the light of concrete local conditions. The result, according to Bülow, was "the most perfect manifestation of the superiority of strategy over tactics in modern war."<sup>47</sup>

As more depended on strategy and comparatively less on tactics, the problems of supreme command took on a hitherto unknown complexity and scope. Battle lost some of the element of pure chance which Frederick had feared in it, and which before the Revolution had served as a deterrent to aggressive operations. It became rather the test of elaborate preparations made long beforehand. Planning became more fruitful, prediction somewhat more possible, warfare more of a "science." Military command shaded into diplomatic relations on the one hand, and into domestic policy and constitutional practice on the other. On these matters Bülow had much to say.

Bülow, like Frederick, insisted on the need of a single unifying intelligence at the head of a state. He held that under modern conditions of strategy there could be no separation between politics and war—great soldiers must understand foreign affairs, as successful diplomats must understand military action. Of the advantage of uniting foreign policy and military responsibility in one mind Napoleon's career was an example and the fumbling of the Allied governments a kind of negative demonstration. A firm guiding intelligence also became more necessary with modern conditions of technology. The supreme command must rise above the specialists and the experts. The technique of fortification, the theory of artillery fire, military medicine, logistics, said Bülow, are only "preparatory sciences." "The science of employing all these things fittingly for the strengthening and defense of society is true military science." This is the real business of generalship. "Hear this plainly: when a chief of state is obliged to leave the guidance of the state's energies in war to a squad of mere specialists trained in the preparatory sciences, the inevitable outcome will be fragmentation and cross-purposes, of which the first result will be weakness—a stable full of calves and donkeys—and the end result dissolution; because the binding power of intelligence is missing, which unites the materials in one building, or in one purpose." Here again the lesson was driven home by the contrast between Napoleon and every other ruler of Europe.<sup>48</sup>

On man power, or the constitution of armies, Bülow had views not at all flattering to contemporary Prussia. He upbraided the Prussian government for blindly maintaining the Frederician system, of which he said even Frederick saw the weaknesses before his death—a system which left the common people demoralized and uneducated, subject to a discipline that violated the rights of

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. lviii-lix, II, pp. xxxiv, 109.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 5-20.



man. He recommended the French system of universal conscription with its nationalistic effect on morale. "Even if we take a purely utilitarian view, an army could be regarded as the most general educational establishment for youth." Military science must face "a weighty matter of internal administration, the inspiring and rewarding of virtues and talents." Prussia, he observes, has produced few men of genius; yet resources are wasted unless able men control them. So Bülow calls for a policy of careers open to talent, and offers Napoleon's Legion of Honor as a model. He proposed a *Bund der Tugend*, in which men should be graded by intelligence, judgment, and utility to the state, and which, at least ideally, should efface the old aristocratic distinctions.<sup>49</sup>

All these ideas remained unassembled in Bülow's mind. He never attained that firmness of grasp and singleness of purpose which he recognized as essential to leadership. It is impossible to say what he felt his own aims to be. He seemed to favor the French Revolution, and spoke well of the rights of man; yet he was less a liberal than Gneisenau, to name another professional soldier for comparison. He called himself a Prussian patriot, but he despised Frederick, and said that Prussia by its very existence had ended the national existence of Germany. Sometimes he spoke as a German nationalist, but he remained stubbornly pro-French. Sometimes he favored a balance of power; again, he professed not to care whether the sovereigns of Europe maintained their independence. He certainly was a crusader, to what end is not clear. He was a vehement reformer but held reform to be a chimera. He was a kind of transcendental philosopher in military science, enjoying a sense of duty for its own sake without specifying its object. On the practical level, he advised Prussia, and all Europe, to come to terms with Napoleon after Austerlitz; he said that a Fourth Coalition would be useless and urged the continent to join with the French emperor for the humiliation of England. His attitude after Jena was simply, "I told you so."

Bülow by 1807 had given cause to the Prussian government to regard him as a madman, or at least as a nuisance in time of public disaster. He seemed to write for no purpose except to air his own views and the worst that can be said of the officials who sent him to prison, given the catastrophic conditions of 1807, is that in perceiving his faults they failed to recognize his merits. He was too irresponsible, vain, and vague to collaborate in the practical work of reconstruction. The world lost no Scharnhorst with his death.

As a theorist, he had the merit of sensing, though slowly and confusedly, the nature of the military revolution of his time. This revolution was not based on technology, despite important improvements in artillery; nor was it primarily a revolution of strategy in the strict sense, despite the heightened mobility and striking power of an army emancipated from magazines and organized in divisions. The military revolution was at bottom a political revolution. The driving force of the French was their new *politisches Weltbild*. This consisted in the fusion of government and people which the Revolution had effected. On the one hand the people, in a way not possible before 1789,

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. xviii-xxxii, 131-136; *Neue Taktik der Neuern* (Leipzig, 1805), p. 48.

felt that they participated in the state, that they derived great advantages from their government, and therefore should fight for it loyally and with passion. On the other hand the government, ruling by the authority of the nation and invoking its sovereign power, could draw upon human and material resources in a way not dreamed of by Frederick the Great. More temporary advantages of the French were revolutionary fanaticism and missionary zeal. The net result was that, after 1793, the wealth, man power and intelligence of France were hurled against Europe with irresistible effectiveness. During the nineteenth century the fundamental principle, the fusion of government and people, which may or may not be democratic, was built into the political system of most European states. The wars of kings were over; the wars of peoples had begun.