



BUNDESWEHR

1. Panzerdivision

Kommandeur

1<sup>st</sup> of September 2020

*Dear Soldiers of 1<sup>st</sup> Panzerdivision*

Recently I had the honor to speak about what makes a good soldier in front of our young leaders at the Army Officer School and the Army NCO School. I used this opportunity to explain my understanding of leadership in terms of **servicing one's country**. You have the right to know, what your Division Commander expects of you and himself. How do I measure being a soldier? What does it mean – for what have you voluntarily chosen to stand for – What are the consequences of your decision – what do I as a soldier and commander expect from you.

This letter will provide you with my guidance towards leadership and my profound understanding about the current events in German news. Where does **servicing one's country** begin and where does it end?

It has already begun – in my understanding – encompassing your life holistically and consistently up until our peaceful, merciful or – in the extreme case – our violent death, when we are called to fulfill our oath.

Therein lies the 'particular, the different, the unique feature' of our profession because ultimately we put our lives on the line for this liberal, wonderfully worth living, prosperous and highly constitutional system of values of ours in Germany – I do feel that we have been blessed to live in this paradise on earth – embedded in Europe, NATO and the liberal- and peaceful-minded international community remaining protected and able to defend itself so that we can pass it on to our children with the same quality of life we had when we were born into it. Our great-grandparents and grandparents had to learn by bitter experience that this cannot be taken for granted and we still see it in many regions of this world on a daily basis.

So the soldier is not a profession like any other, the army, is not a job like any other, no employer, no company like any other and most of all you and all of us are no employees like any other. We are soldiers! We will be measured against the sharp end of our profession, the operational readiness and ability to wage war, the persistence with the unbending will to assert ourselves and finally come out victorious. This is different, it is special, it is unambiguous, it is legitimized and it is enticing exactly because of its differentness and not because of its sameness for it does not exist.

Please do not get me wrong, different does not mean better, but initially simply different. This differentness illustrated above involves the responsibility and the professional ethics of each and every one of us, which are reflected in the insignia of the Army Officer School coin: 'There is an ultimate way of life, and this ultimate way of life is: Serve in Freedom!' There you have a first answer to the question 'what for'.

Our soldier's profession belongs to the archaic professions going back to prehistoric times. Man bearing and also using arms underwent many and at times sinister manifestations in



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HEER



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history. The soldier's profession was and is consequence, not cause of the inability of human beings to coexist peacefully. We soldiers, whose characteristic it is that our identity and our mission might take us to the edge of life and beyond, must look beyond an understanding of life largely feeding on material and individualized hopes of happiness and salvation. This is why we, who as officers and NCOs have been entrusted with command responsibility, have a particular obligation to ethical and authentic reflection, which allows us to look ourselves in the eye in the mirror every morning regardless of gender, race, or religion, but must also permeate our thoughts and actions and be outwardly transparent.

Briefly put and in modern language: Your and our individual comfort zone is not the I, but the WE serve as a team in order to fulfil our joint mission.

For 1. Armored Division I have outlined my understanding of leadership as a soldier, officer and comrade with five quotes by outstanding personalities:

**Bible/ Galatians Chapter 6, Verse 2: 'Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the Law of Christ.'**

Love – Faith – Hope – Forgiveness and Pardoning. I personally associate these central Christian values with the corner points of my ethical coordinates. Do not worry; I am not trying to convert you. I am very confident that these fundamental principles of human interaction are equally reflected in Judaism, Islam and other beliefs as well as in humanism. Based on my experience though, that I have made throughout my life, my leadership as well as my deployments, I firmly believe that our professional ethics can hardly be harmonized with schools of thought that set the human being or an ideology as the highest measures. These ideologies deny the previously mentioned set of values that developed in the Christian-Occidental culture. Whenever humans made themselves and their ideology the highest priority, when societies, people, soldiers had lost their compass of values, their interaction was ruled by destructive discord, hatred, war and misery. I believe that mutual respect, dignified treatment, noble actions even under maximum pressure, in relentless situations, the ultimate consequence of which I have pointed out at the beginning of my address, are only possible if we are aware of this.

**Frederick the Great: 'First Servant of the State'.** Command responsibility at all levels requires us to become the 'first servant for our mission'. We as leaders will not stand on the sidelines as observers of great events; I expect you and me to stand in the penalty area leading by example - not for yourselves and your disdainful personal success and advantage, but for your team, for our joint mission. In this context you should not try to imitate glorified and alleged heroism - try to copy it, bluntly, no, you must shape the action yourself, professionally, humbly, with discipline and decisiveness, and be determined, strong-willed and emphatic towards your team and towards your adversary as well.

**Albert Schweizer: 'Those who want something will find ways, those who do not want something will find reasons!' and Steve Jobs: „The only way to do great work is to love what you do!“ – "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and 'just' a 'poor' follower."** You and I have chosen one of the most demanding, most versatile and most attractive professions. One of the most essential characteristics of military leadership, already in routine duty, in training, on exercises, but especially on operations, in battle, is acting and leading without any certainty about the outcome. This applies to you/to us at all levels as well as to our adversaries.

Repression, predictability, ignorance, unawareness, elusiveness, negligence, lack of imagination, laziness, selfishness, deceitfulness, idleness - You can continue this list of expressions arbitrarily - are diametrically opposed to the demands placed on us such as operational readiness, ability to wage war and persistence with the unbending will to assert

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HEER





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ourselves and finally come out victorious. This applies to your/our individual operational readiness and ability to wage war, your/our warfighting ability as well as to your/our team. It is a fact that no one is born a master, so it is necessary to learn, experience and live the completion of the triad 'Knowing - Doing - Mastering. Following this path, you have successfully overcome the first obstacles, however - if you admit it to the person in the mirror - you have also experienced where your boundaries are, where you have been caught up in the behavior and awareness pitfalls that I have just mentioned. Rest assured that everyone, including me, has had this experience. The essential aspect is that you identify your weakness the same way as your strengths and develop the discipline and toughness towards yourselves in order to fight it.

The realization behind this was summarized by one of the founding fathers of the Bundeswehr, General Graf (Count) Baudessin as follows: ***'The role model is not the soldier who underwent tough training, but the tough soldier who educates and trains himself.'***

If we succeed - and I have no doubt that most of you have earned their fulfillment already - we will very quickly experience the appeal, the fulfillment and the success which makes our profession a vocation and which enables us to command the triad together with our team, to experience actual recognition as a military leader due to our noble and humble attitude, our reliable and solid professionalism and our success and therefore, to approach the goal of operational readiness and ability to wage war as much as possible.

In return, you will fail if you see this profession, our profession, from the perspective of an employee, as a job for feeding your individualized feelings of happiness and salvation. This would be very unfortunate, for us, but especially for yourself because you would simply miss a great opportunity and we would have to head towards different paths if you choose this way.

The 'differentness' of our profession that I illustrated in the beginning needs to be shaped according to the principles I have just outlined in order to qualify the 'different' character. It is in our hands whether our attitude that is undoubtedly oriented towards the liberal character of our system of values, our convincing and humble, but consequently, compelling professionalism and our operational readiness and ability to fight in connection with our actual availability will succeed in giving this 'differentness' a qualitative unique characteristic like **exemplary - paradigmatic - noble and dignified - reliable and convincing - in humility and pride**. This was and still is the expectation I have had of myself, of you and of us!

That requires an "All-in" approach – the alternative is only an "All-out / failure" which is not an option at all.

Before I finish my address, I am once again returning to our initial question: Where does **servicing one's country** begin? It is very simple; when we defend our liberal system of values on a daily basis, there is no space in our ranks for anybody who is stupid and ideologically blinded enough to listen to, tolerate or follow rabble-rousers of religiously and politically extremist and consequently anticonstitutional ideologies in a passive or even active manner. Especially today, when single extremists spread throughout our country. Extremism is a disease that threatens all of us, wherever it might originate from. We must not allow exclusion, defamation, insult, polemicizing, division and rabble-rousing in our actions as, by implication, this would not be compatible with our consensus of values, the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act and finally, our oath. To me, this behavior concludes treason - and we will separate you! Unfortunately, I have currently seen these tendencies coming mainly from the right wing, nationalist spectrum; however, I apply this standard to every extremist politically or religiously motivated ideology. Even though this sounds easy, it requires all of us, both on and off duty, to have a clear attitude and unambiguous commitment to our liberal, pluralistic, open system of values. You have it in your hands to stop hate. We all know

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that it starts with simple words – and we do know where this can lead. They are the foundation for violence. I expect you to stand against all forms of extremism as well as any form of misconduct.

Do not worry; my last visits throughout the division do not give me any doubt about your professionalism. Your impeccable behavior makes me proud to be your commander. We have it in our hands to be role models and to stand for justice and liberty.

That is the foundation for modern and real leadership in our 1. Armoured Division. We owe it to our country, our people that trust in us but most of all we owe it to ourselves!

I count on you, my dear soldiers!

Sincerely,  
Yours  
Jürgen Joachim H. P. Schmidt