



Address
by the
Division Commander
of 1st Armoured Division

Major General Jürgen-Joachim von Sandrart

on the occasion of the

Graduation Ceremony of Officer Course 1, Army Officer School

in Dresden
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Check against delivery!

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
but most of all distinguished graduates of Officer Course ONE - TWO and the English
Language Course,
dear soldiers, mes chers camarades,**

I am impressed and delighted that even under COVID restrictions we have made a joint effort to gather here in this dignified setting of the Army Officer School's grove of honour for the graduation ceremony of your courses. General Hain, thank you for allowing me to join you here tonight.

I am well aware that as a soldier and commander of 1st Armoured Division, and, at the same time, as a father of one of the graduates, I am in a unique position today because under normal conditions, your family and friends would be among us in order to accompany you and celebrate your successful course graduation and promotion to probationary officer cadet together with you.

Thus, I am absolutely certain that I may congratulate you on behalf of your parents, families and friends and I am also sure that parental pride, relief and the resulting joy over the successful completion of your course awarding you the officer commission in the form of an officer diploma and promoting you to probationary officer cadet is resonating in my words tonight. On the weekend at the latest you will be able to celebrate this together with your loved ones.

Please know that my words apply to all of you, but I hope you understand that I will focus on the awarding of the officer commission.

Officer Commission under the motto '**Wir. Dienen. Deutschland**', roughly translated as 'We serve Germany' – It has a nice ring to it, almost solemn. You can be proud and we, your parents, friends and older soldiers feel proud and fulfilled with you.

However – and this is what I will focus on in the coming minutes – decisive is the question of the '**so what**' – **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.

Where does 'Wir. Dienen. Deutschland' begin and where does it end?

Let me put it clearly. 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 to '**faithfully serve the Federal Republic**

of Germany and bravely defend the law and freedom of the German people, so help me God.'

I also find that 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 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 Bundeswehr, much as the police and fire service, 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 must 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.

Our parliamentary state secretary Dr. Tauber highlighted the differentness of the soldier's profession in his speech at the German Navy a few weeks ago and quoted to that end among others the writer Jürgen Busche, former speechwriter of the late Federal President von Weizsäcker, as follows: ***'The soldier must act even though it is dangerous and success is uncertain. And: the soldier must act because it is dangerous and success is uncertain. On the one hand, he has to bear danger, on the other hand, he has to be able to recognize it and use it as an opportunity. Both call for the right balance. Being able to bear it and make use of it makes a hero of war. The ability to find the right balance, however, is formed only in peace and at the end of the day only stands the test then.'***

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 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 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, but must also permeate our thoughts and actions and be outwardly transparent.

Briefly put and in modern language this means: 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. Armoured Division I have outlined my understanding of leadership as a soldier, officer and comrade with five quotes by outstanding personalities:

1. 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.

I would like to point out to you that our professional ethics can hardly be harmonized with atheism or schools of thought that set the human being or an ideology as the highest measure. 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.

2. Frederick the Great: *'First Servant of the State'*.

Command responsibility at all levels requires us to become the 'first servant for our mission'. You as officers 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.

3. Albert Schweitzer and Steve Jobs:

'Those who want something will find ways, those who do not want something will find reasons!'

'The only way to do great work is to love what you do!'

and

'Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a **-poor-** follower.'

You 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 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 got caught up in the behaviour 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.***'

This sounds easy - however, its implementation is very demanding.

If you succeed - and I have no doubt that most of you will - you will very quickly experience the appeal, the fulfilment and the success which makes our profession a vocation and which enables you to command the triad together with your team, to experience actual recognition as a military leader due to your noble and humble attitude, your reliable and solid professionalism and your 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.

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.

Now I am an optimist by nature and when gazing upon you up and down the rows, I am very confident that the foundation for a fulfilling, exciting and successful officer career has been laid in you by your excellent instructors. I wish you continued joy and success, celebrate this weekend - I am looking forward to seeing you again in the force!

Before I finish my address I am once again returning to our initial question: Where does ***'Wir. Dienen. Deutschland'*** 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.

We must not allow exclusion, defamation, insult, polemicising, 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.

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.

Dear soldiers, I congratulate you

- on the successful completion of your courses and
- on your promotion to probationary officer cadet

and I thank you for your attention.