

MALE IDENTITY, THE MILITARY, AND THE FAMILY IN THE FORMER GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Andrew Bickford

Rutgers University Department of Anthropology/Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis

This article examines the relationship between militarization policies, gender, and the family in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), and serves as an overview of the ideological and legal aspects of the militarization of masculinity in the GDR.¹ In this overview, militarization is understood as “the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence” (Gillis 1989:1). As such, this article examines some of the salient features of the militarization of gender roles in the former GDR, and will seek to show that the development of militarized gender roles is an explicit project on the part of the state (see for example Arkin and Dobrovsky 1990; Berger et al 1995; Connell 1995; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1995; Enloe 1993; Gehler 1998; Gehler and Keil 1992; Gill 1997; Seifert 1996, 1996a). My focus is primarily on the years 1978-1990 in the GDR, and the lives of former *Nationale Volksarmee* (National People’s Army - NVA) soldiers and their families. I focus on these years in particular because of the introduction of *Wehrerziehung* (Military Education) in schools in 1978, and the passing of the *Wehrdienstgesetz* (Military Conscription Law) of 1982, the most draconian of all GDR conscription laws. Drawing on oral history interviews, archival research, and participant observation in a community of former soldiers and officers of the NVA, I examine the relationship between state ideals of male identity as promulgated through military and paramilitary training, and the ways in which state programs for militarization and national identity articulated with the household, divisions of labor, and traditional, patriarchal forms of German identity (Borneman 1992; Heineman 1999; Kracht 1995; Ostner 1993). I also examine how the GDR attempted to create legitimacy and reconstitute male identity after World War II by forging a symbolic link between men, the military, and the state predicated on the tropes of “Peace” and “Defense” (see for example Jeffords 1998; Mosse 1990, 1996).

In his historical overview of family structure in the GDR from the early 1950s through the mid 1980s, Borneman (1992) contends that new family laws severely curtailed the rights and traditional roles of men in East German society; men came to play an increasingly marginal role in East German family life. Women were no longer economically dependent on men, could rely on state support for child care, and received the apartment provided to each family by the state in almost all divorces. In general, men were more dependent on women for housing and security than vice versa. This follows Verdery’s (1994) overview of gender policies in former East Bloc countries, in which she traces the decreased

importance of traditional male roles due to governmental interventions in family life and “traditional” arrangements. However, neither Verdery nor Borneman examine the pervasive role of militarization and conscription as a means of instilling notions of hierarchy, discipline, and sexism as key components of male identity. In terms of post-socialist anthropology and scholarship in general, a thorough consideration of the impact of militarization and military service on everyday life and the construction of gender identities is needed to provide a more complete picture of life in former socialist countries. Given the dearth of research concerning militarization policies and gender in the former Warsaw Pact, the purpose of this article is to begin to fill in this *lacuna* in Post-Socialist Studies.

Field work and archival research show that men and traditional, patriarchal male roles were valorized in the military whilst marginalized in the family in the GDR. Despite the official policy of equality between men and women in the GDR, the military, an almost exclusively male domain, was celebrated as the backbone of society. While the East German government attempted to break through traditional German gender roles and identities through “work,” the reconfiguration of family structure, and the erosion of patriarchal authority and privilege (Borneman 1992; Heineman 1999), I contend that it reconstituted these differences through the military and the development of “socialist military personalities.”

Male Identity, the Military, and the Family in the former German Democratic Republic

In 1975, an East German mother wrote a letter to the women’s journal, “*Für Dich*” (“For You”), inquiring whether or not it was safe and healthy to allow her son to play with toy soldiers and tanks. Dr. Ulrike Menke, a doctor of education, replied:

Even pre-school children know that soldiers protect our Homeland. If the child is prevented from playing war through prohibitions or derogatory remarks, the child will find himself in a conflict situation. From these prohibitions and remarks, children in this age group can develop negative attitudes towards para-military training and their “Duty of Honor” in the National People’s Army. The child must be made aware of the duties of the armed forces of our state- in the first instance by the father and mother. Along with this it is also

necessary to develop an age-appropriate “Friend/Enemy” viewpoint² (*Für Dich* 9/75).

This is a prime example of the relationship between male identity, militarization policies, and state ideals of the family in the former German Democratic Republic. During the forty year history of the GDR, over one million men passed through the NVA, and took part in compulsory military, paramilitary and civil defense training. Military training and service for men played a key role in transmitting both the ideological and political aims of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), as well as state-endorsed gender roles and identities deemed necessary by the SED for the maintenance of East German society.

Active military service in the NVA consisted of eighteen months of mandatory service; in addition, there was a thirty-six month enlistment as a noncommissioned officer (*Unteroffizier auf Zeit*), a ten or twenty-five year enlistment as a career noncommissioned officer (*Berufsunteroffizier*), a fifteen year enlistment as a warrant officer (*Fähnrich*), and a twenty-five year enlistment as a career officer (*Berufsoffizier*) (Backerra 1992; Fischer 1995; Foster 1980; Karlson and Judersleben 1994; Wenzke 1994). While much has been written concerning the importance of “work” and “workers” in East German society (Borneman 1992; Fullbrook 1995; Woods 1994), as well as the role of women in East German society (Dölling 1993; Kolinsky 1993; Ostner 1993; Rosenberg 1991), men’s experiences and the influence of militarization on East German identity and family life, both before and after unification, have been curiously overlooked, despite the fact that the majority of men in the GDR were required to complete military and paramilitary service (Beck 1983; Fischer 1995; Wenzke 1994).

The GDR viewed itself as the central “battleground” of the Cold War, and the likely site of a war in Europe (Backerra 1992; Diedrich, Ehlert, and Wenzke 1998; Koop 1995; Zillian 1996). One of the founding tropes of the NVA, and the cornerstone of the ideological preparation of youths for military service, was “*Frieden*” (Peace). The NVA was portrayed and conceptualized as an “*Armee des Friedens*” (Army of Peace), and all members of the NVA were to view themselves as servants and guardians of peace. “*Wehrdienst im Sozialismus ist Friedensdienst*” (Military Service in Socialism is Service for Peace) was an oft used slogan to promote this idea, and in 1986 at the XI Party Congress, the SED stated that the “meaning of

being a Soldier in Socialism is to maintain Peace, and prevent weapons from speaking” (Diedrich, Ehlert, and Wenzke 1998).

During interviews, almost all informants stated that they believed this to be correct, and were thoroughly convinced that they were in fact helping to maintain peace in Europe.³ This was particularly evident amongst officers, who stated that they never served in an army of conquest, but in an army that defended socialism against aggression and conquest, and therefore helped maintain peace in Europe. Many former officers stated that any offensive overtones in the NVA were merely responses to NATO militarization and aggressive actions. One former colonel claimed that while one could consider the GDR to have been a militarized state, there was no “war enticement” (*Kriegsbegeisterung*); rather, militarization was “peace enticement” (*Friedensbegeisterung*). “Defense” and “Peace” were used as overarching master-tropes to promote militarization programs, and foster the perception of the need to create citizens who would be willing and able to defend both the GDR and Socialism.

Women - whether as mothers, daughters, or girlfriends - and children, were presented as in need of defense, and worth dying to defend; women were also portrayed as the “Hinterland” of male soldiers, a concept that created a symbolic link between the defense of the homeland and the defense of women (Eifler 1996, 1999). By equating the GDR with women, both were made to seem threatened, in danger, and in need of defense by men. The contradictions inherent in these two sets of assumptions- men trained to commit acts of violence in the name of peace and women conflated with the nation in such a way as to warrant violence on the part of these “*Soldaten des Friedens*” (Soldiers of Peace) - are emblematic of the confused and often contradictory logic of militarization in the GDR.⁴

Militarization and Gender: Creating “Socialist Military Personalities”

Mandated by law, compulsory military training was designed to inculcate differing identity attributes according to gender. In 1969, a top secret agreement between the *Ministerium f. Volksbildung* (Ministry of Education), the mass youth organizations, and the East German Red Cross, under the aegis of the SED, provided for the “unconditional preparation of all male students for military service;” the aim was to provide for, “the

unity of the political-moral, military- and military-technical, physical, and psychological abilities of students in preparation for military service.” Despite rudimentary training in marksmanship and Atomic-Biological-Chemical (ABC) protection, girls and young women were only expected to complete courses in First Aid and civil defense, and to attain qualifications in the German Red Cross.⁵ While both male and female students received military education, and to some degree participated in the same sorts of training, military education and training were always focused on males; eventual military service was to be seen, by both men and women, as a “natural” part of a man’s life-course, and the fulfillment of their “*Ehrendienst*” (Duty of Honor). To refuse military service was to be a “dishonorable” man and to fall outside of civil society, and also meant that one refused to perform the very duty that was to define one in a fundamental way as a “man.”⁶ While women were allowed to join the military in certain fields, a military career for a woman was viewed as something of an aberration, and was only looked upon as a positive development in the late GDR.⁷ As two former officers told me, “We didn’t want our women to have the burden of military service, that was our burden. We thought you Americans were barbarians for having women in your army.”⁸

Through a long-term process of militarization, the SED attempted to create the “New Socialist Man” and “New Socialist Woman”, as well as “Socialist Military Personalities,” through a concerted effort on the part of state-sponsored mass organizations, educational facilities, and military and para-military organizations (Beck 1983; Bohme and Spitzner 1977; Fulbrook 1995; Meyer and Collmer 1993). Military socialization in the GDR was accomplished through a merger of schools, educational facilities, and mass organizations such as the *Ernst Thälmann Junge Pioniere* (Young Pioneers), the *Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik* (The Society for Sports and Technology - GST), the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth - FDJ), and the NVA.

Militarization began at an early age. Children between the ages of six and fourteen were expected to join the Young Pioneers. After the Young Pioneers, children were to move into the Free German Youth, where they would receive intensified ideological training, and into the Society for Sports and Technology, where they would begin to learn the “military-technical” skills necessary for service in the NVA. In conjunction with the paramilitary organizations, military education, or “*Wehrerziehung*” in schools was designed to

develop a clear “picture of the enemy” (*Feindbild*) and further trust in the SED (Diedrich, Ehlert, and Wenzke 1998).

To promote the militarization of children, close contacts were established between military units and kindergartens and schools, with soldiers making regular visits to classes. Soldiers and other military figures were to serve as role models for young children, especially boys, and “open house” days at military barracks were designed to familiarize children with military equipment, soldiers, and military life, and inculcate an innate trust in the military.⁹ Children were taught that members of the NVA were their guardians and protectors, and this process was facilitated by the official East German press, which stressed the (state-desired) close relationship between soldiers and children by constantly portraying them together. Children’s books and pre-school textbooks stressed the need to create close relationships between soldiers and children; a preschool book from 1983 featured a drawing of children visiting an NVA barracks, and began, “your child, like all children, is interested in the abilities of soldiers and military technology.”¹⁰ Beginning in 1969, children in the Young Pioneers were expected to take part in yearly “Pioneer Maneuvers,” large scale military exercises designed to further militarize youths, as well as allow them a chance to display the level of their military knowledge and capabilities. The code-names of these maneuvers, *Manouver Schneeflocke II* and *Freundschaft* (“Maneuver Snowflake II” and “Friendship”) were designed to mask their military nature. In 1969, 824,000 children participated in the “Snowflake II” war games (Marks 1970); these became a yearly events, with hundreds of thousands of children participating each year (Baron 1993). *Manouver Schneeflocke* was carried out in such a way that many children did not know that it was a form of military preparation; only during an interview did a couple who had taken part in these maneuvers come to the realization that the word “*manouver*” was an indication of the military aspect of this exercise.¹¹

Schools also operated along military lines and, as the “instruments of power of the ruling class” (Bohme and Spitzner 1977), were instrumental in the initial military socialization of children. As early as the first or second grades, children were required to stand in military-like formations before class, organized around a student chosen as class leader. This student would take roll, march to the teacher, salute, and report, “Class X reports 200 Young Pioneers ready for action.” The teacher would then address the students, “Young

Pioneers, Be Prepared!”), to which the students would reply in unison, “Always Prepared!”¹²

After the Young Pioneers, children and youths were pressured to join the FDJ, as well as the GST. The FDJ was responsible for the ideological training and indoctrination of youths, whereas the GST was the primary para-military organization in the GDR. The GST was mandated with the development of “*Verteidigungsbereitschaft*” (Defense Preparedness) in students and the preparation of all youths in various military and military-technical skills that would allow them to move quickly into the NVA; as such, the GST was known as the “*Schule des Soldaten von Morgen*” (School of the Soldiers of Tomorrow) (Diedrich, Ehlert, and Wenzke 1998; Marks 1970). The GST also provided a constant reserve force that was to be made available in the event of war. The GST, however, did not function completely as desired or designed; interviews with people who took part in GST activities show that while they enjoyed the opportunities to scuba dive, parachute, or learn how to use radios, to a large degree, most people took part in the GST to obtain their driver permits, which they could do much more quickly, and for free, through the GST.

Beginning in 1978, the GDR increased the pressure on boys to join the military; in this year, “*Wehrerziehung*,” or military education, became a required course in the ninth and tenth grades (Wolle 1998: 258). By introducing military education into schools, children were to be provided with a basic knowledge of civil defense, and their willingness to defend the country was to be developed (Wolle 1998:258). The ultimate goal of *Wehrerziehung* was to combat pacifism, increase the willingness of men to fight, make individuals capable and fit to fight, and indoctrinate individuals with the ideological aims of the SED (Baron 1993:53). Additionally, beginning in the seventh grade, pressure was applied by teachers and military recruiters on boys to begin considering a career in the NVA. A clear picture has emerged of the attempts of the GDR government to intensify pressure on young men to join the military and choose the military as a career; while teachers were to begin urging boys to consider a career in the military in the seventh grade, archival evidence and interviews show this often happened as early as the fifth grade.¹³ In this way, children were enmeshed in a system of constant exposure to military themes; given the mandatory paramilitary, military, and reserve service for males, men were placed in a network of military obligations that extended well into their fifties. “Proper”

citizenship was also based on military service; a pattern emerged in which “citizens” were coded as men conducting (or who had conducted) military service, while “girls” and “women” remained something outside of “true” citizenship, and, in extreme cases, outside of “humanity.”¹⁴

Military education in schools was conducted in subtle and not so subtle ways. A fourth grade grammar text used border guards and watch dogs to teach subject/verb agreement, and a math textbook from the tenth grade used artillery firing solutions to teach math equations. According to interviews with officers responsible for conscription, young men in high school were “tracked” for their eventual service in the NVA; for example, young men who were good at math were sent into the artillery service or became artillery officers, since they were able to do the math required to fire artillery pieces and rockets. In the GDR, mathematics was considered a key component in the development and education of “socialist” individuals, and as such, was considered an important means of “developing those personality traits that a citizen of our socialist state must possess.”¹⁵ Keeping in mind that the various branches of the NVA were hierarchically coded according to prestige and “manliness” by NVA soldiers, the “math nerds” of high school found themselves highly valued within the army, given the importance of artillery in modern combat. In this sense, “prestigious” masculinity in the NVA was fluid; physical size and strength were not necessarily the standards by which men as “good soldiers” were measured. The hierarchy was partly based on the ability to perform complicated tasks and operate certain types of weapons.

The *Wehrdienstgesetz* of 1982

In an effort to further militarize the GDR, the *Wehrdienstgesetz* of 1982, the final and most all-encompassing law in regards to the increased militarization of East German society, stated explicitly:

State organizations, as well as factories, leading industrial groups, concerns, installations, associations, societal organizations and groups are mandated with the preparation of all citizens for military service...preparation for military service is the main focus of education and pedagogy at comprehensive schools, installations for career training, trade schools, high schools, and universities (*Wehrdienstgesetz* 1982:6).¹⁶

The intent of this law, and the intense pressure applied to young men in high school to join the military for longer periods of time, are demonstrated by the fact that at the end of 1982, the SED and NVA decreed that the number of young men choosing to become career officers was to be raised from the yearly average of 520 to 3730.¹⁷ The introduction of *Wehrerziehung* represented a quantitative leap in the militarization of East German society, and the militarization of men. In addition to further civil defense training at two-week summer camps, young men were given the chance to “volunteer” for light-weapons training with the NVA. In 1979, 20 percent of young men were to “volunteer” for this training, and by 1983, almost 100 percent of young men were to “volunteer” (Mählert and Stephan 1996). *Wehrerziehung* was also to provide young men with an opportunity to engage in activities that validated male identity and their contribution to the state, a contribution that only they, as men, could make via mandatory military service, or rather, their “duty of honor.”

The primary concern of militarization was the development and inculcation of the “*Sozialistische Persönlichkeit*” (Socialist Personality) (Müller 1997), an essential component of which was the “*Freund-Feind Bild*” (Friend-Enemy Viewpoint), in which East German children and youths (that is, primarily males) were to view the “enemy” with hatred, while fully integrating themselves into the socialist community. Ultimately, the successful implementation of this “world view” would result in “the creation of socialist-military warriors who are ready and able to follow every command of the Worker’s and Peasant’s State in an unhesitating manner, and who will fulfill all combat orders with their entire being” (Baron 1992:53).

The concept of the “*Sozialistische Persönlichkeit*” was gradually subsumed under the rubric “*Sozialistische Wehrpersönlichkeit*” (Socialist Military Personality) (Bald 1992; Jungermann 1973; Merkl and Wünsche 1996). The perfection of this ideal would be the development of soldiers who possessed the following attributes: “loyalty to socialist ideals, proletarian internationalism, socialist patriotism, solidarity, resilience in the face of adversity, courage, discipline, knowledge of how to achieve victory, loyalty to the party of the working class, willingness to sacrifice one’s self, and hatred of the class enemy.”¹⁸ Additionally, the early inculcation of these attributes was geared toward offsetting and countering any form of pacifism. Thus, traits

ascribed to the ideal socialist citizen were those associated with men, as women were prohibited from military service for the most part. Women only began to enter the officer corps in 1984, and only then as political officers. Ideals such as courage and self-sacrifice were seen as the exclusive domain of men; women were expected to acquire other, more “feminine” traits that would complement militarized male identity. Viewed from this angle, militarized masculinity in the GDR required a form of female identity that would support and sustain military service and indoctrination. In other words, the GDR needed to create a gender dynamic that both supported and induced compliance with military service in both men and women. Additionally, this dynamic coded militarization as completely dependent upon heteronormative family forms and “traditional” forms of sexual interaction (Enloe 1993).¹⁹

Armee Rundschau: Dreaming of Soldiers and Wives

An example of this process can be found in *Armee Rundschau* (Army Panorama), one of the most widely circulated and read magazines in the GDR, with an average monthly readership of 1.5 million.²⁰ This magazine reads like a training guide for young men, and focuses on how to be a good soldier, find and keep a girlfriend, and act like a “decent” man in a relationship and as a citizen of the GDR. In an interview with the former chief editor of *Armee Rundschau*, I was told that the main purpose of the magazine was to prepare boys and men for their military service, and to prepare women to be good “wives and girlfriends.”²¹ Women were portrayed as passive, unsure of themselves, apolitical, and interested solely in establishing lasting relationships with men and becoming mothers (Eifler 1996:20). Women were also portrayed as highly respectful and understanding of a man’s decision to remain in the army, viewing it as more important than their own careers, and as willing to wait for the soldier, despite the tremendous demands of military service (Eifler 1996:20). *Armee Rundschau* functioned as a means to maintain and enforce traditional patriarchal roles and expectations in men, reconstitute men’s position of authority in society, and promote the idea that women also believed in traditional gender roles and values. It also functioned to assuage men’s fears that military service would inhibit their chances of finding a girlfriend or wife, or of causing an

already existing relationship to fail as a result of military service (Spanier 1992).

NVA theorists and sociologists viewed heterosexual relationships and the family as the “first line” of military socialization, as males were “to be positively influenced for military service by their parents, other relatives, wives, and girlfriends” to ensure that youths fulfilled their “duty of honor to the greatest degree possible.” (Pröll 1985:58). Archival evidence also shows that the NVA instrumentalized the family; it was viewed as the most important “cell” of society, and was seen as the primary site of indoctrination and militarization for East German society. Discussions of the family in NVA documents describe it as a site to be influenced and used for the maintenance of the military; no mention of love or affection is ever made with regard to soldiers and their families. Rather, such traits were to be developed in soldiers vis-à-vis their equipment and technology.²²

Letter exchanges between soldiers and women were printed in *Armee Rundschau*; these were always examples of relationships surviving the hardships of military service, and always emphasized women’s willingness to wait for their “soldiers” to return home.²³ The letters usually contained comments from women detailing the ways in which their partners had changed for the better as a result of military service, a view that was echoed in a number of interviews with East German women between 1998 and 2000.

Archival research shows that the militarization of women was of great concern to the East German military and government, and a number of documents show that the NVA considered it extremely important to direct effort and pressure towards women in order for them to support men to join and remain in the military²⁴. The NVA and SED were of the opinion that men could only be militarized in so far as women were militarized and convinced to support men in the military. Requiring women to undergo some of the same para-military and defense training as men was designed to help women understand the “burden” that men bore.

An example of the extent to which male identity and heterosexuality were bound to the military can be found in the following: I was told that of all of the students in an informant’s graduate class, only two of the men had not served in the military, both due to medical reasons. As a result, none of the women in the class would talk to them or enter into a relationship with them, nor

could the two men converse with the men in the class who had been in the military, as the NVA had its own very distinct jargon. The two men were marginalized because they had not served in the military, and were thus not “real” men; military service, it was commonly believed, was the only way to become a “man.” Both men expressed a sincere desire to have been able to have served “for at least two months.”²⁵

Following Connell (1995) and Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), the vignette described above fits well with conceptions of “hegemonic masculinity.” Hegemonic masculinity defines successful ways of being a “man”, and in so doing, defines other sorts of masculine behavior as inadequate or inferior, while leaving the “successful” way of being unreflected and uncriticized; it becomes the “natural” way of being a man. In the above example, the “real” men (for both the women and other men) are those who have served in the military. While there was a considerable amount of resistance to military service in the GDR, it seems that the military was successful in shaping the normative ways of being a man, and of being “good at being a man” (Herzfeld 1985; see also Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994).

In an interesting twist, a number of former soldiers told me that they became better men, and more successful in their relationships with women, by having learned to sweep, mop, clean, and generally keep a tidy house while in the army. Women also mentioned this as a very positive aspect of military service. This is noteworthy, given that East German women interviewed said that they were generally not fond of conscripts or officers; it would seem that military service was a necessary part of a man’s curriculum vitae, but only if in the past. While Shaw (1991) may be correct in his assertion that militarization and war preparation have become basic parts of economic and social structures in modern nation-states, and are “first and foremost means of state power” (Shaw 1991:30), one must also question just what kind of “power” this is, and what the intended and unintended consequences of this power are. Militarization, it seems, is not just about producing “soldiers” who will fight, but partners who know how to iron and keep house as well.

Conclusion

The vector of militarization and the family played a key role in shaping male identity in the German Democratic Republic. While East

Germany purported to have achieved complete gender equality, at least in regard to "work" and employment, and did have some success in destabilizing traditional forms of patriarchy and male domination in the household, the militarization of East German society valorized traditional gender roles and functions. Furthermore, it promoted traditional forms of heterosexual behavior as necessary for the defense and perpetuation of the state; gender identity, sexuality, and defense formed a mutually supporting triad to uphold the state. Militarization also served to counter the "demasculinization" of East German society brought about by the political program of equality (*Gleichberechtigung*) designed to win women's support for the Socialist Unity Party after World War II. Through the discourse of "Defense" and "Peace," the SED was able to resurrect the military from the ashes of World War II. Germany's defeat in World War II brought about a crisis in masculinity in post-war Germany, as men were blamed for the devastation of the war. By maintaining that the NVA was solely for peaceful purposes, and that "military service in socialism is service for peace," the SED was able to counter this trend and use the military to revalorize militarized male identity as a means of establishing greater control over the GDR.

References

- Arkin, William, and Lynne R. Dobrovsky. 1990. Military Socialization and Masculinity. In *Making War, Making Peace: The Social Foundations of Violent Conflict*. Francesca M. Cancian and James William Gibson, eds. Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Backerra, M. 1992. NVA: Ein Rückblick für die Zukunft- Zeitzeugen berichten über ein Stück deutscher Militärgeschichte. Köln: Markus Verlag.
- Bald, D., ed. 1992. Die Nationale Volksarmee: Beiträge zur Selbstverständnis und Geschichte des deutschen Militärs von 1945-1990. Baden Baden.
- Baron, U. 1993. Die Wehrideologie der Nationalen Volksarmee der DDR. Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer.
- Beck, T. 1983. Liebe zum Sozialismus-Hass auf dem Klassenfeind: Sozialistisches Wehrmotiv und Wehrerziehung in der DDR. Luneburg.
- Berger, M., et al. 1995. *Constructing Masculinity*. New York: Routledge.
- Bohme, Gunther, and Wolfgang Spitzner. 1977. Schutz des Sozialismus- Recht und Ehrenpflicht. Einheit 5/1977.
- Borneman, J. 1992. *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation*. New York: Cambridge.
- Connell, R.W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cornwall, A. and N. Lindisfarne. 1994. *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*. New York: Routledge.
- Diedrich, T, H. Ehlert, R. Wenzke. 1998. Die bewaffneten Organe der DDR im System von Partei, Staat und Landesverteidigung. Ein Überblick. In *Im Dienste der Partei: Handbuch der bewaffneten Organe der DDR*, Herausgegeben von Torsten Diedrich, Hans Ehlert und Rüdiger Wenzke. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag.
- Dölling, I. 1993. Gespaltenes Bewusstsein: Frauen und Männerbilder in der DDR. In G. Helwig and H. M. Nickel, eds., *Frauen in Deutschland 1945-1992*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
- Eifler, C. 1996. Zu Weiblichkeitsklischees in der NVA-Propaganda. Offiziersbrief 28:19-21.
- , 1999. Die Rede vom Frieden in der DDR. Redemanuskript: Frauen und Männer im geteilten Deutschland, 30.9.99-2.10.99, Berlin
- Enloe, C. 1993. *The Morning After: Sexual Politics and the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fischer, E., ed. 1995. *Ehemalige Berufssoldaten der NVA in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Report 1995. Bonn: Karl-Theodor-Molinari Stiftung
- Foster, T. M. 1980. *The East German Army*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Fullbrook, M. 1995. *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gehler, R. 1998. "EK, EK, EK- bald bist du nicht mehr da!" Soldatenkultur in der Nationalen Volksarmee. Schriftenreihe des Museums der Stadt Hagenow.
- Gehler, R. and D. Keil. 1992. Die andere Realität: Alltagserfahrung Wehrdienstleistender in den Kasernen der DDR. Ludwig-Uhland Institut für Empirische Kulturwissenschaften der Uni. Tübingen/Inst. für Ethnologie der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Gill, L. 1997. Creating Citizens, Making Men: The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia. *Cultural Anthropology* (12)4:527-550.

- Gillis, J. (ed.). 1989. *The Militarization of the Western World*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Heineman, E. 1999. *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Herzfeld, M. 1985. *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jeffords, S. 1998. The Remasculinization of Germany in the 1950s: Discussion. *Signs* 24(1):163-170.
- Jungermann, P. 1973. *Die Wehrideologie der SED und das Leitbild der Nationalen Volksarmee vom sozialistischen deutschen Soldaten*. Stuttgart: Degerloch.
- Kolinsky, E., ed. 1993. *Women in Contemporary Germany: Life, Work, and Politics*. Providence: Berg.
- Koop, V. 1995. *Abgewickelt? Auf den Spuren der Nationalen Volksarmee*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag.
- Kracht, G. 1995. Der DDR-Mann: Eine rekonstruktive Annäherung an Mannsein und Männlichkeit in der DDR-Gesellschaft. *Mitteilung aus der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Forschung 36: Differente Sexualitäten*. Heft 18: 130-142.
- Luckham, Robin. 1984. "Of Arms and Culture", *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, VII.
- Marks, Heinz. 1970. *Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik: Vormilitärische Ausbildung in der DDR*. Köln: Markus Verlag.
- Merkl, G. and W. Wunsche. 1996. *Die Nationale Volksarmee der DDR-Legitimation und Auftrag: Alte und Neue Legenden kritisch hinterfragt*. Berlin: Forschungs und Diskussionskreis DDR Geschichte.
- Meyer, G. M. and S. Collmer. 1993. *Kolonisierung oder Integration? Bundeswehr und Deutsche Einheit: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Mosse, G. 1990. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 1996. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nickel, H. M. 1993. "Women in the German Democratic Republic and in the New Federal States: Looking Backward and Forward (Five Theses)." in N. Funk and M. Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. New York: Routledge.
- Ostner, I. 1993. "Slow Motion: Women, Work, and the Family in Germany." in Jane Lewis, ed., *Women and Social Policies in Europe*. Hants: Edward Elgar.
- Pröll, B. 1983. *Bundeswehr und Nationale Volksarmee in Staat und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt.
- 1985. *Sozialistische Wehrerziehung in der DDR im Zeichen der Entspannung: Anachronismus oder unabdingbare Reaktion?*. IFSH-Diskussionsbeiträge Heft 40, September 1985.
- Rosenberg, D. 1991. "Shock Therapy: GDR Women in Transition from a Socialist Welfare State to a Social Market Economy," *Signs* 17.
- Seifert, R. 1996. *Die militärische Konstruktion von Männlichkeit*. *Offizierbrief* 28:4-8.
- 1996a. *Militär-Kultur-Identität: Individualisierung, Geschlechterverhältnisse und die soziale Konstruktion des Soldaten*. Bremen: Edition Themmen.
- Shaw, Martin. 1991. *Post-Military Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Spanier, T. 1992. In Erinnerung an meine Dienstzeit: 18 Monate als Wehrpflichtiger in der NVA. In M. Backerra, ed., *NVA: Ein Rückblick für die Zukunft- Zeitzeugen berichten über ein Stück deutscher Militärgeschichte*. Köln: Markus Verlag.
- Verdery, K. 1991. "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe." *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 1994.
- Wenzke, R. 1994. *NVA-Inneres Gefüge: Das Leben in der Truppe*. Unpublished Manuscript.
- 1995. *Militärjustiz und Disziplinrecht in der NVA*. *Militärgeschichte* Heft 3, 3 Quartal 1995:45-51.
- Wolle, Stephan. 1998. *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag.
- Woods, R. 1994. "The East German Contribution to German Identity." In M. Gerber and R. Woods, eds., *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 13: Understanding the Past- Managing the Future: Integration of the Five New Lander into the Federal Republic of Germany*. Selected Papers from the

Eighteenth New Hampshire Symposium. Lanham MD: University Press of America.

Endnotes

¹ Research for this project was carried out from 1998-2000, and was funded by generous grants from Fulbright IIE, The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, The Social Science Research Council Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, a Woodrow Wilson Archival Research Grant, and a Rutgers University Special Research Award. I would like to thank everyone at the SSRC Berlin Program Seminar and the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis. I would personally like to thank Kate Goldman (in particular for her editing skills and patience), Uli Linke, Roger Lancaster, and Omer Bartov, who all provided valuable insights and comments on this paper.

² All translations from the German are my own.

³ According to Dr. Dagmar Pietsch, a former NVA sociologist, men joined the NVA out of a strong personal conviction to help maintain peace (see Dagmar Pietsch, "Motivation des Wehrdienstes," in Wolfgang Wünsche, *Rührt Euch! Zur Geschichte der NVA* [Berlin: Edition Ost, 1998]. Interviews with former NVA officers and soldiers contradict this "official" account; many former soldiers spoke of economic motivations, boredom, or pressure from family members as their reasons for the joining the NVA. "Maintaining Peace" was the official party line of the NVA; while some men may have joined for this reason, most came to accept it after the fact.

⁴ An example of this can be found in a letter published in a 1987 issue of *Armee Rundschau*, a popular military magazine:

"Hinterland Katrin"

"I promise to remain a secure hinterland for my husband, because the strong and sure love between us will help us make it through the 18 months (of mandatory service)." This example shows that marriage, female gender roles, and space were conflated to create a unitary sign of weakness, a sign intended to shore up an "active", traditional sign of male strength and defense.

⁵ Vereinbarung der MfVb, GST, FDJ, DRK, 30.5.1969/ Diedrich, Ehlert and Wenzke 1998:651

⁶ The only legal form of alternative service in the GDR was service in the so-called "*Bausoldaten*" (Construction Soldiers). *Bausoldaten* wore

standard NVA uniforms, but did not carry weapons. They were to provide support to the NVA through street construction and repair, logistical support, etc. In a sense, they were more of a penal battalion; by volunteering for duty in the *Bausoldaten*, educational and career opportunities after enlistment were severely curtailed, and men who had volunteered for service as a *Bausoldat* were marked as pacifists and ideologically unreliable.

⁷ Only in the mid and late 1980s did the NVA consider conscripting women; this was a result of demographic studies which showed that the military would not be able to meet its "manpower" requirements. Elaborate steps were taken to entice women to join the military, including promises of prized educational opportunities after military service. However, Erich Honecker (the head of state of the GDR) decided to slash the overall size of the NVA in 1988/89; consequently, a large number of women who had been promised military training and educational opportunities were told that they were not needed, and that they were no longer eligible for certain university slots.

⁸ (FE, HP: PC 1998)

⁹ Success was often measured by an absurd standard: a report concerning an open-house at a base stated in glowing terms that they had achieved immense success in exciting children about military service by serving them pea soup (*Erbsenpuree*) from field kitchens. A number of informants recalled being served pea soup at such outings; contrary to the report, all said that they hated eating the soup, and only did so because it was expected of them.

¹⁰ *Bald bin ich ein Schulkind: Ein Buch zur Vorbereitung der Kinder auf die Schule*. Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag Berlin, 1983.

¹¹ Children were issued sticks with red flags tied to the top instead of rifles. They were told that under no circumstances were they to lose their stick. The same type of order is given to soldiers in basic training in militaries around the world regarding a rifle or other personal weapon. Awards and citations were given out during the children's training programs for those who excelled in tactics, terrain navigation, and other skills. Additionally, according to a number of informants, the "Snowflake II" war games were considered fun and exciting because they were able to miss school and "play".

¹² WR, PC:1997

¹³ DY30/IV/2.2039/201

¹⁴ From SAPMO DY6/4856 *Nationalrat der Nationalen Front der DDR Informationsbericht 15.08.78*: “There are still divided opinions concerning the introduction of military education. The point has been raised that the young people are being ideologically prepared for their service in the NVA; it is also being asked how the education for the girls will be structured.” The word “Menschen” (people/humans) is used to indicate young men being prepared for military service; it is not used to include the education of girls (Mädchen). This raises the question: are young boys “Menschen” because they will serve in the military, and are therefore “human”, while girls, because they are not allowed to perform military service as men do, remain something less than human? It seems that the implication is that the only way to become a proper citizen, and therefore human, is to serve in the military.

The original passage from the report, written 14.08.1978:

Zur Einführung des Wehrunterrichts gibt es nach wie vor geteilte Meinungen. Zum Teil wird hervorgehoben, dass die jungen Menschen durch den Wehrunterricht rechtzeitig besonders ideologisch auf ihren Wehrdienst in der NVA vorbereitet werden, dabei wird auch gefragt, wie sich der Unterricht für die Mädchen gestalten wird.

¹⁵ See Gerhart Neuner et al, *Allgemeinbildung - Lehrplanwerk - Unterricht* (Berlin, 1972) as quoted in Sterling Fishman and Lothar Martin, *Estranged Twins: Education and Society in the Two Germanys*, London: Praeger, 1987. For an official overview of GDR education policy in the early 1980s, see *Das Bildungswesen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Betrieb, 1983)

¹⁶ *Wehrdienstgesetz* 1982:6. Once again, “citizens” are only those who conduct military service, i.e. men.

¹⁷ SAPMO DY 30/IV/2/2039/201 “*Gewinnung des militärischen Berufsnachwuchses, Ministerium f. Volksbildung/Hauptabteilung Oberschulen.*” Stefan Wolle, in *Die Heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1998) reports a similar figure.

¹⁸ Ideological training in the NVA and paramilitary groups was often referred to as “*Rotlichtbestrahlung*”, or “red radiation”. The implication is that ideological training was designed to “mutate” them into “socialist personalities”, presumably against their will. “Red radiation” indicates that ideological training was not simply accepted, and that there was considerable resistance to this type of training. See Beck 1982 and Karlson and Judersleben 1994.

¹⁹ Sexuality was a difficult topic to discuss with former officers. While they would sometimes brag and boast about women, it was difficult to move the discussions away from such banter. They would become embarrassed and uneasy unless the tone of the discussion remained at a somewhat humorous level. When asked about homosexuality in the NVA, officers routinely drew a blank; the majority claimed that there was no homosexuality in the military, while a few, including the former minister of defense, claimed that homosexual acts between soldiers occurred so infrequently that they demanded little attention. However, interviews and archival evidence show that the NVA was very concerned about homosexuality, and either transferred soldiers suspected of having homosexual relationships to different units, or dismissed them from the military.

²⁰ UG:PC:1999

²¹ UG:PC: 1999

²² Militärarchiv Freiburg AZN P2979: *Soziologische Untersuchungen, Dezember 1980, Politische Hauptverwaltung, Abteilung Information*. The NVA’s view of technology is somewhat contradictory, but nonetheless entwined with notions of manhood. During the Kosovo war, I interviewed a number of former officers concerning their views of the war, the ethics of it, should Germany be involved, etc. One of the defining features of these interviews was the officers’ desire to discuss NATO weaponry and technology: they were both fascinated and appalled. When describing the use of depleted uranium rounds by the U.S. Air Force, one officer said, “your country is once again engaged in nuclear war...what you’re doing is inhumane- we knew about these weapons, but only now have I seen their effects- they’re like small mushroom clouds” (FF PC:1999). Another officer said that it was simply an example of what they had thought all along, “Technology is an example of American cowardice (“amerikanische Feige”); you use high-

tech weapons to accomplish what we would have simply used men for”(HB PC:1999). In this context, high-tech weaponry, usually coded as “hyper-masculine” and as a defining point of militarized masculinity, is turned upside down and made into an example of cowardice; only cowards use technology to accomplish what “real” men use physical bodies to get done, even if this means certain death for those involved.

²³ While women’s letters contained passages about willing to remain at home, waiting for the soldier to return, men’s letters contained poems concerning the stress of being on the “Front Line of Peace”. Men’s poems celebrated soldiers as heroes, and often utilized a fictive female voice to speak of “waiting for my hero.” In this way, letters and poems helped create a “wartime” atmosphere by establishing an artificial war front/home front dichotomy.

²⁴ See DY30/901: SED Abteilung Sicherheitsfragen Information 03.85 and DVW1/55631: Protokoll der Sitzung des Kollegiums des Ministerium f. nationale Verteidigung 30.09.1983. In a report from 1985 to the Ministry of the Interior from the deputy minister of the Interior in Suhl, the necessity of targeting women was made explicit: “The working groups of the German Women’s Association are working with increasing intensity with the mothers, wives, brides, and girlfriends of the (military) applicants, but also with all women, to convince them of the necessity (for men) to take up military careers, to educate women about life at the side of an officer, warrant officer, or non-commissioned officer, and to win them over to strengthen the resolve of the applicants.” From DY30/901.

²⁵ WR:PC, 1997