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The East German Military: School to the Nation

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A Research Paper

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EUR 84-10063C

April 1984

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The East German Military: School to the Nation

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of European Analysis. It was coordinated with
the Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, East European Division,
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The East German Military: School to the Nation

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 10 March 1984
was used in this report.*

The East German regime, far more than any of the other East European governments, has used the country's military establishment as an instrument of political and social indoctrination. The National People's Army, at the behest of the Communist Party, directs and administers a system of "military education" in which virtually every citizen, young and old, must actively participate. The authorities have long employed military education—for example, weapons training, schooling in strategy and doctrine, and related political indoctrination—to ensure party control, enforce social discipline, and nurture political loyalty. They also have increasingly tried to kindle popular pride in Prussian military history and traditions to help create a national identity. General Secretary Erich Honecker has intensified these efforts since the early 1970s, primarily, we believe, to counter growing disaffection among youth but also to remedy military recruitment and retention problems. These moves, however, have fallen short of the "militarization" of the East German state, as charged by some in the West.

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Although the authorities have been able to force compliance from some segments of East German society, their methods have failed to create real enthusiasm for the regime. Indeed, Honecker's persistence, in our estimation, has increased alienation of youth, helped give impetus to an independent peace movement, and strained relations with the Lutheran Church. And the regime has not solved the Army's manpower shortfall; rather, we believe its policies have probably prompted more young men to apply for conscientious objector status and may have exacerbated discipline and morale problems in the armed services.

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Despite these failings, Honecker seems intent on intensifying efforts to regiment and discipline East German society in response to apparently spreading pacifist sentiments, especially among alienated youth, and to the need for more severe economic austerity measures. Although, in our view, even stronger applications of "military education" probably will not precipitate violent reaction from a heavily intimidated populace, we do believe such methods are likely to provoke more youthful restiveness and support for the peace groups, which, in turn, could raise concern within the military over recruitment and discipline. In addition, church-state relations, in our judgment, would further deteriorate. The long-term effects of

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Honecker's policies are less clear but perhaps more sweeping. The regime's continued harkening to German history may only arouse stronger feelings for a reunited Germany, which in turn can only lead, in our estimation, to more popular frustration—prompting even greater numbers of especially young East Germans simply to tune out or to try harder to emigrate. And Honecker still will not have achieved the large measure of legitimacy that East German regimes have sought since 1949.



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The East German Military: School to the Nation

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Introduction

Most East European armies are involved in social, political, or economic activities that go beyond their purely military missions. In Poland, for example, Premier Jaruzelski uses the armed forces to help administer the government, and Romania's President Ceausescu relies heavily on the Army as a source of labor and technical expertise for the civilian economy. The East German leadership also uses its military in a unique way—a way that involves the military more thoroughly in the lives of the people than in any other East European state. The regime has created an extremely broad system of "military education," which it uses as a major instrument for encouraging discipline and political loyalty to the state on the part of the East German people.

Such a substantial sociopolitical role for a Communist East European army has drawn attention at home and abroad. Many East Germans,

question the glaring contradiction between the regime's pervasive peace propaganda and its reliance on peculiarly military methods of political indoctrination and regimentation as instruments for domestic control. Beyond its borders, particularly in West Germany, the Honecker regime has opened itself to considerable criticism for bringing about what many call the "militarization" of East German society or the creation of a new Prussia. This paper explains the reasons successive East German regimes have relied increasingly on the military as an instrument for socialization, analyzes the consequences of this effort, and assesses the prospects for greater use of military education and the political implications.¹



Logo of the GDR's Society for
Sport and Technology

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The Formative Years

East Germany has long included various aspects of military education as an important part of its Soviet-style political indoctrination efforts (see appendix B). While still administering an occupied zone, East German leaders were pressing military training and discipline on the population through civilian organizations. This trend accelerated after the formation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949 and the emergence of Walter Ulbricht as party leader in 1950:

- The Free German Youth (FDJ), the Communist Party's youth organization created in 1946, was soon tasked with recruiting young people for the "garrisoned police," the forerunner of the national army.
- The Society for Sport and Technology (GST), formed in 1952 as a forum for recreation and athletic competition and initially subordinated to the Ministry of Interior, by 1963 became the regime's primary organization for teaching basic military skills to youngsters while also conveying heavy political indoctrination.

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Workers' Militia on parade

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- The Workers' Militia, organized in July 1953 in the wake of large-scale worker riots,² was initially charged with protecting factories during national emergencies, but subsequently became more of a territorial defense force and mass political control organization with the recruitment of many nonparty workers. Military-style exercises increasingly dominated its training activities during and after working hours.
- After universal military service was adopted in 1962, reserve "collectives" were organized in virtually every place of employment. Reservist duty—compulsory for ex-servicemen and young men awaiting conscription—consisted of training in military schools, assignments to active duty, and participation in mobilization exercises.

The regime's motives for increasingly expanding military education, in our view, stemmed from a drive for self-preservation and legitimacy given East Germany's unique postwar position. The Allied agreements made at Yalta and Potsdam, though not legally binding, prohibited the building of any German standing army, so East Berlin in the late 1940s and early 1950s sought, with Soviet support, indirect means of creating a national defense capability. The leadership was also trying to overcome a strong sense of pacifism among many East Germans, especially the young, that it said was "nurtured by their bitter experience in World War II." Additionally, we believe Ulbricht turned to paramilitary groups like the GST, the Reserve Collectives, and especially the Workers' Militia, to strengthen party control and security in the factories and to try to inject military discipline into civilian life. As Cold War tensions rose, the regime

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² As many as 300,000 workers were involved in strikes protesting food price hikes in June 1953, and Soviet military forces ultimately had to help put down the protests.

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GSTers receive training in various military skills ... from map reading ... to using a crossbow.



sought to rally popular support, and evidently attached considerable value to military-style indoctrination, with its simple "friend-foe" approach and heavy emphasis on the looming military threat from the West.

Finally, Ulbricht, in our estimation, glorified military service as part of an early attempt at cultivating an East German national identity, implicitly appealing to lingering respect among older Germans for military service and pride in military history. After creating the National People's Army (NVA) in 1956 in response to rising Cold War tensions, the mustering of the West German Bundeswehr, and Soviet wishes, Ulbricht introduced military garb reminiscent of the Wehrmacht gray. By the 1960s the regime was erecting monuments to famous Prussian military commanders, and Ulbricht was proclaiming the Army the "party school of the nation," an idea borrowed from East Germany's Prussian heritage.³

The Honecker Years

When Erich Honecker succeeded Ulbricht as party chief in 1971, he quickly began expanding military

³ The "school to the nation" concept originated with Prussian Gen. Gerhard Scharnhorst and his reform-minded military colleagues of the early 19th century who wanted to develop a loyal and effective army in part through universal conscription. Scharnhorst believed such a "people's army" would help transform "subjects" of the King into "citizens" of the state, and each soldier would therefore have considerably more vested interest in protecting his country.

education programs and placing even more emphasis on the country's military heritage:

- In 1973 he revised the GST's curriculum to improve training in specific military skills and to make youth more understanding of the need for a "vigilant defense of socialism." A year later the government required all adolescents to participate in military sports activities sponsored by the GST and tasked local officials to ensure compliance.
- The regime in 1973 introduced in the secondary schools optional coursework covering military strategy and doctrine and training in military skills.
- By the mid-1970s the authorities had significantly enlarged the civil defense system to encompass most workplaces, increased the frequency and scope of its "exercises," and intensified its political indoctrination activities.
- "Duty to country" became a dominant political indoctrination theme. Taking a cue from his predecessor, Honecker increasingly stressed that "socialist" Germany's heritage included King Frederick the Great and Prussian generals von Clausewitz and Scharnhorst, citing them as fine examples of such "Communist" virtues as social discipline and allegiance to the state.

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Horst Drinda als Gerhard v. Scharnhorst, Gunter Schoß
als Hermann von Boyen im 1. Teil „Die Katastrophe“.

Announcing a special serialized
drama on East German televi-
sion

The East German Army ©

Honecker's efforts, in our view, reflected his own political experiences and his response to emerging challenges. Having been chairman of the FDJ for its first nine years, he placed particular confidence in political indoctrination and probably was chagrined at the party's limited success in bolstering political loyalty. He apparently considered intensified socialization efforts necessary at a time of easing East-West tensions and increased contacts between East and West Germans following the intra-German accords. He hoped, in our estimation, that military-style indoctrination—with its aggressive hostility toward the NATO alliance—would help keep the people in line and encourage them to identify more with the regime as their protector. Honecker's emphasis on political indoctrination was probably only heightened by official polls in the mid-1970s that indicated that most East Germans considered themselves simply "Germans," rather than "citizens of the German Democratic Republic," and that showed few people were interested in domestic or foreign political issues other than East German–West German relations.

Even more than Ulbricht, Honecker, in our view, wanted the Army to serve as an important instrument in nurturing an East German national identity. By wrapping Communist dogma in the uniforms and patriotic bunting of the People's Army and by evoking the names of Prussian soldiers, he was trying to create a role model for all of society. By harkening to Germany's military heritage, he was also trying to establish a distinctly East German "socialist" history (see inset).

The Youth Problem

We believe Honecker's actions particularly reflected growing official concern over youthful ferment.

Honecker apparently was so concerned about the youth problem that he created a special Politburo commission in 1976 to find solutions. At the same time, he ordered the FDJ in 1977 to take over full responsibility for improving the military education of all East German youth. He complemented this by focusing much of his heralded "consumerism" on young people, trying to win their support with domestically produced blue jeans and rock music, and regime-sponsored nightclubs.

Violent street demonstrations by young East Germans in 1978⁴ brought home to Honecker, we believe, the ineffectiveness of his policies for socializing youth and provoked swift regime reaction, which, in our estimation, marked the year as a watershed in East Germany's use of military education for political ends. The Politburo, formally reprimanded the head of the FDJ for failing to implement party directives and launched a broad "new" propaganda campaign replete with more military and patriotic themes.⁵ Perhaps most importantly,

⁴ [redacted] incidents occurred in Wittenberg on 1 May, in Erfurt on 28 May, and in several other cities near the West German border; a two-hour melee between youngsters and police erupted in East Berlin's main square during the 7 October national day celebrations.

⁵ The regime reinvigorated the rubric of "National Defense of the Homeland" by ordering party activists to drive home the ideas of "pride in the national armed forces," "awakening love of the fatherland," and "immunizing East Germany from Western influences."

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The Military's Equity

East Germany's military leaders, in our view, consider their sociopolitical "assignment" an effective way to strengthen the Army's credentials as a national institution. The East German Army, unlike some of its East European counterparts, cannot easily draw upon the prestige enjoyed by its 20th-century predecessors: hailing the battles of the Kaiser's army would carry too much of an anti-Russian overtone, and any favorable public treatment of the Nazi Wehrmacht is strictly taboo. The Army therefore has had to reach much further back to establish its own history and traditions, by touting such "heroic struggles" as the Great Peasant War of 1525 and the 1848 revolution as proof of its pedigree.^a The military apparently has had some success in cultivating a favorable image, judging by the expressions of public support for the Army reported by US Military Liaison Mission officers in Berlin.

Military leaders, in our estimation, no doubt also believe that the glorification of military service that is implicit in so much of the education programs helps boost the morale and self-esteem of career soldiers. We believe that many East German officers as a result probably consider themselves coequals

^a The highest medal attainable in the East German National People's Army is named after Gerhard Scharnhorst, who also advocated social reforms such as an end to serfdom.

with their counterparts in the government and party apparatus—a status some other East European officer corps do not enjoy.

retiring military officers easily secure senior positions in the civilian bureaucracies because of their administrative and party credentials.

Despite its glorification, the military, in our view, has remained very much under party control, largely because the party has gone to great lengths to ensure subservience. The East German officer corps undergoes some of the most rigorous political training and screening, and it probably has by far the highest percentage of party members—about 97 percent—of any in Eastern Europe. Additionally, East German political officers, in our view, are given more authority and greater opportunity to conduct their party "oversight" duties than some of their East European counterparts, largely because of what former officers and military publications describe as an elaborate system of political checks in the command structure. The East German party secretary who "oversees" the work of the district military headquarters probably exerts more control than counterparts in other East European countries.

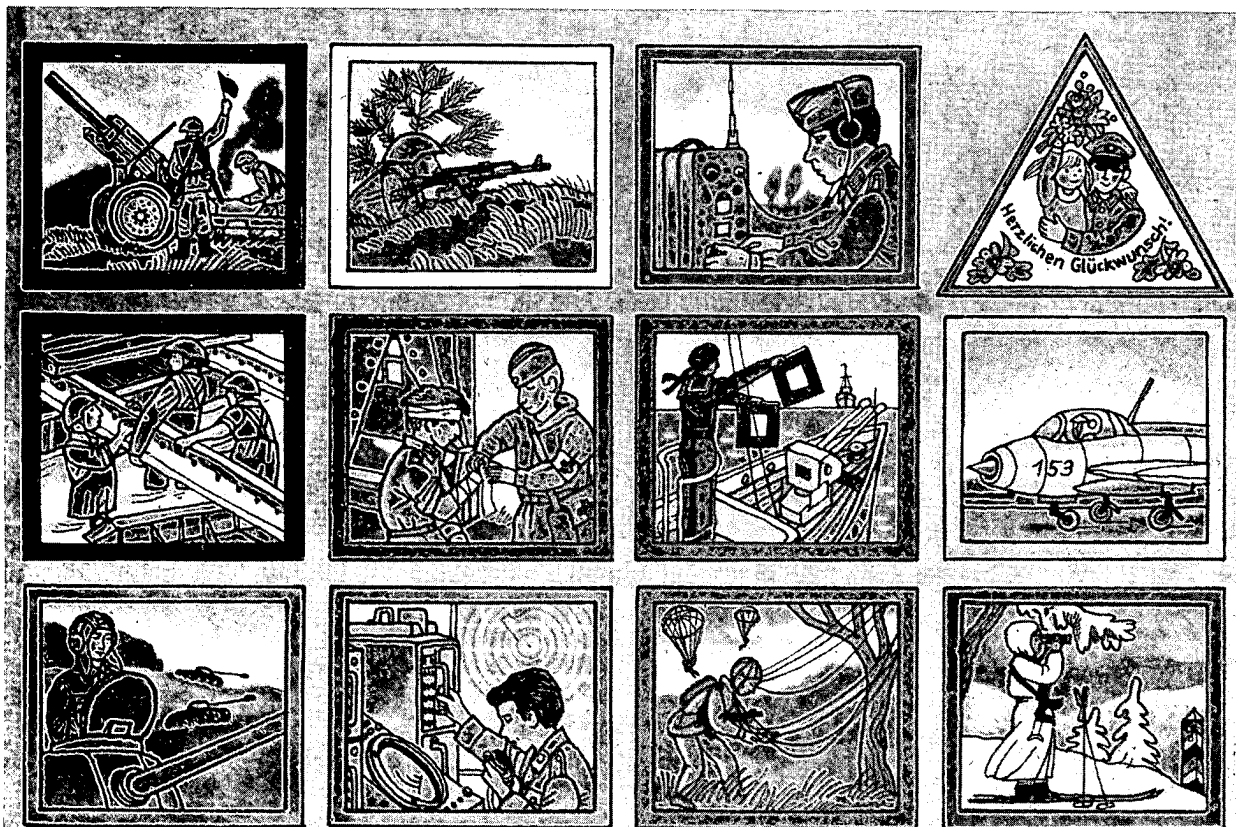
An FDJ group learns about air defense



An der Seite de Genossen ©

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An article in the weekly youth magazine Bummi shows the different career opportunities in the National People's Army.

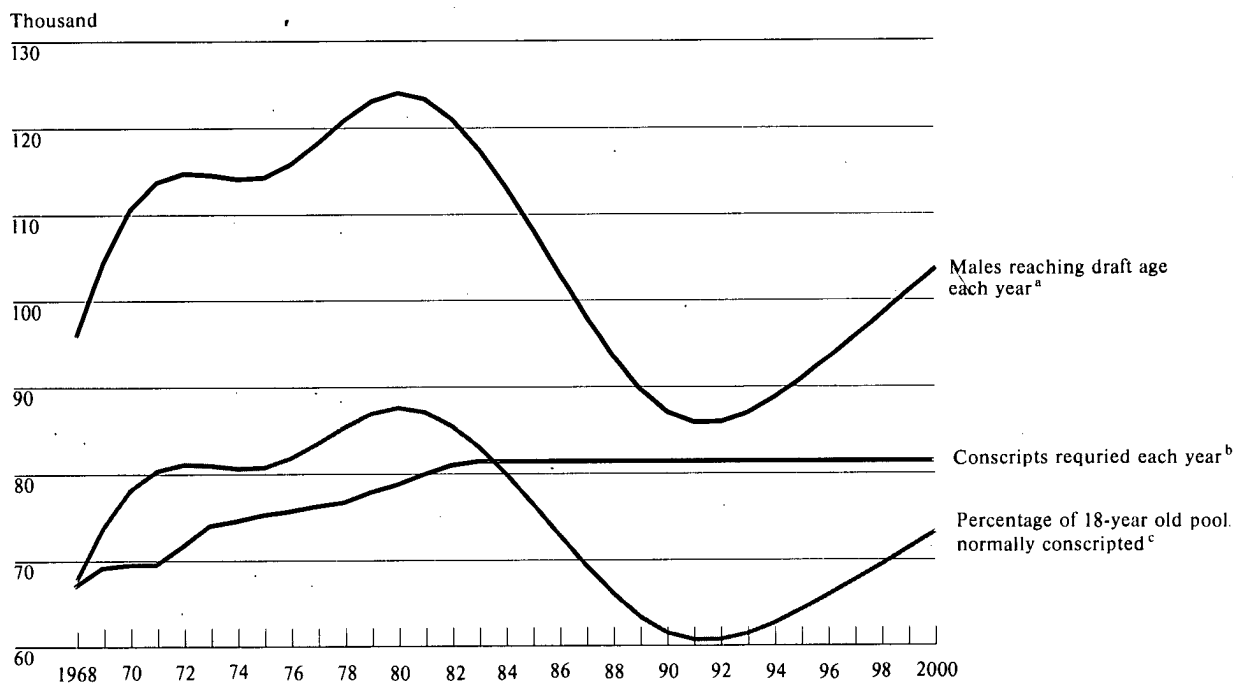
the Ministry of Education in 1978 instituted obligatory courses of military instruction and civil defense training in the secondary schools. Honecker subsequently took additional measures to impress military education on the people:

- A 1978 defense law required all state organs, combines, enterprises, institutions, co-ops, social organizations, and citizens to ensure that the party's guidelines were followed. It also offered lengthy, full-time service in the civil defense system as an alternative to regular military service.
- In September 1981 the regime announced that all secondary school seniors would be required to take "practical" military courses in the schools—weapons training for the boys and civil defense instruction for girls.
- In early 1982 the Ministry of Public Education ordered stricter adherence by teachers to party guidelines on teaching military-related subjects in the classrooms.
- A 1982 defense law made all state managers "legally responsible" for fully implementing military education programs within their jurisdictions.
- The Workers' Militia increasingly held periodic recruitment drives, applied heavier pressure on members to join party cells, and undertook more "training exercises" after normal working hours.

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Conscript Availability and Demand in East Germany, 1968-2000



^a Excludes 10-15 percent who would not qualify for military service because of medical disabilities, criminal records, and so forth.

^b This number may increase with some organizational expansions in the armed forces.

^c Reflects historical average of about 60 percent.

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This policy, according to Defense Minister Heinz Hoffmann, was intended to remedy the lack of "high personal initiative to Socialism" and the absence of a "clear friend-foe concept" among East German youth.

The Manpower Dilemma

The regime also looked to increased military education to alleviate some burgeoning military manpower problems. What in the early 1960s was a disturbing downward trend in the birth rate had become by the late 1970s a serious shortage of 18-year-old males that persists to this day. The East German armed forces in the last several years have drafted over

80,000 men a year primarily from the 18-year-old age group; in 1992 the entire male population in this age bracket will only total about 90,000. We believe Honecker in 1982 balked at extending the obligatory term of military service (currently 18 months) because of likely negative reaction at home and adverse publicity in the West. Rather, the regime has tried to use pervasive premilitary education and training programs to attract more young men to military careers, to encourage more women to volunteer for military service, and to better prepare draftees for active duty.

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"Socialist Military Education" in Practice

The following sketches give a sense of how much the regime's military education programs pervade everyday life in East Germany. They are based on East German newspapers and textbooks [redacted]

- Arriving at school, the kindergartners are told it is a special day: a soldier from the People's Army has come to visit. He will tell them about military life, lead them in patriotic songs, and invite them to visit his military unit.
- Seventh-grade math teacher Frau Goebling closely follows the party's guidelines in using military examples to demonstrate East Germany's "peaceful use of science" and the West's "misuse of technology for aggression"; to learn how, she attended special classes for teachers at a local Army staff school. She will soon get a salary bonus for exceeding her quota in recruiting students for the FDJ's "Military Applicant Collectives"—special groups for those youngsters interested in the Army as a career.
- Sixteen-year-old FDJ member Wolfgang completes every day at his vocational school with a class on "Military Instruction." Nearly every afternoon and weekend is filled with related "extracurricular" activities: an FDJ rally at townhall to protest NATO's policies; "sports" competitions with his GST unit; marksmanship training, again with his GST comrades, at a local Army rifle range. His girlfriend is similarly occupied with her FDJ functions and civil defense training; she will get even more schooling in civil defense at the university.
- Hans had heard that Army life was drudgery, but he had no idea . . . he is strictly forbidden to watch West German TV . . . he cannot have a personal radio in his possession . . . he has long political classes every day . . . he is forbidden to write his cousin in West Berlin . . . and those "Friendship Days" with the Soviet troops, how absurd!
- Joachim thought he had military life behind him last year when he began working at the Erfurt tractor combine. But his foreman told him that few apprentices get promoted unless they are active in the shop's "Reserve Collective," so he volunteered to teach map reading and pathfinding to a local GST group. His boss also has been telling him for months that the combine's Workers' Militia battalion desperately needs members, and Joachim's infantry background makes him an ideal candidate. And just today the leader of the factory's civil defense unit approached him about "helping out" at next month's exercise. Joachim doubts that he will ever have any real "leisure time" until he retires.

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The manpower problem prompted the regime in a 1982 defense law to begin registering draft-age women to fill certain service jobs during national emergencies—a move unprecedented in the Warsaw Pact. The government has also resorted to using more reservists to fill out active units and has delayed the callup of some conscripts to have them available in future years (see figure). [redacted]

The System Today

The system of "Socialist Military Education," as the East German regime calls it, has evolved into a comprehensive program that begins in nursery school

and extends almost to the retirement home (see inset). Its fundamental aims, nonetheless, are still those initially pursued by Ulbricht: to teach practical military skills, to instill discipline, to mold political attitudes, and to build popular identification with the state. Directed by a hierarchy of party committees, the system encompasses all age groups, although it is oriented heavily toward young people. It involves virtually all state institutions, including elementary and secondary schools; youth and sports groups; and factories and government offices. [redacted]

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GST members on exercise: learning field radio "procedures" []

A variety of activities are employed: formal coursework in military strategy and doctrine; field training with small weapons and related equipment; elaborate sports competitions highlighting military-related physical activities; and extensive field exercises in civil defense skills. Intense political indoctrination pervades all its activities, with a specific focus on the NATO military threat and the East German citizen's obligation to participate actively in defense preparations (see inset). To ensure participation, the regime uses various forms of intimidation and inducements, from trying to exploit peer pressure among school children to withholding highly prized apprenticeships from uncooperative young workers. In some instances, the allure of activities such as parachuting or sailing undoubtedly is enough to prompt a youngster to join a regime-sponsored organization. []

The military fulfills the regime's "party school" concept in the broadest sense by providing the classroom, the teachers, and the administrators:

- Regular commissioned and noncommissioned officers, as well as reservists, teach courses in schools and colleges.
- The Army reportedly conducts special classes for civilian school teachers to show them how to convey military-related material in the classroom (see inset).

The GDR's Ideological "Hate" Campaign Against the West

- *Gen. Heinz Kessler, Chief of the Army's Main Political Directorate, on political indoctrination in the armed forces (August 1983):*

(Our) work is to convey an enemy image which clearly illustrates the threat of impending imperialist aggression, which leaves no doubt about the brutality and insidiousness of the enemy, and which causes abhorrence and hatred. []

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- *Dr. Heinz Ahlborg, Secondary School Principal, on the importance of political-military indoctrination in the classroom (November 1981):*

A man is ready to defend his Socialist Fatherland . . . only if he is convinced of the correctness of our social development and hates the imperialist system with all his heart. []

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- *Wolfgang Reischock, SED party education expert, on the role of East German mass media in counter-ing Western influences (August 1982):*

. . . it must develop youth's capability. . . to see through enemy methods, tactics, and strategies of opinion molding and render them ineffective. []

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- *The legal statute revised in 1976 to provide clearer guidance to the work of the Free German Youth proclaims it "will . . . steel the young people of the GDR in irreconcilable hatred for imperialism and its reactionary policies."* []

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- Reserve officers and NCOs serve extensively as administrators and advisers in all youth and sports groups.
- Military reservists also are forced to serve in the civil defense and Workers' Militia units. []

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Soviet Interests

Some within the Soviet leadership, especially those who experienced war with Germany firsthand, probably shudder at East Berlin's extensive use of military

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**"Socialist Military Education"
in the Classroom:
A Sampling of the Curriculum^a**

Kindergarten Marching Song: "I Drive a Tank"

I drive a tank, ra-ta-ta-ta-ta
I drive a tank, ra-ta-ta-ta-ta
I load the cannon, rum-bum-bum,
I load the cannon, rum-bum-bum,
When I grow up,
I'll join the People's Army . . .

Second-Grade Reading Exercise

Peter and Paul race to the creek. Tanks have stopped there. Who is smiling at them from the turret? It is a tank soldier. Peter says, "What kind of wheels does the tank have?" The soldier says, "There are tracks. Watch out! Get out of the way!" Already, the tanks are rumbling and grinding on. Peter and Paul shout, "Tomorrow, we'll be tank soldiers, too!"

Third-Grade Math Problem

Out of 54 soldiers in one unit, 12 have won the "sharpshooters" medal. How many collectives of this unit are still vying for this honor, if each collective has six soldiers?

^a From various East German textbooks,

Fourth-Grade Reading Exercise "On Maneuvers"

The voice of the CO gives the order "Advance!" Our armored personnel carrier jumped across the rocks . . . then we assumed battle positions . . . Suddenly, a deafening noise. Motorized infantrymen were firing their machine pistols. In between, the dull thuds of antitank guns . . . Then, suddenly, complete quiet. Our forces had destroyed the enemy's last positions. On our stubblefield, we had a brief rollcall . . . our commanding general gave us a grade of "excellent" for our operation.

Tenth-Grade Math Problem

The antitank turret machinegun of a medium tank is installed on the upper edge of the turret at 2.7 meters above the ground. The gunsight quadrant elevation is adjustable between -5 degrees and +30 degrees. Compute the "dead space" radius around the tank with respect to the antitank turret machinegun.

education. But we believe Moscow has allowed Honecker such latitude for some very practical reasons, although there are definite limits to which it will permit the cultivation and exploitation of German national pride. East Germany's use of youth and paramilitary organizations follows long-established Soviet methods for mass control, even though, in our view, East Berlin often exceeds its mentor in the degree of regimentation and the intensity of its propaganda. The Soviets also apparently recognize the unique problems that East Germany has faced since its artificial creation, particularly its lack of historical legitimacy and heavy exposure to West German media. And the party's firm grip on the Army probably serves to reassure the Soviets that the military will not abuse its political role.

More importantly, the Soviets probably feel they can afford to grant Honecker certain liberties because of their penetration of East German institutions. Although evidence is scanty, we believe that Moscow has established a network of "close friends" within the East German party hierarchy that probably is more extensive than in any other Pact country. Soviet controls in the East German military establishment seem especially pervasive.

Like their civilian

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FDJ political activities take up
much of the young people's free
time



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counterparts, most East German military officers on the way up attend various Soviet staff and technical schools.*

Impact

The regime's heavy reliance on military education as a means of political socialization has had mixed results. Many East Germans participate in the regime's programs because of the heavy pressure and prospective material benefits. The authorities' enforcement of social regimentation has, in our view, achieved a certain degree of compliance. Indeed, the

* Moreover, Moscow's military presence in East Germany—which includes 19 tank and motorized rifle divisions—far exceeds such deployments in other Pact countries and greatly overshadows the strength of East Germany's own national forces—six such divisions.

regime has demonstrated repeatedly its ability to turn out thousands of students and young workers for rallies orchestrated to demonstrate support for its policies. Moreover, there has been no recurrence of the violent 1978 youth disturbances. And, we believe that, because of its intensity and appeal to patriotism, the government's militarized political propaganda is probably accepted by at least some of the people, especially among the older generation, and helps provide the regime a small measure of the legitimacy it continues to seek.

Alienation

We believe that the regime clearly has not succeeded, however, in overcoming considerable public apathy, which is growing, especially among young people.

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[redacted] since the late 1970s the Workers' Militia, for example, has experienced growing problems in attracting members. Even more disturbing for the authorities, [redacted] is the failure of their efforts to use the Militia as recruiting ground for party members. [redacted]

[redacted] while participation in most youth organizations is high, enthusiasm for many of the political functions remains low. Even the carefully controlled television coverage of mass youth rallies often inadvertently betrays the considerable indifference of many participants. [redacted]

[redacted] last November the party canceled an official petition campaign against NATO INF deployments because it garnered such embarrassingly little popular support. [redacted]

In fact, the regime's programs appear to have generated subtle forms of resistance. Former East German dissidents Rudolf Bahro and Karl Winkler claim that many youngsters stop adapting naively to every regime demand by the time they reach adolescence and that even the offspring of some officials eventually begin rejecting the party's line [redacted]

[redacted] after participating in the Young Pioneers, the FDJ, and the GST and then serving in the military, most workers simply want to be left alone. [redacted]

[redacted] even some young party members are openly dismayed over the regime's "hard sell" attitude toward military education. An article in the respected West Berlin newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, which has numerous contacts in the east, opined last year that East Berlin's efforts to raise the "socialist consciousness" of its youth through political indoctrination have hit a "dead end" because the constant propaganda barrage has turned off so many youngsters. Indeed, the regime's extensive efforts to indoctrinate and regiment its citizens probably intensify the already considerable appeal of West German media, particularly television, which are received in most of East Germany. [redacted]

The East Germans have acknowledged these problems in several ways. The media, for instance, have defended at length universal military training and heatedly rejected the notion that this is incompatible with



"Swords Into Plowshares"—a rallying theme of the East German peace groups [redacted]

Der Spiegel ©

the regime's advocacy of disarmament. The FDJ journal *Forum* in December 1982 admitted that many students were criticizing the saturation of academic curriculums with political-military indoctrination. A West German official responsible for Berlin affairs told US Embassy officers in Paris last year that Honecker was so concerned about the young people's rejection of "socialist ideals" that he set up a secret commission, with representatives from youth organizations, universities, and the government, to find solutions—a move reminiscent of his creation of a Politburo commission in 1976. [redacted]

The Peace Issue

We further believe Honecker's efforts at regimentation have helped spawn an unofficial peace movement that commands a small and perhaps growing following. What began in 1981 as a grassroots movement of

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The idea of a European nuclear-free zone is not new, but East German pacifists added their own emblem—which was banned by the authorities.

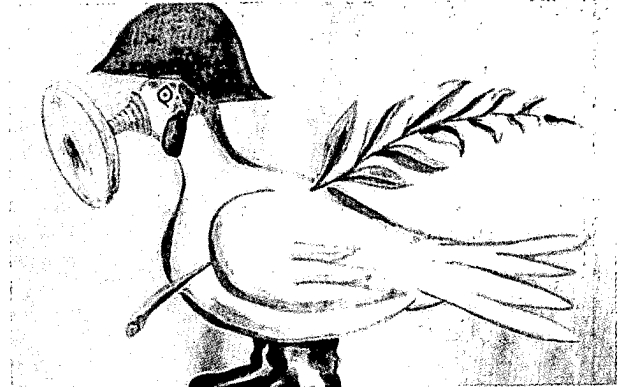


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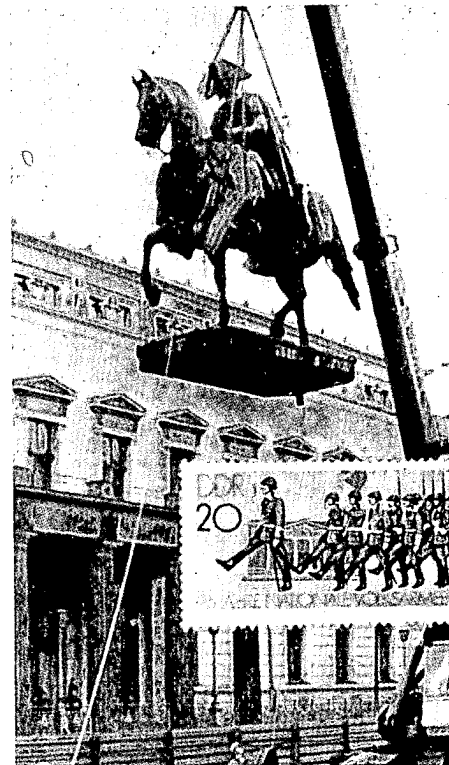
a few conscientious objectors demanding an alternative to military service has developed into a loosely knit amalgam of peace groups whose broadened platforms now advocate dismantling the military arsenals of both East and West. Such attitudes were no doubt inspired in part by the activities of peace groups in West Germany, but, in our view, the growing sense of pacifism among many East German youth is also a direct reaction to the regime's intensified military education programs. Actual membership in the various groups, according to the US Embassy

probably numbers only several thousand, but some of their peace workshops and festivals, even under the close eyes of security police, often attract tens of thousands. Most of these participants, according to US Embassy reports, want advice on resisting military education and obligatory military service, seek the anonymity of a large group to express their opposition to the government, or simply want to participate in a social function that is not regime controlled. Although the independent movement offers little real threat to the regime, its very existence and ability to garner public attention and even modest active support, in our estimation, have proved to be a growing embarrassment.

According to the US Embassy Honecker's policies on military education have also caused friction with the Lutheran Church. the church hierarchy has persistently asked the regime—in public and private—to tone down militarist propaganda in the schools, ease compulsory military coursework in the classrooms, and lift penalties on those who resist such education. Church leaders also continue to press for a



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Postcards composed by East German pacifists exude cynicism toward regime policies.

social service alternative to the military draft and, despite repeated regime rebuffs and warnings, have provided support—particularly sanctuary—to the independent peace groups and their activities. A number of worshipers apparently sympathize with the

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ideals of the unofficial peace movement and are repelled by what they see as hypocritical regime policies. Some of the clergy may feel morally obligated to support their parishioners on such emotional issues, and church officials, not wanting to lose credibility, are trying to keep in step with popular attitudes. Church leaders may also be speaking out from a sense of moral obligation because of the indifference to German militarism shown by their predecessors some 50 years ago. []

The Military's Mission

Despite their vigorous application, the military education programs have also not fulfilled many of their specific military goals. In some ways, indeed, the regime's policies appear to have made matters worse. Although we do not believe these setbacks have seriously eroded the East German Army's state of preparedness, we do believe they are sources of concern for political and military leaders alike. []

The extensive military education of the vast majority of young men apparently has not significantly improved the average conscript's level of military expertise. Although the programs have provided young East Germans an understanding of fundamental military concepts and some rudimentary practical skills (like small-arms handling), they have not been effective enough to prompt Army leaders to alter basic training for inductees—the format and number of hours devoted to teaching basic skills have remained constant. At the same time, the programs apparently have not kept pace with the demands of force modernization: in late 1982 the regime revamped the compulsory courses run by the GST for male high school seniors to provide better training in more advanced military skills. []

Reports from the US Embassy []

[] indicate that since 1981 discipline problems in some Army units have increased and morale has declined. Infractions reportedly include "antistate" activity (that is, political dissent), desertions, insubordination, and maintaining personal contacts with Westerners. Articles in professional East German military journals stressing the need for more discipline among the soldiers suggest increasing official concern over morale problems. According to the US Embassy, several Army generals—perhaps reflecting concern especially in the Army's political

administration—have publicly called for strengthened political education of draftees, even at the expense of weapons training. In October 1982 the Army instituted tougher disciplinary regulations, []

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The regime's efforts also have not persuaded more young men to stay in the armed forces. Rather, []

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[] the Army is still experiencing serious difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of military careerists. []

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[] the regime has stepped up efforts to recruit women for certain job categories. Most young adults, however, evidently prefer careers in the more lucrative—and relatively less regimented—industrial sector. []

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[] US Embassy reporting indicate, moreover, that many soldiers who volunteer for extended service terms are primarily interested in the civilian education benefits offered as incentives—such as preferential admission to universities and lucrative stipends—and leave for the universities once they have fulfilled their obligation. []

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The regime's socialization policies, in our estimation, have, indeed, contributed to increased resistance to military service. Conscientious objection—something relatively unheard of in East Germany a couple of decades ago—is, []

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[] up markedly. To be sure, a very small number of young men—mostly Jehovah's Witnesses—have consistently resisted the draft. But, despite the almost certain prison sentence of 18 to 24 months for such an offense, their number has been slowly growing. Moreover, []

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[] since the late 1970s the number of conscripts annually seeking entry into the Army's noncombatant construction battalions—the only *legal* alternative available to conscientious objectors—has risen steadily from a few hundred to about 1,000. []

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[] because the construction units are overflowing many are being shunted into other noncombatant service jobs—such as hospital orderlies. []

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Marching to the "Monument to Victims of Fascism and Militarism," the National People's Army with traditional regalia.



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The East German Army ©

[redacted] party officials have become increasingly disturbed about the problem, despite the still relatively small numbers, because it potentially could spread. But they do not know what to do other than requiring applicants to submit written "certification" of "active involvement" in religious life before they report for induction. Those who persist in trying to obtain such status after they have been placed in combat units often spend their service time in penal units or prison. [redacted]

recognizing the fundamental shortcomings of his socialization policies. The regime's natural inclination to rely heavily on military-style regimentation as a means of managing society and its concern about political unrest during a period of continued economic austerity will help reinforce its commitment to strengthening social discipline. [redacted]

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Prospects

Even though the military education programs have not fulfilled expectations of the regime, we believe it will not abandon them, but redouble such efforts. Honecker appears convinced that even stronger doses of military-style indoctrination and regimentation will keep a lid on—and ultimately win over—alienated youth. Honecker's professional "agitprop" background, with its emphasis on repeatedly hammering home the same message, probably prevents him from

We believe the regime's appeal to Prussian virtues, nonetheless, has passed the point of diminishing returns. Even heavier applications of military education, in our view, will not win the kind of loyalty and obedience that Honecker seeks, but probably will only compound some of the domestic problems he is trying to solve. Honecker's demands for discipline through military training are unlikely to lead to serious disturbances because most of the population remains thoroughly intimidated, but they could easily provoke

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increased protests from young people, especially zealous peace activists, who are more daring about challenging the regime's pervasive control mechanisms. A church source recently told US Embassy officers that, despite regime warnings and sanctions, young people are still joining the peace movement. We seriously doubt, moreover, that the church will abandon its criticism of "creeping militarism" despite the possibility of increased strains with the regime; indeed, deepening government intransigence could in turn make some clergy more defiant and widen the gulf between church and state. [redacted]

The long-term implications of what Honecker and company have let loose are less clear but perhaps more sweeping. The regime's appeal to traditional German values may inadvertently be fostering even stronger yearnings for a Germany reunited, and put even further out of reach the large measure of legitimacy that East German governments have long sought. And the more ordinary East Germans realize that reunification is out of the question, the more likely they are to sink into a deeper apathy or, alternately, the more eager they may be to try by any means to emigrate. [redacted]

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Although we do not anticipate that persisting youthful discontent and spreading pacifism will pose serious morale and discipline problems for the East German military, these phenomena could raise some questions about the East German Army's reputation for political reliability. They may further dampen popular support for the military. Moreover, continuing problems in recruiting enough highly qualified and properly motivated career soldiers could stir more concern among military leaders in both East Berlin and Moscow. And increased efforts to evoke military history and traditions could ultimately foster a recrudescence of the kind of German national sentiment—that is, feelings of uniqueness—that would raise hackles among East Berlin's Slavic allies and potentially become a source of friction within the Pact.⁷ [redacted]

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⁷ Chancellor Otto von Bismark, credited for unifying Germany over a hundred years ago, is the latest historical figure undergoing partial rehabilitation by East German authorities. They cite Bismark's "realistic and common-sense" attitudes toward foreign relations as considerably more enlightened than the "adventurism and military megalomania predominating in ruling circles of today's imperialist states." [redacted]

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Appendix A

Previous Research

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Virtually immune to societal unrest for decades, East Germany has entered a period of increasing ferment. Since the late 1970s, consumers have become more assertive in protesting increasingly evident shortages. At the same time, young people have become more rebellious, which has led to increased delinquency and youth crime, greater job dissatisfaction, and a growing attraction to idealistic causes. Although the level of discontent is very low compared with Poland during Solidarity's heyday, it marks a sharp departure from the traditional acquiescent behavior of East Germans.

[REDACTED]

Young East Germans especially appear to expect the relative prosperity they knew in the 1970s. Moreover, they are repelled by authority—perhaps even more than rebellious Western youth—because of the regime's endless demands for conformity. Their involvement in Eastern Europe's only spontaneous peace movement—the first grassroots political movement in East Germany—is a dramatic way of resisting regimentation.

[REDACTED]

The regime is trying to counter the ferment with a mix of persuasion and coercion. Party leaders have shifted around consumer goods to dampen discontent and sought to siphon off pacifist sentiment into a "peace movement" directed by the official youth organization. At the same time, the authorities are increasing pressure on peace activists and their church supporters. We expect this restiveness, nonetheless, to grow, especially as East Germany's economic problems mount. The austerity measures—necessary because of the large foreign debt and the end of cheap Soviet raw materials and easy Western credits—virtually ensure that the regime cannot sustain its all-important "Consumer Communism."

[REDACTED]

In the near term, we believe the regime's pervasive controls will prevent East Germany from becoming a major crisis point in Eastern Europe. Repression will nonetheless undermine the leadership's long-term goal of public acceptance, contribute to the downward economic spiral, and wreck any hope for economic reform. In the end, the high costs of repression may strengthen the hand of those—including younger, technocratic elements in the party—who argue for more pragmatism.

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Appendix B

Organizations for Political Socialization

Organization	Composition	Size	Functions and Activities Relating to Military Education
Young Pioneers (JP) (1948 established)	Ages 6 to 10	1.8 million (99 percent of age group)	<p>Parallels military education in the classroom with training in hiking map and compass reading; terrain orientation; camouflage; first aid; and weapons handling (including bow and arrow, crossbow, and air guns).</p> <p>Encourages participation in "extracurricular" groups such as: Young Infrantrymen, Young Radio Operators, Young Seamen, Young Model Makers, Young (Air) Pursuers.</p>
Ernst Thaelman Pioneers (1948 established)	Ages 10 to 13		<p>Sponsors annual "Children's Maneuvers"—tightly regimented, military-style summer camp with training conducted by regular Army officers.</p> <p>Heavy political education given in all activities.</p>
Free German Youth (FDJ) (1946 established)	Ages 14 to 26	2.1 million (65 percent of age group)	<p>Conducts intensive political indoctrination to "awaken" defense willingness and readiness.</p> <p>Recruits prospective career soldiers in "Candidate Collectives."</p> <p>Sponsors "brother units" in the armed forces.</p> <p>Sponsors "Hans Beimler Sport Contests" in secondary school grades eight to 10, in which military skills predominate.</p>
Society for Sport and Technology (GST) (1952 established)	Ages 14 to 26	600,000 (16,000 units country-wide)	<p>Subordinated to the Ministry of National Defense since 1956.</p> <p>Conducts compulsory premilitary basic training for 16- to 18-year-olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weapons training (including handgrenade throwing); nuclear-biological-chemical training; first aid; and map and compass reading. • Administered by regular army officers. <p>Offers members advanced training in marksmanship, motor sports, communications, aviation, parachuting, underwater diving, and navigation.</p> <p>Offers members "sports competition" in military fields.</p> <p>Incorporates political indoctrination in all activities.</p>
Workers' Militia (<i>Kampfgruppen</i>) (1953 established)	Males, ages 25 to 60	400,000 to 450,000	<p>Subordinated directly to party Central Committee.</p> <p>Members required to complete 132 hours of weekend political and military training annually.</p> <p>Most members are military reservists.</p> <p>Average age is 38 to 40.</p>

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Organizations for Political Socialization (Continued)

Organization	Composition	Size	Functions and Activities Relating to Military Education
Reserve Collectives (1964 established)	Ages 20 to 60	1.5 million	<p>After active military duty, enlisted men are required to remain in the reserves until age 50; officers, until age 60.</p> <p>Periodic political education and military training.</p> <p>Members encouraged to be active in other groups—FDJ, GST, Workers' Militia, and Civil Defense.</p> <p>Conducts military recruitment in schools.</p>
Civil Defense System (1958 established)	Ages 16 to 65	650,000 active members; over 7 million have received training	<p>The Civil Defense System was subordinated to the Ministry of National Defense in 1978.</p> <p>Full-time training is mandatory for females from age 16 through 18; part-time training is obligatory for female university students, as well as male students unfit for military service.</p> <p>Intensive political indoctrination.</p> <p>Periodic exercises in factories and government offices.</p>

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