

PUBLIC OPINION OF CONSCRIPTION IN THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,

1954-1956

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In 1955, barely ten years after the end of the most devastating war in Modern German history, a new German military was established in the Federal Republic, the *Bundeswehr*. In order properly fill the ranks of this new military the government, under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer, believed that it would have to draft men from the West German population into military service. For the government in Bonn conscription was a double-edged sword, it would not only ensure that the *Bundeswehr* would receive the required number of recruits but it was also believed that conscription would guarantee that the Bundeswehr would be more democratic and therefore in tune with the policies of the new West German state. What this study seeks to explore is what the West German population thought of conscription. It will investigate who was for or against the draft and seek to determine the various socioeconomic factors that contributed to these decisions. Furthermore this study will examine the effect that the public opinion had on federal policy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Die Wehrpflicht ist das legitime Kind der Demokratie.

Bundespräsident Theodor Heuss¹

On 11 April 1957 the first 10,000 young men were called up to serve in the new West German military, the Bundeswehr. Little more than ten years earlier Germany was reeling from the catastrophic consequences of the Nazi regime and the most destructive war of the twentieth century. To a man these young draftees had experienced the devastating effects of the last war as small children. A great number of them had lost fathers, uncles, or brothers on the battlefields of Europe. In many cases these new soldiers also lost mothers, grandparents, or siblings in the air raids on German cities. For each of them, however, the traumatizing effects of war had permanently altered their lives. Now, on 11 April 1957, they were called to serve West Germany by becoming soldiers in the Bundeswehr.²

At first, the idea of Germany rearming and drafting men into military service so soon after World War II appeared to be irrational at best. To be sure, this event elicited a strong emotional response from those whose lives had been affected by the war. The Allies had made great sacrifices during the war to defeat Nazi Germany and were from the start strongly opposed to the idea of a new German military. However, the events immediately following the war, the opening phase of the Cold War, quickly changed the attitude in Germany and the world. Soon after the end of World War II the Western powers and their Soviet allies disagreed sharply over the shape of the post-war world. As the two remaining superpowers, the United States and the

¹ Military duty is the legitimate child of democracy, “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, 16 January 1957, 14.

² Bundesministerium für Verteidigung, correspondence with author, 28 January 2009.

Soviet Union began to gather allies as they faced off in central Europe. The situation continued to deteriorate and when South Korea was invaded by communist North Korea in the spring of 1950 many in the West believed that an armed conflict with the Soviet Union in Europe was imminent. It soon became obvious to some that a West German contribution to the defense of Western Europe was necessary if the western powers hoped to stem the red tide. This shift in strategy precipitated the change of opinion about West German rearmament in the Western governments and allowed for the creation of an armed force in the Federal Republic that drafted young men into service.

Compulsory military service is well established in German history. While conscription has existed in some form for many centuries in Europe, modern conscription was first instituted in France in 1793 when the French National Convention called all able-bodied men to military service with the *levée en masse*. Napoleon later used conscription to build the massive armies that he led across Europe. Following its defeat at the hands of Napoleon, Prussia underwent a period of military reform. A product of this reform, conscription was established in Prussia in 1813. Determined to drive out the French as soon as possible every male citizen over the age of 17 was required to serve in the military. Conscription was continued in Prussia and later Germany until the end of World War I. The Versailles Treaty restricted the German army to 100,000 professional soldiers, effectively ending conscription in Germany for the time being. When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 he quickly began remilitarizing Germany and in 1935 reintroduced conscription. When World War II ended in 1945 conscription had been a part of German life, except for the seventeen years during the Weimar Republic, for centuries.³

This thesis explores public opinion toward compulsory military service in West Germany

³ Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (New York: Berg, 2004). Also see Roland G. Foerster, *Die Wehrpflicht: Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung*, (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994).

in the years leading up to and immediately following the establishment of the Bundeswehr and the subsequent institution of conscription. To find the answer a number of questions will be asked, such as: How did West Germans feel about military service in general? How did the West German population view military conscription so soon after World War II? For those who agreed with the draft, who were they, what was their socio-economic status, what were their political tendencies, and why did they agree? Who disagreed with the draft and what were their reasons? What effect, if any, did public opinion have on federal policy?

This study begins in the years immediately following the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. The end year of the research, 1956, corresponds with the year that conscription was established and the year that the Federal Defense Minister responsible for the passage of the law, Theodor Blank, left office. Blank was responsible for much of the rearmament process and worked closely with Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to achieve the Chancellor's goal of a stronger, sovereign Federal Republic of Germany.

The secondary material on the rearmament process in West Germany is substantial. While the interest shown in the Bundeswehr and its creation has increased since the collapse of the Soviet Union and German reunification, it is still thoroughly overshadowed by the continuing attention enjoyed by its predecessor, the Wehrmacht. This, however, is a trend that will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, works on the Bundeswehr continue to be published and contribute to a growing scholarship that remains influential. There are a number of significant books, in both English and German, that have influenced the field. Most notable among these is the multi-volume set produced by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (the Historical Research Office of the German Ministry of Defense) titled *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956*. This collection was authored by a group of accomplished German

historians and provides an all-encompassing look at West German rearmament that is a standard in the field. For a more manageable work, David Clay Large's *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* is excellent. Large attempts to bring together the key issues of German rearmament in an easily accessible work that is both broad and complete. His work is thorough, well detailed, easily read, and informative. However, because of its broad scope, one must look elsewhere to find more specific information about various aspects of West German rearmament.⁴

The subject of conscription in Germany, known as *Wehrpflicht* or *Wehrdienst*, has not received as much attention, especially in post-1945 Germany. Most of what is available about conscription in the Federal Republic can be found in the form of a chapter in a book or a portion of a chapter. For example, in 1992 the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt held a conference in Potsdam to compare the German history of compulsory military service to several other countries. This conference produced a number of papers from noted scholars on the subject; most notably Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg's paper "Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (The confrontation about the introduction of the defense-duty in the Federal Republic of Germany). His paper focused primarily on the political aspect of the *Wehrpflicht* debate and is quite informative.⁵ One of the best works on conscription in Germany is Ute Frevert's *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*. A study of conscription as it relates to German society, this book provides a wealth of information and analysis. Frevert argues that the paradigm of a 'nation in

⁴Federal Republic of Germany, *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956* vol. 1-4, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982-1993); David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁵ These papers were edited and collected in a book published by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, "Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in *Die Wehrpflicht: Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung*, edited by Roland G. Foerster, 107-118, (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994).

barracks' is, at its core, in conflict with the basic principles of civil society. This argument contradicts what some people in the Federal Republic believed was a primary benefit of compulsory military service, its ability to foster a more democratic society. Frevert, however, only devotes a portion of the last chapter of this book to conscription in the Federal Republic.⁶

Many studies of West German rearmament mention the *Wehrpflicht* debate in the Federal Republic. All of these works allude to the strong feelings this debate elicited in the West German population but the question of what exactly the public opinion of conscription was has not been fully investigated. Along with determining what the public thought about the draft, one must also determine why the West German people thought they way they did. These questions are what this study intends to explore and answer.

There is a wealth of primary material available that allows for the study of the public opinion of West German conscription. Some of the most readily available sources are newspapers from the Federal Republic. Since there were a large number of newspapers in circulation in West Germany during the 1950s it would be very time consuming, as well as redundant, to examine all of them. Thus, a selection of a few of the most popular publications will be used. Perhaps the most prominent news publication was (and still is today) the center-left news magazine *Der Spiegel* (The Mirror). Published weekly in the North German city of Hamburg, *Der Spiegel* was first printed in 1947 and has maintained a large readership for much of its existence. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (South German Newspaper), printed in Munich, has been in existence since 1945 and has been a widely read newspaper in Bavaria and the rest of Germany since its inception. It is known as a newspaper with a center-left political orientation. Printed daily in Frankfurt am Main the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Frankfurt General

⁶ Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*.

Newspaper) has been in existence since 1949. The *FAZ*, as it is known, has been traditionally liberal but has prided itself for its efforts to stick to the truth and to “make its reader think.” The Hamburg based newspaper *Die Welt* (The World) has been in existence since 1946 and has been known to have a conservative tilt. All of these newspapers were, and still are, widely read in the Federal Republic and by consulting them one is able to begin to determine how the general population received and discussed the major issues of the day. They were also the mouthpieces of the nation in the sense that the politicians in Bonn were continuously checking the headlines to see how their latest actions were being reported. It is through these news outlets that the general public had the best chance to alter political proceedings. Therefore a close look at how the *Wehrpflicht* debate was discussed in the news is imperative in a study such as this.

To assess the extent that public opinion influenced the politicians in Bonn it is essential to know what was discussed on the floor of the German parliament, the Bundestag. This is made possible by reading the Bundestag minutes in the *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages* (Minutes of the German Parliament). It is also helpful to have the wealth of statistical data on the early Federal Republic that is available from the Statistisches Bundesamt in its *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Statistical Yearbook for the Federal Republic of Germany).

Some of the most useful resources for a study like this are the public opinion polls that were conducted at the time. The Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach was founded in 1947 by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann and is regarded as one of the best polling organizations in Germany.⁷ Allensbach has been under contract by the government of the Federal Republic since 1950 to carry out monthly public opinion polls and was the first to

⁷ Allensbach is the name of the town where the Institute is based in southwestern Germany.

measure the former level of public support for the Nazi regime after the war. As well as providing the government with detailed public opinion data, Allensbach published their findings in a number of venues including news articles, pamphlets, and books. This study utilized the data collected by Allensbach to help determine the West German public opinion of conscription.

When World War II ended in devastating defeat for National Socialist Germany in May of 1945, the German nation underwent a period of dramatic change. This point in time, known as *Stunde Null* or zero hour, was for many Germans an opportunity to diverge from the path that Germany had taken during the past century.⁸ This new beginning was reflected in West Germany by the distinctly significant turn to the West. This turn to a democratic and a more socially responsible government fundamentally changed nearly every facet of German life both publicly and, although to a lesser extent, privately. One of the more significant changes was the disbanding of the Wehrmacht by the Allied Control Council on 20 August 1946.⁹ For the first time in centuries Germany existed without an armed force. Even following its defeat in World War I, Germany was still allowed to have a standing army, the Reichswehr. In fact, some consider the existence of a strong Reichswehr to be a contributing factor to the failure of the Weimar Republic. This time, however, the Allied powers were determined to prevent Germany from dragging the rest of Europe and the world back into war.¹⁰

Not only was the military disbanded but the image of the armed forces and the German soldier was tarnished. Soon after the end of the war the Allies began demilitarizing Germany to cleanse thoroughly the German people of the “Prussian militarism” that some believed had

⁸ For a good discussion on the memory of *Stunde Null* in Germany see Konrad H. Jarausch, “1945 and the Continuities of German History: Reflections on Memory, Historiography, and Politics,” in *Stunde Null: The End and the Beginning Fifty Years Ago*, Occasional Paper No. 20. (Washington, D.C.:German Historical Institute. (1997): 9-24).

⁹ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 25.

¹⁰ Ibid, 24.

plagued them for centuries. They attempted to demilitarize Germany in such a way that it would “never again be able to disturb the peace of the world.”¹¹ Along with demilitarization the Allied Powers began a process known as ‘denazification,’ which was designed to reeducate the German population and remove any evidence of the Nazi regime in Germany.¹² During these programs the Wehrmacht and the men who served in it were often blamed in part for the disaster of World War II.¹³ The Wehrmacht was also tainted by the horrific reality of the Holocaust and the atrocities committed during the war, particularly on the Eastern Front. At the Nuremberg war crimes trials a number of Wehrmacht officers and National Socialist officials were convicted for these crimes.¹⁴ Most soldiers, however, were never charged with any war crimes, but it was made clear that the court believed all members of the Wehrmacht “actively participated in all these crimes, or sat silent and acquiescent.”¹⁵ Many veterans believed they had fought honorably and had only done their duty for their fatherland and therefore were quite upset about being thrown in with the ‘few fanatical Nazis’ that had committed the crimes. To some degree the general public also believed this and were outraged along with the veterans when it was announced in 1946 that the former soldiers would not receive benefits such as pension payments. In the end, these issues tainted the German soldier and the military and military service came to be seen as ignoble in the eyes of many Germans.¹⁶

¹¹ Gordon Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960: The Case against Rearmament* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 34.

¹² For more discussion of denazification see Alexander Perry Biddiscombe, *The Denazification of Germany: A History 1945-1950* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007) and Constantine FitzGibbon, *Denazification* (London: Joseph, 1969).

¹³ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 25.

¹⁴ For more on the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial see Robert Conot, *Justice at Nuremberg*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1983) and Angelika Ebbinghaus and Klaus Dörner, *Vernichten und Heilen: der Nürnberger Ärzteprozess und seine Folgen*, (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2001).

¹⁵ Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 259.

¹⁶ The Allied Control Council Law 34 of 20 August 1946 suspended all legal and economic benefits for veterans and their families. Large, *Germans to the Front*, 25.

In June 1948, the Soviet Union blocked all access to the western sectors of Berlin in an attempt to gain complete control of the city.¹⁷ The eleven-month Soviet blockade of Berlin failed in the end because of the success of a massive campaign by the Western powers to airlift supplies into the western zones of the city. While this was a success for the Western powers, it also made clear the vulnerability of Central Europe to Soviet pressure. It became clear to some that West German soldiers would be required to help secure Western Europe from the threat of Soviet aggression.¹⁸

The situation continued to deteriorate when war broke out in Korea in the spring 1950. Soldiers of communist North Korea drove across the 38th parallel into South Korea in an invasion that took the American led United Nations troops by surprise. The UN forces were quickly overwhelmed and pushed south, down the Korean peninsula, in a matter of weeks. Many in the West saw this as a thinly veiled attempt by the Soviets to expand their sphere of influence into the other parts of the free world and some believed that Western Europe would be next. As the United States deployed more and more troops to Korea it was soon realized that without help from the Federal Republic the United States would not be able to maintain sufficient troop levels in Western Europe. The Allied powers quickly recognized that a West German contribution to the defense of Western Europe was essential to counter-balance the perceived Soviet threat.¹⁹ The Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Konrad Adenauer (Christian Democratic Union – CDU), realized in this situation a unique opportunity for the Federal

¹⁷ This was also retaliation on the part of the Soviets for the West German Currency Reform in June of 1948, Dennis Bark and David Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1989), 210.

¹⁸ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 36; Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 35; for more discussion of the Berlin Airlift see Gerhard Keiderling, *"Rosinenbomber" über Berlin: Währungsreform, Blockade, Luftbrücke, Teilung : die schicksalsvollen Jahre 1948/49*, (Berlin: Dietz, 1998) and Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Berlin Airlift* (New York: Atheneum, 1988).

¹⁹ For a discussion about the effect of the Korean War on the West German rearmament debate see Christian Griener, "Die alliierten militärstrategischen Planungen zur Verteidigung Westeuropas, 1947-1950," in *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, vol. I: Von der Kapitulation bis zum Pelven Plan*, (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1982).

Republic. Adenauer hoped that in return for a West German contribution to the defense of Western Europe he would be able to secure full sovereignty for the Federal Republic. With this in mind, Adenauer became a strong proponent of West German rearmament.²⁰ However, the West German people were by no stretch of the imagination united in support for rearmament.

In fact, most West Germans were bitterly opposed to rearmament in any form. The Social Democrat (SPD) Carlo Schmid told a party rally in 1946 that, while other nations “may continue to rearm, never again do we want to send our sons into the barracks. If the madness of war should break out again somewhere, ...then we would rather perish, knowing that it was not we who committed the crime.”²¹ Writing under the pseudonym Jens Daniel, *Der Spiegel* publisher Rudolf Augstein argued that the German people were not ready, both psychologically and physically, to rearm. He wrote that even if Germany were to rearm it would be too little too late to make a real difference if war broke out in Central Europe between the Allies and the Soviet Union. Augstein concluded, “Hang yourself or not - you’ll regret either.”²² Paul Sethe, another prominent journalist in the Federal Republic who was an editor for the *FAZ*, wrote an article for the *Frankfurter Heft* titled “The Decision on Life and Death” (*Die Entscheidung auf Leben und Tod*) where he described the paradoxes of West German rearmament. In order to rearm, Sethe wrote, the West German population would have to forget the previous five years of Allied denazification and demilitarization programs. They would also have to reverse the dismantling of the German war industry and soldiers would have to forget the implications of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. Not only would the Federal Republic have to forget the recent

²⁰ Charles Williams, *Adenauer: The Father of the New Germany* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 356, 365.

²¹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 35.

²² “Hänge Dich oder hänge Dich nicht – bereuen wirst Du beides.” Jens Daniel, “Soll man die Deutschen bewaffnen,” *Der Spiegel*, 2 October, 1948, 5; see also Roland G. Foerster, “Innenpolitische Aspekte der Sicherheit Westdeutschlands,” in *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, 431.

past, but also so would the rest of the world. Sethe wrote, “One arms the Germans, although they are still regarded as untrustworthy, in the hope that they already fight on the right side and will remain in the fight.”²³

While the West Germans were not ready to talk about the possibility of rearmament, the United States had already begun considering West German rearmament in the latter half of 1949 and the discussion heightened among the Allied Powers with the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany on 23 May 1949.²⁴ It was proposed that West Germany should make a contribution to its own defense.²⁵ The discussion soon reached the West German public where it became apparent that many West Germans did not approve.

For example, a 1950 poll by Allensbach asked participants, “Would you be in favor of Germany being invited, in connexion with the Atlantic Treaty and within the framework of a European Army, to build up her armed forces again?” Of the participants fifty-eight percent responded against rearmament, thirty-three percent were for rearmament, and fifteen percent were undecided.²⁶ Never the less, regardless of the sentiments of the population it soon became clear that the Federal Republic would rearm. The question became how and when.

²³The *Franfurter Hefte* was an important and widely read periodical that focused on cultural and political issues in the Federal Republic. “*Man bewaffnet die Deutschen, obgleich sie weiterhin als unzuverlässig gelten, in der Hoffnung, das sie schon auf der richtigen Seite kämpfen und im Kampf bleiben werden.*” Paul Sethe, “Die Entscheidung auf Leben und Tod” *Frankfurter Hefte*, 5 (1950), 907-913, quote from page 911.

²⁴ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 37.

²⁵ Ibid, 39.

²⁶ The typical number of people who participated in Allensbach polls was 2000. Elizabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann, *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1967), 436; See Appendix C, Table 1.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE *WEHRPFLICHT* DEBATE

As it became clear that West German rearmament was forthcoming, the question of how the Federal Republic would fill the ranks of the new military was raised. There were choices facing the government in Bonn: a military filled with volunteer professional soldiers, or one made up of conscripted soldiers. In the end the Federal Republic chose a middle course; a military comprised of volunteers and draftees, but the path that led to that decision was beset with difficulties that came from the full spectrum of West German society. The West German public had mixed feelings about the draft throughout the course of the debate. The major political parties also had a voice in the debate, as did trade unions and the clergy. This level of involvement was to be expected as the question of conscription was inextricably tied to a number of issues that were just as contentious as conscription itself.

Even though many believed that the Federal Republic would have to rearm itself in the near future, the idea was not universally accepted. With wounds still fresh from the most devastating war in modern history and caught between two superpowers who faced each other with nuclear weapons, many thought that West German rearmament was nothing short of madness. Championing this cause, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) was the most adamant voice of opposition to the government.²⁷

The Social Democratic Party in Germany is the oldest political party in Germany with roots as far back as the 1850s. Traditionally made up of the working class as an *Arbeiterpartei* (workers party), the SPD has sought to speak for workers and trade unionist from the left of the

²⁷ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 135.

political spectrum.²⁸ Decidedly anti-war after 1945, the Social Democrats went as far as to pass an anti-war resolution in 1947 stating that war should be banished “from the minds and hearts of men.”²⁹ Central to the Social Democrats’ argument against rearmament, and later conscription, was the fear that a remilitarized Federal Republic would further divide West Germany from its Eastern counterpart, the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik or DDR). The reunification of East and West Germany was at this point still seen as a possibility and many saw reunification as the primary issue facing the Federal Republic.

On the other side of the rearmament debate were a number of center-right political parties such as the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU), the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CSU), the Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP), and the German Party (Deutsche Partei, DP). Early on the CDU and CSU had become sister parties and formed a common faction where they have often been referred to as the CDU/CSU faction. The CDU/CSU, FDP, and DP created a coalition government after the 1949 and 1953 Federal elections with Konrad Adenauer as Federal Chancellor.

Founded in 1945, the CDU brought Catholics and Protestants together in a common conservative party. Made up of former Deutsche Zentrumsartei (German Center Party, the Catholic political party) members as well as other conservatives, the CDU bridged the gap between the two Christian faiths to make one of the most powerful political parties in post-war Germany. From the beginning, Konrad Adenauer was key to the organization of the CDU. Born in the Rhineland city of Cologne on 5 January 1876, Adenauer entered politics in the early

²⁸ The SPD began to shift from an *Arbeiterpartei* to a *Volkspartei* in the 1960s to broaden its appeal to voters, a change that Gordon Drummond attributes to the rearmament debate of the 1950s, Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 4.

²⁹ Ibid, 35.

1900s. A devout Roman Catholic, Adenauer had been a member of the Catholic Center party and was elected mayor of his home city of Cologne in 1917. Adenauer's time as mayor was cut short in 1933 when the Nazis came to power and because he refused to work with the party he spent most of the Nazi regime in hiding. After the war, Adenauer was noticed by the Allies and served again as mayor of Cologne for a short time. Adenauer played a key role in the founding of the CDU and led the young party into the first democratic elections in 1949. As the leader of the CDU Adenauer was elected the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic in the 1949 Federal election, a position he would hold until 1963. As Federal Chancellor, Adenauer fought to strengthen West German ties with the western powers since he was convinced that the Federal Republic had to turn to the west and become more democratic and socially responsible. For a significant portion of his time as Federal Chancellor, Adenauer fought to secure full sovereignty for the Federal Republic.³⁰

Initially focused on simply building the new republic, the CDU/CSU soon became strongly in favor of rearmament. The basis for this was the belief that the Federal Republic could not gain full sovereignty without a military to defend it. There was also a real concern with the Soviet threat. The CDU/CSU was alarmed by the seemingly aggressive moves being taken by the Soviet Union, most notably the Berlin Blockade and Soviet troop levels in East Germany, and wanted to be sure that the Federal Republic would be able to defend itself. Concerned that the Allied governments would abandon West Germany if the Soviets attacked, the party believed the Federal Republic would be better served with a military of its own.³¹

³⁰ For more on Adenauer see Terrence Prittie, *Konrad Adenauer, 1876-1967*, (Chicago: Cowles Book Co, 1971); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: A German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution, and Reconstruction*, (2 vols, Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995-1997); Adenauer also wrote an excellent set of memoirs in the final years of his life that are insightful, see Konrad Adenauer, *Erinnerungen*, vols. 1-4, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1965-1968).

³¹ Large, *Germans to the Front*.

The Federal Ministry of Defense was officially established in October of 1950 with Theodor Blank appointed as the first Defense Minister. Born on 5 September 1905, in a small town in western Hesse, Elz an der Lahn, Blank was also a founder of the CDU. As a loyal supporter of Adenauer, the Chancellor charged Blank with quietly preparing the way for rearmament. His office, known as the *Amt Blank* (Blank Office), was officially responsible for affairs relating to Allied occupation troops. However, as time progressed the primary focus became the re-establishment of the military. The *Amt Blank* was responsible for many rearmament issues, including conscription.³²

In 1950 a plan was proposed by the French Prime Minister René Pleven to create a pan-European defense community (EDC) that would include military contributions from a number of Western European nations, including West Germany. This proposal became known as the Pleven Plan and was meant to prevent the Federal Republic from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and therefore allowing the Western Powers to control any West German military force. The plan was eventually torpedoed by Pleven's own government in 1952 as some in the French parliament believed that such an arrangement would threaten France's national sovereignty. Despite its failure, the plan helped pave the way for discussion, both internationally and domestically, about West German rearmament.³³

Allensbach polled the West German population in March 1950 about their opinion of conscription. The results indicated that most Germans, just five years since the end of World War II, were against the draft. The question posed by Allensbach was "Are you, in principle, for

³² "Der härteste Schädel in Bonn," *Der Spiegel*, 10 December 1952, 6-13; Christian Greiner, "Die Dienststelle Blank," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 17 (1975): 99-124; For an excellent study of the *Amt Blank* see Dieter Krüger, *Das Amt Blank: die schwierige Gründung des Bundesministeriums für Verteidigung*, Einzelschriften zur Militärgeschichte, 38. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1993).

³³ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 130.

or against compulsory military service?” Of the participants, fifty-five percent said that they were against conscription and thirty percent said that they were for it. The remaining fifteen percent were undecided about the matter.³⁴

The first time conscription was publicly discussed was in October 1950 when Blank’s predecessor, Count Gerhard Schwerin who was in charge of the unofficial Ministry of Defense, told reporters in Bonn that he believed the Federal Republic would have to introduce conscription to staff the military adequately. A clear breach of policy this statement was not well received within the government or in the public sphere. This blatant political misstep was one of the reasons for Count Schwerin’s quick dismissal and Blank’s appointment.³⁵ The first official statement about conscription was made by Blank in January 1952 when Bonn felt that the time had come to introduce the draft. In a discussion with Allied officials, Blank estimated that the German contribution to a European army might consist of more than a million drafted soldiers. This information was received with some skepticism in the West German press, as some were unsure of how the government would be able to call up so many men for service. The Social Democrats were quite vocal in their opposition to this proposal as they believed that any discussion about rearmament and conscription at that point was premature and out of line. Before any discussion of conscription could occur there first had to be laws regarding the rights of soldiers and, most importantly, the right to establish a military. There were, however, some indications that the West German public was beginning to warm up to the idea of a drafted military.³⁶

³⁴ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443. See Appendix C, Table 7.

³⁵ “Bundesregierung plant ‘Wehrgesetz’ mit allgemeiner Wehrpflicht,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 25 October, 1950, 1; “Allgemeine Wehrpflicht,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 October, 1950, 1 (hereafter FAZ); On Adenauer’s reaction to Count Schwerin’s statement see *Die Welt*, 28 October, 1950, 1.

³⁶ “1,2 Million Rekruten sollen eingezogen werden,” FAZ, 7 January, 1952, 2; “Blank kündigt die Auslert-Dienstpflicht an,” FAZ, 21 January, 1952, 1.

However, when given the choice between a drafted military or a volunteer force, West Germans chose the latter of the two. When Allensbach polled the West German population in September 1951 about the choice of a volunteer or conscripted army the people strongly favored a volunteer force. The question posed to the participants was, “If rearmament cannot be avoided, should the German units comprise of volunteers, or should conscription be reintroduced?” Of the respondents fifty-six percent favored a volunteer army and twenty-eight percent favored a conscripted army. The remaining sixteen percent were undecided. While this does not indicate whether or not the population was opposed to the draft in principle, it clearly shows that in 1951 they preferred the military be manned by volunteers and not their conscripted sons and brothers.³⁷ Another reason for preferring a volunteer army was the belief that a large conscripted military was no longer needed. In an age of nuclear technology a small, highly trained, professional army seemed to some to be the most logical option. Why have a large army of conscripts with only a few months of training when the enemy would be attacking with nuclear weapons instead of mass armies of soldiers and tanks? In response, those in favor of a conscripted army pointed to the great number of Red Army soldiers in East Germany and asked if the age of big armies had really passed.³⁸

In 1953 Allensbach again asked the public about conscription as it had in 1950 and recorded decidedly different results. In November 1953 the number of West Germans in favor of conscription had increased dramatically to fifty percent of the population with thirty-one percent stating that they were against the draft. On this occasion, however, the number of people who were undecided also increased to nineteen percent.³⁹ This shift of opinion probably reflected the

³⁷ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443. See Appendix C, Table 6.

³⁸ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 256.

³⁹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443. See Appendix C, Table 7.

effect that the Korean War had on the West German population, as many believed that West Germany was the next target for communist expansion.⁴⁰

By 1954 the West German people had begun to warm up to the idea of an independent German army. When polled in July 1954 participants were asked, “Do you support or reject the proposal to build up an independent German army?” Of the respondents forty-three percent supported the creation of an independent German army with twenty-three percent undecided and thirty-four percent against the proposal. While the largest percentage was in favor of an independent German army, a significant number remained either undecided or against it. This is an indication that there was no clear consensus about West German rearmament among the population.⁴¹

The population also disagreed about the effect that the creation of an independent German army would have on European harmony. The question posed to West Germans by Allensbach in September 1954 asked, “Do you think the rearmament of West Germany will serve to consolidate peace in Europe, or will it increase the danger of war?” Of the respondents thirty-four percent thought that rearmament would consolidate peace in Europe. Thirty-three percent believed that rearmament would increase the danger of war and twenty percent thought that rearmament would cause no change. The remaining thirteen percent had no opinion. Once again, no clear consensus about West German rearmament emerged.⁴²

The West German youth who were of draft age also played a role in the discussion about rearmament and conscription. Many were vehemently opposed to military service and were quite vocal about their opinions. Some young men accepted the principles of rearming West

⁴⁰ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 62.

⁴¹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 436.

⁴² Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 436. See Appendix C, Table 2.

Germany and were willing to serve in a new military. On average, however, young men in the Federal Republic were generally opposed to rearmament and conscription. This is fairly understandable, as they would be donning uniforms and filling the ranks of the new armed forces where they would quite possibly be fodder for a nuclear war. Another concern was the treatment that they would receive in the new military. Having heard the stories of the difficulties of life in the barracks of the Wehrmacht from their fathers and uncles, many young men were not convinced when they were assured that the “new” army would be different. To counter this, the government attempted to foster a sense of duty and patriotism among West German youth with publicity campaigns and public discussions.⁴³ Journalist Paul Sethe described the attitude of many young West German men in an article in the *FAZ* titled “The Will of the Twenty Year Olds.” He wrote that while some of the West German population had unenthusiastically acknowledged that rearmament would be a political necessity, the young men of the Federal Republic continued to oppose it vehemently. Sethe wrote, “The twenty year olds, who will be called to arms for a lengthy time, however tend to have the strongest aversion against the thought of having to put on a uniform. It can be claimed that the emotional resistance against military service is as strong in no European country at the moment as it is in the Federal Republic.”⁴⁴

By May 1955, the West Germans were still in disagreement about whether or not the Federal Republic should have its own army. In a poll that May Allensbach asked, “If a referendum were held tomorrow to decide whether we in West Germany should have an army and you could only vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, would you vote for or against an army?” The results of

⁴³ “Bonn Tries to Stir Interest in Army,” *NYT*, 9 December, 1954, 8.

⁴⁴ “Diejenigen aber, die nächstens für längere Zeit zu den Waffen gerufen werden sollen, hegen die stärkste Abneigung gegen den Gedanken, Uniform anziehen zu müssen. Die Behauptung darf gewagt werden, dass zur Zeit in keinem europäischen Land der gefühlsmäßige Widerstand gegen den Wehrdienst so stark ist wie in der Bundesrepublik.” Paul Sethe, “Der Wille der Zwanzigjährigen,” *FAZ*, 10 November, 1954, 1.

the poll were fairly evenly split with forty-five percent of the participants responding negatively and forty percent responding affirmatively, the remaining fifteen percent said that they would not vote on the referendum.⁴⁵

From the outset of the *Wehrpflicht* debate the topic of conscientious objection was at the forefront. The right of an individual to refuse military service based on principle was enshrined in the *Grundgesetz*, the basic law (a constitution), when West Germany was founded in 1949. The fact that the right of conscientious objection was written into the *Grundgesetz* caused many proponents of conscription to believe that the men who drafted it foresaw the need to institute compulsory military service.⁴⁶

All of the major political parties in the Federal Republic supported the draftees' right to refuse military service to varying degrees. The Social Democrats fought hard for a very broad interpretation of the law while the CDU/CSU was very specific about exactly who should be able to object and for what reasons. Adenauer's government believed that the law should only apply to conscientious objectors who objected to military service because they were either fundamentally opposed to war in any situation or objected for religious reasons. The SPD thought that every individual had the right to object based on his conscience for a number of reasons. Some Germans, the SPD maintained, might conscientiously object to military service because of life circumstances. For example, a person in a divided Germany might object to military service where they would be required to fight against other Germans, or if they had family still living in the Soviet zone. Others might have lost family because of the war or because of Nazi persecution. Some Germans might conscientiously object to military service because of the use of nuclear weapons. The Social Democrats felt that the right of conscientious

⁴⁵ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 438. See Appendix C, Table 4.

⁴⁶ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 71.

objection was applicable to anyone who refused to perform military service for reasons of conscience.⁴⁷

The West German population was also in disagreement about the right of conscientious objection. When polled by Allensbach in December 1953 West Germans were asked, “It will also have to be decided whether it should be permissible to object to military service. Do you think those called up should, or should not, be allowed to object to military service?” Of the participants, fifty-one percent thought that a person should be allowed to object to military service and thirty-one percent thought that a person should not be allowed to object. The remaining eighteen percent responded saying that they did not know.⁴⁸

The same question was again asked in January 1955 with similar results. Of the participants, forty-five percent said that a person should be allowed to object and thirty-nine percent said that a person should not be allowed. When asked three months later in March 1955 comparable results were recorded with forty-eight percent responding that objection should be allowed and thirty-five percent saying that it should not be allowed.⁴⁹

If a young man was to be allowed to object to military service, the question then became: What should he do in lieu of military service? West Germans responded strongly in favor of the conscientious objector performing some sort of service when asked in December 1953, “Should men who have been exempted from military service on the grounds of conscience perform other duties instead, or should they be wholly exempt from service of any kind for the war?” Of those polled sixty percent of the collective said that the exempted men should perform some other kind of service and twenty percent said that they should be wholly exempt. Of the remaining eighteen

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 449. See Appendix C, Table 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

percent responded saying that they did not know and two percent said, “Refusal to do military service was quite out of the question.”⁵⁰

When the participants were separated into groups based on gender, a number of differences in each group’s responses became apparent. The male participants responded sixty-five percent in favor of the objectors doing some sort of service and twenty-one percent said that they should be wholly exempt. Of the remaining, twelve percent said that they did not know and two percent opposed conscience objection from the outset. The female group responded a bit differently. Fifty-six percent said that objectors should perform some sort of service and nineteen percent said that objectors should be wholly exempt. When compared to the men’s response the women answered saying that they did not know twice as often as the men with twenty-four percent.⁵¹

The next step for Allensbach was to determine what kind of alternative service an objector should perform. Allensbach asked in December 1953, “What should conscientious objectors do?” The collective response was twenty-eight percent in favor of home service, eight percent said service with the medical corps, five percent said that they should join the forces but not on active duty, forty percent were against their doing any other service, and four percent had no definite response.⁵²

By 1955 it had become clear that the Federal Republic was going to rearm and the West German population would have to come to terms with the reality of a new German military. An Allensbach poll indicated that because of the stigma attached to military service after the war most West Germans advised young men against joining the army. According to the January

⁵⁰ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 449. See Appendix C, Table 16.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. See Appendix C, Table 17.

1955 poll, West German participants were asked, “If someone asked you whether he should become a regular soldier in the new German Army, would you advise him to do so, or would you advise against it?” Those polled responded with forty-seven percent as advising against and only nineteen percent advising in favor of army service. Of the remaining respondents twenty-two percent were undecided and twelve percent said that it depended on the situation.⁵³ The same question was posed to West Germans in February 1956 with fairly similar results. One interesting difference in the 1956 poll with the one in 1955 was an eight percent increase in participants who responded as undecided in 1956. The percentage of the responses for military service decreased four percent and those against military service decreased three percent. This seems to indicate that as the actual establishment of the *Bundeswehr* drew near the population became increasingly unsure of how they felt about military service.⁵⁴

Interestingly the West German population responded strongly in favor of military service when asked a similar question by Allensbach in January 1955. The participants were asked, “Would you say that the influence of military service is by and large good or bad for young people?” Of the participants, a resounding seventy-five percent said that the influence of military service was good for young people and only eleven percent said that the influence was bad for young people. Of the remaining nine percent were undecided and five percent had no opinion. When categorized by age all of the respondents clearly believed that military service was a good influence. However, as the age of the participants increased the likelihood that they thought it was a good influence also increased.⁵⁵ This data points to some very interesting conclusions regarding how West Germans felt about the influence of military service. Some

⁵³ Ibid, 445. See Appendix C, Table 11.

⁵⁴ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 21.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

may have seen military service as the ‘school of masculinity’ much as it had been viewed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was widely believed that the military taught young men order and good manners, both traits that any parent would want their child to possess. Women were strongly in favor of the army teaching the West German youth these qualities. This may have been due to the absence of father figures in the home in post-war Germany because of those who were lost in the war, thus leaving the youth to be raised by the women in the household. Many women may have seen the army as a place that could provide guidance for their sons and in the process instill in them self-assurance, responsibility, camaraderie, and maturity. Adenauer was conscious of the military’s ability to serve this purpose as he wrote in a promotional pamphlet “The common military service under the same conditions will have many young people experience what comradeship is... Military service - Education for life.”⁵⁶

The role of the military as the ‘school of the nation’ apparently did not apply to the young women of West Germany. When polled by Allensbach in January 1955 if women should be called into the service West Germans responded emphatically. The question posed was, “When we in West Germany have an army again, do you think women should be called up for auxiliary military service, or not?” A solid seventy-seven percent responded “No,” twelve percent said that they should only serve as volunteers. Only eight percent said that women should be conscripted and three percent said that they did not know. The very low percentage of people who responded saying that they did not know indicates that the West German population was quite decided on the issue.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ute Fervert has an interestingly analysis of this where she discusses conscription and gender roles in Germany, Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*, 274; Adenauer quote, “*Der gemeinsame Wehrdienst unter den gleichen Bedingungen wird viele junge Leute erfahren lassen, was Kameradschaft ist ... Wehrpflicht - Ausbildung fürs Leben.*” “Was Kameradschaft ist,” *Der Spiegel*, 16 May, 1956, 16.

⁵⁷ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 449. See Appendix C, Table 18; This issue

The question of the influence of military service on the youth was again posed to the West Germans in March 1956 with similar results. This time sixty-one percent responded saying that the influence of the military was good for young people and twelve percent said that it was not. A larger percentage, seventeen percent, were undecided and ten percent had no opinion. These differences indicate that some West Germans still had reservations about the benefits of military service, as the Bundeswehr became a reality in the fall of 1955.⁵⁸

On 5 May 1955 the Allied High Commission formally dissolved the Occupation Statute and the Federal Republic became a sovereign nation and was subsequently admitted to NATO as a full member.⁵⁹ After a heated debate in the Bundestag the Bundeswehr was established and Federal Defense Minister Blank commissioned its first soldiers on 12 November 1955.⁶⁰ The date coincided with the 200th birthday of the great Prussian military reformer of the early nineteenth-century, Gerhard von Scharnhorst, whose ideals and traditions the Bundeswehr had chosen to embrace as its own.⁶¹ With the Bundeswehr established, the debate over conscription soon became increasingly contentious as it became clear that sufficient troop levels could not be reached with volunteers alone.

would later be raised again as women wanted the opportunity to serve alongside men in the *Bundeswehr*. In a 2000 ruling by the European Court of Justice women gained the right to volunteer and serve in any capacity, including combat roles, Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*, 279.

⁵⁸ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 446.

⁵⁹ Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, 345.

⁶⁰ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 243.

⁶¹ This concurrence was intended as the *Bundeswehr* wished to establish connections with the Prussian reformers of the early nineteenth-century. For an excellent discussion of the military traditions of the *Bundeswehr* see Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 166.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEBATE

Following the establishment of the Bundeswehr in November 1955 the *Wehrpflicht* debate became one of the primary political issues in West Germany. Now part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Federal Republic was obligated to make a military contribution to the defense of Western Europe. This contribution would consist of twelve divisions totaling around 500,000 men. Having had little success in recruiting a sufficient number of volunteers, Federal Defense Minister Blank soon realized that conscription would be necessary if the Federal Republic were to meet its obligation to NATO. This knowledge only heightened the controversy about conscription as people from all aspects of West German society voiced their opinions about the draft in the hopes that they would be able to influence the outcome of the debate in parliament. Rudolf Augstein in *Der Spiegel* later criticized the rearmament plan for being incompatible with the political atmosphere. Augstein wrote “*In such a situation, to insist on the 500,000 men, too little to protect us, sufficient to obstruct all political possibilities, is Don-Quixote.*”⁶² While many of the arguments for and against conscription had already been voiced, several new ones were articulated in the months leading to the Bundestag debate.⁶³

One issue brought up was the effect that compulsory military service would have on the fledgling West German economy. The economy of the Federal Republic had been growing since the currency reform in 1948 and by the early 1950s West Germany had begun to experience the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) that would be the hallmark of the decade. Most of the

⁶² “*In solch einer Situation auf den 500 000 Mann zu beharren - zu wenig, uns zu schützen, genug, uns alle politischen Möglichkeiten zu verbauen -, ist Don-Quichotterie.*” Jens Daniel, “Krieg Auf Der Falschen Seite?” *Der Spiegel* 1 August, 1956, 8.

⁶³ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 220, 260.

available labor supply was absorbed by the quickly growing economy and some began to worry that conscription would further deplete the labor pool and consequently increase labor costs for the West German industries.⁶⁴

Some in the agricultural sector were particularly concerned about the possibility of a military draft. Since agricultural work was physically demanding but did not require any specialized training, young men right out of school were one of the cheapest and most readily available sources of labor. If conscription was implemented this labor source might very well disappear and the farmers would have to hire foreign workers to meet their labor needs. Bavarian politician Hans Utz voiced the frustration that some Bavarian farmers had with the proposal of a draft stating, "I have no understanding for it that our sons are sharpened on the barrack square against their will while imported Italian foreign-workers sleep with our girls."⁶⁵ The Deutsche Bauernbund (German Farmers Association) also voiced concerns about the draft stating that there was "hardly an occupation with a more acute manpower shortage than agriculture."⁶⁶ Alongside agriculture, many businessmen were against conscription as they feared that the draft would hurt the economy. Other industries feared that they would lose skilled workers to the draft who would be expensive to replace.

Another concern of the economic sector was the length of service of the draftees. The government in Bonn wanted at minimum an eighteen-month service period in the Bundeswehr. This length of time was considered essential because of the specialized training that was required of soldiers in a modern army. This proposal quickly met opposition. In an attempt to reduce

⁶⁴ Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, 268-271.

⁶⁵ "Ich hob koan Verständnis dafür, daß unsere Söhne auf dem Kasernenhof gegen ihren Willen geschliffen werden, während importierte italienische Fremdarbeiter bei unsern Madln schlafen," "Mir san bloß Infanterie," *Der Spiegel*, 15 February, 1956, 17.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Large, *Germans to the Front*, 255.

length of time that young men would be kept from the work force the various industries immediately fought for a twelve-month service period.⁶⁷

These concerns were well founded as the unemployment numbers indicated that a draft would further tax the already tight labor supply. The number of unemployed in the Federal Republic had been steadily declining since 1950 and by September 1955 only 2.7 percent of the work pool was unemployed. Of the male work pool only 225,100, or 1.8 percent, were unemployed. Therefore the proposed number of 500,000 soldiers, of which a large majority would be conscripts, caused great alarm among the businesses and industries in the Federal Republic.⁶⁸

Another factor was the stigma attached to military service. The occupation of a West German soldier in 1956 was not a very respected one. When polled by Allensbach in February 1956 the participants were asked, “Who enjoys the most respect in the community, the regular soldier or the skilled worker?” Of the respondents seventy-two percent said that the skilled worker enjoyed the most respect in the community and nine percent said that it was the regular soldier who enjoyed the most respect. The remaining nineteen percent had no opinion. Not only were the various businesses and industries clamoring to keep their workers, most of the West German population would rather see their young men as skilled workers in the economy rather than soldiers in the Bundeswehr.⁶⁹

In a public statement in late March 1956, Federal Defense Minister Blank described the government’s conscription proposal in an attempt to calm those who opposed the draft. In

⁶⁷ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 253.

⁶⁸ Federal Republic of Germany, *Statistisches Bundesamt. Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1959*, “Beschaeftigte und Arbeitslose,” (European official statistical series on microfiche. Bishops Stortford, Herts: Chadwyck-Healey, 1974), 121 Table 5a. Microfiche. See Appendix B, Tables 1 and 2.

⁶⁹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 445. See Appendix C, Table 10.

defending the government's proposal of conscription, Blank pointed out that many other Western European nations such as France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Great Britain had a draft. Therefore, it was perfectly reasonable for the Federal Republic to conscript men into the Bundeswehr. In his discussion of the draft, Blank compared the draft periods in the other nations' armies to the eighteen-month period proposed by Bonn. The British army had a twenty-four month service period, while the French, Dutch, and Belgian armies each had eighteen-month terms. Along with the service periods, Blank compared the size of each nation's military with the 500,000 man Bundeswehr that the Federal Republic proposed. Each nation had a military that composed between one and two percent of their respective populations while the Bundeswehr with half a million troops would only consist of one percent of the West German population. Again, Blank claimed, the Federal Republic was not unreasonable in its proposal.⁷⁰

In March 1956 the West German population seemed to be in favor of conscription. Allensbach again posed a question as they had in March 1950 and November 1953. This time the question was worded differently. The meaning, however, was the same it was just simply made more direct. Allensbach asked the participants, "Are you, in principle, for or against military conscription – in other words, that every man who is fit for service should be called up?" The response was much the same as in 1953, fifty percent said that they were in favor of the draft and thirty-two percent said that they were against it. The remaining eighteen percent were undecided.⁷¹

In this case, however, Allensbach categorized the responses based on a number of factors including age, gender, education, type of employment, income, confession, political orientation,

⁷⁰ "Blank besteht auf der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht," *FAZ*, 28 March, 1956, 1.

⁷¹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443; Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 17. See Appendix C, Table 19.

where they lived (city or country), and whether they were refugees or locals. This kind of detailed information allows us to look much closer at what kind of West German was for or against conscription. It also provides the opportunity to attempt to determine why they were for or against it.⁷²

When categorized by age the participants' responses differ slightly. The age groupings for both men and women were as follows, sixteen to twenty-nine years, thirty to forty-four years, forty-five to fifty-nine years, and sixty years and older. The youngest age group for both men and women was the least in favor of the draft. The young men were more likely to be against the draft with forty-seven percent responding against and forty-two percent responding in favor. Since this was the age group that would in all probability be called up for service it is to be expected that they would respond the most unfavorably about draft. The rest of the age groups were fairly in favor of the draft with about fifty-three percent for and about thirty percent against.⁷³

The level of education of the participants was also reported. There were three education categories that participants could report as their level of education. The lowest was the Volksschule, the basic primary education and the equivalent of completing the 8th grade (approximately seventy-nine percent of the population at the time). The next level of education was Mittlere Reife, a diploma for those who went to Realschule, similar to high school and the equivalent of completing the 10th grade (approximately seventeen percent of the population at the time). The highest educational level was the Abitur, which is the diploma for those who went to Gymnasium and passed the final exam similar to a college prep school. These individuals were allowed to continue their education at the university (approximately four percent of the

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

population at the time). Those who had attended Volksschule responded the least in favor of conscription with forty-eight percent for and thirty-three percent against. The remaining nineteen percent were undecided, the highest of all three categories. People with this level of education would most probably be lower working class and therefore most likely Social Democrats. The participants who had the Mittlere Reife responded the most in favor of conscription with fifty-eight percent for, twenty-six percent against, and sixteen percent undecided. Those who had the Mittlere Reife would have probably been middle class tradesmen or office workers. Of the participants who had an Abitur, fifty-five percent were in favor of the draft, thirty-five percent against, and only ten percent were undecided. A person with an *Abitur* would likely have gone to a university and be upper middle class to upper class.⁷⁴

This seems to indicate that those with only a Volksschule level of education were the least likely of the respondents to be in favor of the draft, possibly in part because of their SPD affiliation. They were also the most undecided and this seems to indicate that perhaps because of their level of education they were less informed about the situation. The group that was the most likely to be in favor of compulsory military service was those who had received their Mittlere Reife, who were probably mostly middle class office workers. The individuals who were the most educated were also the most decisive with only ten percent undecided. This is indicative of a collection of well-informed people who had strong opinions about the *Wehrpflicht* debate.⁷⁵

The participants' occupations provide information about what West Germans in different types of employment thought about conscription. There were three options for participants to select for the type of their employment. The categories were, *Arbeiter* (worker), *Landwirtschaftliche Berufe* (agricultural employment), and *Schreibtischberufe* (office

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

employment). While these categories were very broad they help to describe the socio-economic background of the participants. The participants who were workers responded forty-five percent in favor of conscription, thirty-seven percent against, and eighteen percent undecided. Again the working class would have most likely been in favor of the Social Democrats and therefore against conscription in principle. The participants who worked in the agricultural sector responded forty-nine percent in favor of the draft, twenty-five percent against, and twenty-six percent undecided, which was the most of any category. Some farmers might have responded against the draft based on the fear that they would lose their labor supply to the Bundeswehr. Most, however, would have probably been conservative and therefore would have supported the CDU/CSU and been for the draft. Those who worked in an office were the most in favor of conscription with fifty-eight percent for, twenty-seven percent against, and only fifteen percent undecided. This group was also probably mostly middle-right conservative and therefore Christian Democrats.⁷⁶

The participants' monthly income based on the primary wage earner in the household was also recorded. For those whose income was less than 250 Deutsche Mark (DM) a month forty-seven percent were in favor of the draft, twenty-nine percent were against, and twenty-four percent were undecided (the highest percentage of any income category). The next income bracket was 250 DM to 400 DM a month. The participants who fell into this category responded forty-nine percent in favor, thirty-five percent against, and sixteen percent undecided. The next income category was 400 DM to 600 DM a month. Of the participants that were in this group fifty-six percent were in favor of the draft, twenty-eight percent were against, and sixteen percent were undecided. The final income category was for those whose monthly income exceeded 600

⁷⁶ Ibid.

DM. The participants who were in this income bracket responded fifty-one percent in favor, thirty-four percent against, and fifteen percent undecided. This information indicates that those who were in the higher monthly income brackets were more decisive than the participants who were in the lowest monthly income bracket. Once again the difference in the percentage of undecided responses might have been caused by of a difference in the level of political awareness of the respondents in the various income levels. Interestingly, each income bracket was mostly in favor of the draft with only twenty-eight to thirty-five percent against it, this might suggest that income was not as much of a factor.⁷⁷

Allensbach also recorded the religious confession of the participants when this poll was conducted. There were three options presented to the participants: Protestant, Catholic, or other faith/without confession. Those who selected Protestant responded fifty percent in favor of the draft, thirty-four percent against, and sixteen percent undecided. The participants who said they were Catholic responded fifty-two percent in favor of conscription, twenty-seven percent against, and twenty-one percent undecided. Of those who said they were of another faith or were without a confession thirty-eight percent responded in favor of the draft, forty-nine percent against, and thirteen percent undecided. The Catholics and Protestants responded alike in favor of conscription. This category would have been primarily center-right conservatives and most likely CDU/CSU supporters. The group that was not Protestant or Catholic would have been predominantly center-left liberal and probably Social Democrat.⁷⁸

Allensbach made a point to record whether a person was a refugee or a local. This was an important distinction to make as large numbers of East Germans and ethnic Germans from lost territories in the east had fled to the Western Allies' zones at the end of the war. These

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

refugees now made up a significant portion of the West German population and their experiences often affected how they felt about political situations in West Germany. Of the participants who were refugees, fifty-seven percent were in favor of conscription, twenty-five percent were against, and eighteen percent were undecided. The local participants were forty-nine percent in favor of the draft, thirty-four percent against, and seventeen percent undecided.⁷⁹

Another distinction made by Allensbach was place of residence. Respondents could select village or small town, small or mid-sized city, or big city. Those who said that they lived in a village or small town responded forty-eight percent in favor of the draft, twenty-seven percent against, and twenty-five percent undecided (the highest percentage of the categories). Of the participants who lived in a small or mid-sized city, fifty-five percent were in favor of conscription, thirty-one percent against, and fourteen percent undecided. The final category, those who lived in a big city, recorded forty-six percent in favor of conscription, thirty-six percent against, and eighteen percent undecided. This information suggests that those who lived in a small town or village may have been less informed about the *Wehrpflicht* debate as they were the most undecided. The big city inhabitants were the least in favor of the draft; this may be an indication of Social Democrat tendencies among the working class that lived in the big cities of West Germany.⁸⁰

In what was perhaps the most informative portion of this poll, Allensbach asked the participants about their political orientation. The participants were given the option of choosing between CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP/DVP or another political party. The participants' responses were characteristically in accordance with party doctrine. As expected the participants who indicated that they were CDU/CSU supporters responded strongly in favor of conscription with

⁷⁹ Ibid, 18.

⁸⁰ Ibid; "Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr," *Der Spiegel*, 18 July, 1956, 29.

sixty-six percent for, seventeen percent against, and seventeen percent undecided. The participants who supported the SPD were not as clearly in line with the party doctrine with thirty-nine percent in favor of the draft, fifty-three percent against, and ten percent undecided. The participants who were followers of the FDP/DVP were fairly in line with their party in their responses with sixty-four percent in favor of conscription, thirty-two percent against, and four percent undecided. The last group of participants was those who were affiliated with other unidentified political parties, they responded fifty-six percent in favor of the draft, twenty-nine percent against, and fifteen percent undecided.⁸¹

Allensbach then categorized the participants' responses based on gender. The information gained from this gender-based categorization indicates that the West German men were more decisive than the women and more inclined to follow their party line on issues. The men who supported the CDU/CSU responded seventy-two percent in favor of the draft, sixteen percent against, and twelve percent undecided. The men who supported the SPD responded thirty-eight percent in favor of conscription, fifty-three percent against, and nine percent undecided. The men who reported the FDP/DVP as their party responded sixty-three percent in favor of the draft, thirty-three percent against, and only four percent undecided. Those who said that they supported other unidentified political parties responded fifty-six percent in favor of conscription, thirty-three percent against, and eleven percent undecided.⁸²

When the men's responses are compared to the responses of the female participants a number of differences can be seen. The women tended to be more undecided and less likely to follow party doctrine. It is possible that the women were less informed about the *Wehrpflicht* debate and therefore unsure of how they felt about conscription. Or they may not have been as

⁸¹ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 18.

⁸² Ibid.

completely sold on the party rhetoric as the men and agreed or disagreed with the party doctrine. Of the women who were supporters of the CDU/CSU sixty-two percent responded in favor of the draft, eighteen percent against, and twenty percent were undecided. The women who supported the SPD responded noticeably out of line with party doctrine with forty-three percent responding in favor of the draft, forty-seven percent against, and ten percent undecided. The women who supported the FDP/DVP responded nearly the same as the male supporters with sixty-six percent in favor of conscription, thirty percent against, and four percent undecided. The women who supported another unidentified party also responded much the same as the men with the same affiliation with fifty-five percent for the draft, twenty-four percent against, and twenty-one percent undecided.⁸³

At the same time Allensbach attempted to determine the reasons why people responded in favor of conscription in a poll that simply asked, “Why are you in favor of it?” Thirty percent replied that they favored the draft “On educational grounds.” Eight percent replied that they felt that “No exceptions should be made, all should have the same civic responsibilities.” Seven percent said that they were in favor “On military grounds (so that everyone will be capable of defending the country).” Of the remaining four percent had no concrete answer and forty-nine percent of the people who responded that they were in favor of conscription were not asked why. It is not surprising that educational reasons were the primary motives for a favorable opinion of the draft. Many West Germans believed that military service filled a sort of ‘school of the nation role’ in society and that the young men of the Federal Republic were in need of the education that the Bundeswehr could provide.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443. See Appendix C, Table 12; “Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr,” *Der Spiegel*, 18 July, 1956, 29.

In April 1956 Allensbach asked a detailed question regarding conscription and voluntary service that received varied results. The question posed to the participants asked,

At present there are two plans under discussion in Bonn: According to the first one, all young men fit for service should be drafted, which amounts to compulsory military service. The other plan is for a regular armed force consisting only of volunteers who can sign on for life. These regulars would, in the course of time, be trained to become technical specialists. What, in your opinion, would be the best solution for us: a regular army of voluntary specialist or an army in which all fit men would serve?⁸⁵

For the collective results, forty-four percent responded saying that they thought that an army in which all must serve was the best solution. Thirty-seven percent believed that the best solution was a regular volunteer army and nineteen percent were undecided. The responses are then categorized based on gender and age. The men responded forty-nine percent for a conscripted army, forty percent for a professional army, and eleven percent responded undecided. When categorized by age the male respondents began to differ noticeably.⁸⁶

Of the eighteen to twenty-nine age group (born between the years 1927-1938) only thirty-eight percent said that they thought a conscripted army would be best and fifty-one percent said a professional army would be best with eleven percent undecided. This seems to indicate that since the eighteen to twenty-nine age group would contain the young men who would be drafted into the military they might be the most likely to oppose general conscription.⁸⁷

The next age group contained the men between thirty and forty-four years of age (born between the years 1912-1926). This group responded forty-eight percent in favor of a conscripted army, forty-six percent in favor of a professional army, and six percent responded undecided. This group contained the men who were of military age during the war; it is quite

⁸⁵ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 19.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

possible that the majority of the respondents were veterans with personal experience in the military. It is interesting then that this group had such an even percentage of responses of being in favor of a conscripted or a regular army and such a low percentage of undecided responses. This indicates that even for those who possibly had the most experience with military service they were fairly evenly split on how the Bundeswehr should be manned.⁸⁸

The following age group contained those respondents who were between forty-five and fifty-nine years of age (born between the years 1895-1911). This age group responded slightly in favor of a conscripted army with fifty-two percent in favor of drafted army, only thirty-four percent in favor of a professional army, and fourteen percent undecided. This age group also probably contained a significant portion of war veterans from both World Wars. Other factors, however, might be contributing to the shift in favor of conscription, more on this in a moment.⁸⁹

The final age group were those men who were sixty years of age or older (born before 1895). This group responded in favor of compulsory military service with sixty percent for a conscripted army, twenty-eight percent for a professional army, and twelve percent undecided. This age group probably contained a significant number of World War I veterans. As with the previous age group, these men probably remembered the old Wilhelmine Reich and the military traditions that prevailed at the time. Another factor that might have contributed to the support of a conscripted army by the group could have been family considerations. Many saw the military as place where young men could learn traditional values such as honor, duty, and a sense of national pride. This consideration might have also played a role in the thirty to forty-four age group as well since they might have had sons near military age.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

While the men who participated in the poll responded differently based on their age, the women who participated were, regardless of age, fairly uniform in their responses. For the women participants, forty percent were in favor of a conscripted army and thirty-five percent were in favor of a professional army. The most significant difference in the women's responses was the noticeably higher percentage of 'undecided' responses, twenty-five percent as compared to only eleven percent of the male respondents. This may have been because of a lack of awareness about the issue. The fairly even split between those in favor and those against indicates that West German women were not uniform in their opinion about a drafted or volunteer army.⁹¹

Allensbach also asked the participants to indicate which political party they supported. Those who said that they were CDU/CSU affiliates responded fifty-six percent in favor of a drafted army, twenty-three percent in favor of a volunteer army, and fifteen percent were undecided. The participants who said that they supported the Social Democrats responded fifty percent in favor of a volunteer army, thirty-seven percent in favor of a drafted army, and thirteen percent undecided. Those who were supporters of the FDP/DVP responded fifty-one percent in favor of a conscripted army, thirty-three percent in favor of a volunteer army, and ten percent undecided. This data indicates that most participants responded in line with their political parties' doctrine. The coalition government of CDU/CSU and FDP/DVP had proposed conscription as the best option for acquiring the manpower needed to field the Bundeswehr. Not only would conscription provide the troops needed to fill the ranks, an army of soldiers drafted from all strata of West German society would create a more socially responsible and democratic

⁹¹ Ibid.

Bundeswehr.⁹² The Social Democrats, however, were in opposition to the government as well as rearmament and therefore opposed conscription. The SPD also opposed conscription on moral grounds as they saw it as a form of militarizing the population. In a campaign to win voters who were opposed to military service SPD officials stated, “If you do not want your son to become a soldier, then vote SPD.”⁹³ There was also the argument that in an age of nuclear warfare it would be best to have a small, highly specialized, professional army of volunteers as opposed to a large army made up of short term conscripts. In each category, however, there was a significant percentage of participants who responded against the party line, an indication that the opinion of West Germans wasn’t completely dictated by their political affiliation.⁹⁴

As previously indicated one of the points of contention in the *Wehrpflicht* debate, both in the Bundestag and in the public, was the period of service for the draftees. The military advisors at the Defense Ministry had originally recommended a two-year service period but since the government knew that the West German public would never accept such a lengthy service period this recommendation was reduced to the eighteen-month period that was formally proposed.⁹⁵ The eighteen-month service period was considered by some to be too long and instead they proposed a twelve-month term. Allensbach polled West Germans in April 1956 about the period of service asking participants, “If compulsory military service is introduced in Germany, if every fit young man is called up, it will be necessary to decide on the period of service. Some say eighteen months, others consider twelve months to be adequate. What do you say?” The participants responded largely in favor of a twelve-month service period. Of the respondents,

⁹² “Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr,” *Der Spiegel*, 18 July, 1956, 29.

⁹³ “Wehrpflicht Debatte,” *FAZ*, 16 April, 1956, 1.

⁹⁴ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 19.

⁹⁵ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 255.

forty-six percent favored twelve months and twenty-eight percent favored eighteen months. Of the remaining, eighteen percent were undecided and eight percent favored other service periods.⁹⁶

When categorized into male and female groups one notices differences between the two groups responses. The men responded with forty-six percent in favor of twelve months and thirty-seven percent in favor of eighteen months, a noticeable increase from the collective response. Nine percent were undecided, and eight percent of the men were in favor of other service periods. The women also responded with forty-six percent in favor of the twelve-month service period and only twenty-one percent in favor of the eighteen-month service period, sixteen percent less than the corresponding male group. Another major difference was the percentage of respondents who were undecided, twenty-five percent, a significantly larger percentage when compared to the male responses. There are a number of reasons for the differences between the male and female responses. Men may have taken military considerations in mind when they chose the eighteen-month service period over the twelve-month period. At the same time the women responded less favorably to the eighteen-month service period. Perhaps this was because of family considerations, women might have considered that a longer service period would mean their sons would be away from home and possibly in harms way for a longer period, a prospect that they certainly did not take pleasure in. Again we see a noticeably higher percentage of undecided responses from women than the men. This is perhaps because of a lack of awareness of political issues. Another factor could be that the women who were married might not have

⁹⁶ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 446. See Appendix C, Table 13.

agreed with their husband's opinion but did not want to oppose them and chose to respond undecided.⁹⁷

The conscription bill passed its first reading in the Bundestag on 4 May 1956. During the debate both the Coalition parties and the Social Democrats stated their arguments about the establishment of conscription. Christian Democrats and their coalition partners defended their position on the draft citing the same arguments that they had made in the preceding months. They insisted that the military threat from the Soviet Union made conscription imperative so that the Bundeswehr could be properly manned and ready to defend the Federal Republic. The Christian Democrats also reiterated their point that a conscripted army would be best for the Federal Republic because it would draw civilians from every part of West German society. Thus making the Bundeswehr a cross-section of the population of the Federal Republic rather than a single minded professional army that existed as a 'state within a state.' Conscription would also prevent the existence of an army like the Reichswehr of the Weimar era, an institution that was shut off from "the free democratic spirit and the fresh air of civic responsibility."⁹⁸

The Social Democrats also argued the points that they had made in the months leading to the debate that May. The Social Democrats accused the Adenauer government of neglecting reunification in the pursuit of West German rearmament. They warned that if the Federal Republic introduced the draft the DDR would do the same and consequently this would deepen the division between East and West Germany. What would result would be two large German armies facing each other across the River Elbe that would seriously threaten any hope of reunification. In response to Bonn's assessment of the international situation, the Social

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Große Mehrheit bejaht allgemeine Wehrpflicht," *Die Welt*, 5 May, 1956, 1; Quotation from Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, 4 May, 1956. 29:7535A.

Democrats stated that the government misunderstood Soviet intentions and that raising a large military was the last thing that should be done in the current state of affairs. The Social Democrats also argued that conscription would not guarantee a democratic and socially responsible army. It was the attitude of the officers, the SPD argued, that dictated the spirit of the army, not the soldiers who served in it. Instead of conscription the Social Democrats argued for a volunteer army “as a reasonable alternative.”⁹⁹ This view was reiterated in *Der Spiegel* later that year when Rudolf Augstein, under the pseudonym Jens Daniel, argued for a professional army rather than one made up of conscripts as the best option for the possibility of German reunification. Augstein stated, “We need, in modification of the Bismarck quote, a ‘powerful, but small army,’ a professional army, since the Soviets will exclude conscription for a set of years out of consideration for the DDR.” Augstein was careful to note that at this point he did not think that the building of the *Bundeswehr* itself should be reduced, rather that its pace be slowed.¹⁰⁰

The conscription bill passed the first reading with a vote by a show of hands. The final reading of the bill would be in early July just before the summer recess. The parties, however, could not decide on an eighteen-month service period or a twelve-month period. The SPD fought for the twelve-month period while the CDU coalition was determined to set the service period at eighteen-months. Aware of the difficulty the service period could cause the passage of the conscription bill the government compromised and agreed to read the bill in July without mention of a service period. The opposition and the government decided that they would take up

⁹⁹ Erler, *Verhandlungen*, 4 May, 1956, 29:7493A-7498C; “Große Mehrheit bejaht allgemeine Wehrpflicht,” *Die Welt*, 5 May, 1956, 1.

¹⁰⁰ It was believed by some that the Soviets would not introduce a draft in the DDR if the BRD did the same. “Wir brauchen, in Abwandlung des Bismarck-Wortes, eine “schlagkräftige, aber kleine Armee”, eine Berufsarmee, da die Sowjets die allgemeine Wehrpflicht für eine Reihe von Jahren mit Rücksicht auf die DDR ausschließen werden.” Jens Daniel, “Sollen Wir Mehr Rüsten?” *Der Spiegel*, 12 December, 1956, 10.

the issue when the Bundestag returned from the summer recess in September.¹⁰¹

The second reading of the conscription bill began on 4 July 1956. The Social Democrats argued each line of the bill in an attempt to wear down the CDU coalition but the government remained resolute. Not able to get the Christian Democrats to compromise on any portion of the bill the Social Democrats walked out of the Bundestag in disgust and protest. The reading continued without them and the bill passed without opposition.¹⁰²

The final reading of the conscription bill began on 6 July 1956. As testament to the controversy of conscription among the citizens of the Federal Republic, the final debate over the bill lasted from nine o'clock in the morning of 6 July until nearly four in the morning on 7 July. The Social Democrats and their allies fought the CDU coalition through every line of the bill. All of the arguments from the preceding months were made again as both sides bitterly fought throughout the tense debate.¹⁰³

One of the more controversial points in the debate was the issue of conscientious objection. The Adenauer government was willing to honor the right of conscientious objection to military service but only with strictly defined conditions. While the Social Democrats agreed that the right of conscientious objection should be upheld they vehemently disagreed with the conditions put forth by the government. They maintained that anyone should have the right to object based on their conscience, whatever that may be. They believed that the state had no right to determine the validity of anyone's conscience, once an individual stated his conscience he

¹⁰¹“Wehrpflicht Debatte,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9/10 June, 1956, 1; Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, “Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.” 116.

¹⁰² “Die Opposition verläßt den Bundestag aus Protest,” *Die Welt*, 5 July, 1956, 1; “Ollenhauer vermißt den Bundeskanzler,” *FAZ*, 5 July, 1956, 1.

¹⁰³ “Höhepunkt des Streites um die Wehrpflicht,” *FAZ*, 7 July, 1956, 1; “Erbittertes Ringenum das Wehrpflichtgesetz,” *Die Welt*, 7 July, 1956, 1.

should not have to prove that “he was not a *Schweinehund*.”¹⁰⁴

The CDU/CSU faction responded that while Parliament should be conscious of the rights of the conscientious objectors, it also had to be concerned about national security and therefore could not allow conscientious objection for any number of reasons. Along with rights each citizen also had duties and these duties included defending the nation. Any state that would allow any of its citizens the right to refuse military service would effectively be committing suicide.¹⁰⁵ The CDU coalition did however change the conditions for conscientious objection to exempt men who had close relatives in the East or who had lost immediate family (parents or siblings) in World War II. This change was in line with the public opinion on the issue. When polled by Allensbach a few months earlier, participants were asked if young men with family in the Soviet zone should have the right to refuse to do military service. Of the participants, fifty-four percent said that the young men should have the right to refuse, twenty-two percent said that no allowances should be made, and twenty-four percent were undecided.¹⁰⁶

The debate went back and forth in the Bundestag over all of the issues. Adenauer had come forward during the debate and had made a forceful speech in an attempt to persuade the opposition that he had no intentions of building up the Bundeswehr to challenge the Soviets. He concluded his speech stating, “We want to lead no crusade against Soviet Russia, but we want something, that is: To protect the freedom of our country.” Adenauer’s speech, however, did not move the opposition. The Social Democrats made it clear that they were not trying to write a better conscription law, they were trying to prove that it did not need to be written at all.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Literally a “Swine-Dog” but basically a “Bastard,” Arndt, *Verhandlungen* July 4, 1956, 31:8594A.

¹⁰⁵ Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, 6 July, 1956, 31:8848D; “Erlebnis auf dem Heuberg,” *Der Spiegel*, 18 July, 1956, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 449; “Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr,” *Der Spiegel*, 18 July, 1956, 29.

¹⁰⁷ “Parole für Wehrpflichtige,” *Der Spiegel*, 11 July, 1956, 11. “Wir wollen keinen Kreuzzug gegen Sowjetrußland

The debate over the conscription bill lasted for nearly eighteen hours and by the time the debate ended both sides had exhausted themselves. The conscription bill passed the Bundestag with a vote of 269 to 166 with twenty abstentions. While the Social Democrats fought every point of the law they were unsuccessful in having any real effect on the bill. The CDU coalition was able to pass the bill with a few minor changes. The process, however, was difficult and there still was no agreement about the draftee's term of service. The debate over the conscription bill indicated that when the term of service issue came to the Bundestag it too would be hotly contested.¹⁰⁸

führen, aber was wir wollen, das ist: Für unser Land die Freiheit bewahren."

¹⁰⁸ *Verhandlungen*, 7 July, 1956, 31:8894.

CHAPTER 4

THE FALLOUT

The passage of the conscription bill was a victory for Adenauer's government but the victory came with a cost. Adenauer's loyal cabinet member, Defense Minister Blank, had taken the brunt of the public displeasure over conscription in the past year and his public approval ratings were in a decline. Theodor Blank by the summer of 1956 had become quite unpopular with the West Germans. In June of that year, forty-eight percent had a negative opinion of him, twenty-nine percent had no opinion and a mere seventeen percent had a good opinion.¹⁰⁹ He was also declining physically as his health was weakened by the strain of the debates. Even with the progress made on rearmament, the Federal Republic was falling behind schedule and NATO had become dissatisfied with the Federal Defense Ministry. Having taken fire from all sides, Blank was beginning to be seen by the government as a liability. Adenauer reluctantly fired Blank in October and replaced him with Franz Josef Strauß.¹¹⁰ Strauß, a Bavarian and founding member of the CSU, was an effective spokesman for rearmament and was well liked by both the public and NATO thus making him the best candidate for the position.¹¹¹

After the Bundestag returned from summer recess that September they soon began to debate the service term of the draftees. In a move that surprised many the Adenauer government proposed a twelve-month service period instead of the eighteen-month term that they had previously fought for. The change was made because of the government's recognition that the eighteen-month term was very unpopular with the West German public and therefore Bonn felt a need to acquiesce to the public will. This was also a move to appease the economic sector, as the

¹⁰⁹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 284.

¹¹⁰ Blank was later made Labor Minister in 1957; Adenauer, *Erinnerungen 1955-1959*, (Vol. 3. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1965) 246; Krüger, *Das Amt Blank*, 170-173.

¹¹¹ "Der Primus," *Der Spiegel*, 2 January, 1957, 11.

longer service period was incredibly unpopular with them as well. The shortened service period, however, alarmed the NATO members, as they feared the Federal Republic would not be able to meet its manpower commitment. NATO voiced their disapproval of the proposal but the government was not intimidated. Bonn chose to consent to domestic opinion and stick with its proposal of a twelve-month service term. The service period bill went through two readings in the Bundestag where it was opposed by the SPD. Even though the service period had been shortened the Social Democrats still fought it on principle. Their arguments had no real effect and the bill was quickly passed at its second and final reading on 5 December 1956.¹¹²

Once the conscription law was passed it was by no means wholeheartedly accepted by the West German population. Many young West Germans refused to register for the draft and the local draft boards were unsure of what to do. In an article printed in *The Nation*, correspondent John Dornberg described the situation in Germany. Titled “Defying the Draft: German Youth Rebels” Dornberg wrote that many draft boards throughout West Germany were reporting that the nineteen year olds who were required to register for the draft were not reporting. In fact in a number of large cities only a small portion of eligible young men reported, for example in Nuremberg less than twenty-five percent registered by the deadline, in Munich less than ten percent reported, and in Cologne barely half of those eligible showed up to their draft board. Dornberg also reported that a number of city officials also refused to participate in draft registration. In the city of Dortmund, fifteen city officials who had been sent to work on the draft board refused to go to work. Dornberg quotes the representative of the group saying

¹¹² Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 189-191; Large, *Germans to the Front*, 259-260; *Verhandlungen*, 5 December 1956, 33:9840; Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, “Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.” 116.

“We’re not going to send our own kids to the army. Our conscience would bother us if we had to register those boys.”¹¹³

Resistance to the draft was a popular concept among the West German population and a number of conscientious objection organizations sprang up in the Federal Republic in the fall of 1956. These groups often provided information about the right to conscientious objection for young men who wished to object to military service as well as free legal counsel. Interestingly these groups also organized citizens from the general population who conscientiously objected to military service but who were not liable for the draft. These people would never be called to serve in the Bundeswehr yet they organized to protest conscription. Many were war veterans who, because of their own experiences, wanted to make sure that the young men of the Federal Republic would never have to experience the horrors of war. Along with war veterans these groups counted among their members people from other parts of West German society such as university professors, clergy, trade unionists, and housewives. Voicing the opinion of many, the leader of the Group of Defense Service Objectors (Gruppe der Wehrdienstverweigerer) Hans Nickel stated,

I’m a product of your American reeducation program. I was drafted into the German Army as a teen-ager and served until the Hitler regime collapsed. In 1945 you Americans told us that we should never again have an army. In 1950 your reeducation officers all packed their bags and went home. Coming in behind them were your generals and politicians who told us to get busy on rearmament. I’m sticking to the original lesson. It appeals to me, and besides I’m getting tired of being reeducated.¹¹⁴

Many West Germans could relate to Hans Nickel’s experiences, they had lived through the devastation of World War II and the occupation that followed. They were thoroughly devoid of

¹¹³ John Dornberg “Defying the Draft,” *The Nation*, 8 December, 1956, 494.

¹¹⁴ Since Dornberg was an American Hans Nickel addressed the U.S. in his statement. Dornberg “Defying the Draft,” 495.

any militaristic feelings and were unwilling to see German youth forced to serve in a new German army. As well as providing legal council these groups also actively lobbied for the rights of conscientious objectors in the courts.¹¹⁵

Enshrined in the *Grundgesetz*, the right to conscientious objection to military service was the legal basis for much of the resistance to the draft. The law states “No one may be compelled against his conscience to perform military service under arms.”¹¹⁶ Conscientious objection was included in the Basic Law primarily to prevent the reemergence of a military that conscripted young men who were morally opposed to military service. A young man could object to military service for a few specific reasons. Those who were opposed to military service for religious reasons, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses or Quakers, were allowed to do so. The young men who objected to military service on personal moral grounds could also make a case for conscientious objection. However, one had to be against all military service in principle, not just on a conditional basis. This was because of the government’s concern that those who objected to a war with nuclear weapons or a Bruderkrieg (literally fratricidal war) with East Germany would make up a large portion of the population and therefore significantly reduce the capabilities of the Bundeswehr.¹¹⁷

Interestingly, with all the activity and publicity concerning the right of conscientious objection, a very small percentage of the men called up actually claimed the right. In fact, of the 100,000 men mustered for the first draft in April 1957 (those inspected by the draft boards but not actually drafted), only 328 (0.3 percent) claimed the right of conscientious objection. Of those mustered only 10,000 were actually called up for service in the first draft. This seems to

¹¹⁵ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, 16 January, 1956, 14.

¹¹⁶ Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970* (Bonn: Federal Minister of Defense, 1970), 82.

¹¹⁷ Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, 6 July, 1956, 31:8848A.

indicate that while many of the West German population were aware of the right to conscientious objection only a small portion of those who could actually claim the right did so. This may have been because the government had been able to convince many of the young men that the Bundeswehr was actually a very different military from the Wehrmacht of Nazi Germany. One could also make the argument that the young men liable for the draft believed that the rights granted to them as soldiers were indeed as progressive and democratic as the government had said they were and therefore military service would not be as oppressive as they had once believed. Regardless of the reasons for such a low percentage of conscientious objectors, this seems to indicate that the men liable for conscription may not have been as opposed to the draft as the opinion polls indicated.¹¹⁸

To determine what the West German population thought about conscription after it had become law, Allensbach polled the population four times in the two years immediately following the establishment of conscription. They asked those who were in favor of keeping the Bundeswehr if they would like to see conscription continued or discontinued. The question posed by Allensbach read as follows, "...if it were possible to discontinue compulsory military service – would you like to see it discontinued, or retained?" In the first polling in November 1956, thirty-eight percent said that they would retain conscription and fifteen percent said that they would like to discontinue the draft. Thirteen percent were undecided and thirty-four percent of the people polled were from the outset in favor of disbanding the Bundeswehr altogether. The same question was posed in December 1956 after the twelve-month service period had passed in the Bundestag. This time the results indicated that people were more in favor of the draft, due

¹¹⁸ "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, 16 January, 1956, 14; Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, "Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," 107; In fact the percentage of conscientious objectors in the Federal Republic stayed at a very low level until the late 1960s, Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970*, 265.

possibly to the twelve-month service period. Of the respondents, forty-one percent claimed that they would retain conscription and twelve percent said that they would like to discontinue it. Of the remaining participants eleven percent were undecided and thirty-six percent were from the outset in favor of disbanding the Bundeswehr. The poll was again conducted in February 1957 as the first draftees were being mustered and the results indicated that people were again increasingly in favor of compulsory military service. Of the people polled, forty-three percent said that they would retain conscription and thirteen percent said that they would discontinue it. The rest of the participants responded fourteen percent undecided and thirty percent were from the outset in favor of disbanding the Bundeswehr. The final poll was conducted in October 1958. This time the percentage of people who responded in favor of retaining the draft decreased to thirty-eight percent. At the same time, however, only eight percent of the respondents said that they would like to discontinue conscription. The percent of people who responded as undecided increased to twenty-one percent and thirty-three percent were from the outset in favor of disbanding the Bundeswehr.¹¹⁹

This data seems to indicate that once the service period was decided on and the first draft approached the West German population grew increasingly in favor of the draft. Once the first conscripts were beginning to be mustered the polls again recorded an increase that points to the conclusion that West Germans were becoming more comfortable with conscription as it was starting to work in practice. The final poll showed a decrease in the percentage of people in favor of the draft but at the same time the percentage of those who would like to discontinue it was the lowest of all four polls. The data points to an increasing percentage overall of West Germans who favored conscription.

¹¹⁹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 440. See Appendix C, Table 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Throughout the *Wehrpflicht* debate, both in the public and political spheres, the opinion of the West German population varied considerably on a number of issues. Overall the population of the Federal Republic was in favor of conscription. Those who opposed the draft, however, composed a significant minority in the Federal Republic. West Germans, whether they were for or against the draft, were influenced by a number of factors in their lives. For example: a male between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine, who lived in a big city, had a basic Volksschule education, was employed as a worker, made 250 DM to 400 DM a month, who had no religious confession, and was a supporter of the SPD would be very likely to be opposed to the draft. On the other hand a woman between the ages of forty-five and fifty-nine, who lived in a small city, held a Mittlere Reife, was employed at a desk job, made 400 DM to 600 DM a month, who was Catholic, and supported the CDU/CSU would most likely be in favor of the draft. These socio-economic factors influenced peoples' opinions about conscription in various ways. While one can draw informed conclusions about the various factors that may contribute to a person's opinion, one may never completely understand why a person holds the opinions that they do.

Generally each West German citizen's opinion had representation in the Bundestag with the support of the politicians from either the CDU/CSU coalition or the SPD led opposition. As in every democracy it was not possible to honor the views of every citizen. Therefore a decision had to be made about the various concerns. Inevitably the CDU coalition won the *Wehrpflicht* debate because of the majority that Adenauer's government held in the Bundestag. Therefore the government was able to choose which course to take in establishing the draft. The decision that

the government made, however, was in line with what the majority of the population of the Federal Republic wanted. The CDU/CSU coalition respected the will of the public majority in the Bundestag and passed a conscription law that was in accordance with their wishes.

The research indicates that public opinion in the Federal Republic did in fact have an effect on government policy. When it came to conscientious objection the public, and Bonn, was strongly in favor of maintaining the soldiers' legal rights. However when the debate about who could object and for what reasons surfaced, the CDU coalition honored the population's wishes to allow men who had family in the Soviet zone to object to military service; a circumstance that the government was not willing to approve in the beginning of the *Wehrpflicht* debate. When the length of service issue came to the fore, people from many different parts of West German society called for the shorter twelve-month period instead of the eighteen-month term. These West Germans were housewives, business owners, farmers, and young men; all opposed to the eighteen-month service period. Bonn, which had originally proposed the longer term, gave in to the public pressure, at the risk of angering its NATO allies, and passed the twelve-month period. These are clear examples of West German public opinion having an effect on government policy.

Immediately following the end of World War II most Germans wanted nothing to do with anything war related. The devastation of World War II had effected the German population and made many Germans anti-military. As the international situation began to change so too did the opinions of the German population. The division of Germany and the ensuing Cold War caused many West Germans to rethink their views on the military and military service. When first mentioned, the idea of conscripting young men into a new German military was unimaginable to many in the Federal Republic but by the time that the Bundeswehr was established in 1955, the majority of West Germans favored military conscription. At the same time a large majority of

the population felt that military service was a good influence for young men. This shift in public opinion could be seen throughout the Federal Republic in the newspapers and the opinion polls. The young West German government paid close attention to the views of its citizens and acted accordingly. Along with a number of other issues, the *Wehrpflicht* debate was one of the early tests of the new West German democracy.

APPENDIX A
DRAFT STATISTICS

Draft statistics.¹²⁰

Relationship of the registered to the examined, the military service capable, and to the military service draftees 1937-1940.

Birth year	Registered	Examined	Capable of Military Service	Draftees	Rejected at muster
1937 II	194.940	188.129	151.762	68.175	-
1938	434.724	411.389	336.512	113.037	-
1939	470.201	434.220	340.970	98.887	81.400
1940	464.418	393.853	309.654	147.095	71.073
Sum	1.564.283	1.239.462	1.138.898	427.194	152.473

¹²⁰ Dietrich Bihr, “Die Durchführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und die mögliche Erhebung einer Wehrdienstausgleichsabgabe als Ausgleich für nicht abgeleisteten Wehrdienst: ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um die Wehrgerechtigkeit” (PhD diss., Universität Mannheim, 1973), 201.

APPENDIX B

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Table B.1. Employment Statistics.¹²¹

Employed and Unemployed 1950-1958

Date	Employed and Unemployed			Employed			Unemployed		
	Men	Women	Men and Women	Men	Women	Men and Women	Men	Women	Men and Women
12. 1950	11.040.800	4.812.200	15.853.100	9.800.000	4.363.000	14.163.100	1.240.800	499.200	1.690.00
3. 1951	10.973.700	4.839.500	15.813.200	9.853.100	4.393.400	14.246.500	1.120.600	446.100	1.566.700
9. 1951	11.129.600	4.990.000	16.119.600	10.333.700	4.551.000	14.884.700	795.900	439.000	1.235.000
12. 1951	11.197.100	5.039.700	16.236.800	10.050.100	4.533.200	14.583.300	1.147.100	506.500	1.653.600
3. 1952	11.137.500	5.025.600	16.163.100	10.062.500	4.521.000	14.538.500	1.075.000	504.600	1.579.600
9. 1952	11.319.200	5.187.700	16.506.900	10.677.800	4.778.500	15.456.300	641.400	409.200	1.050.600
3. 1953	11.387.700	5.215.900	16.597.600	10.438.300	4.766.300	15.204.700	943.300	449.500	1.392.900
9. 1953	11.587.200	5.398.400	16.985.600	10.997.900	5.046.600	16.044.400	589.400	351.800	941.200
3. 1954	11.686.400	5.499.100	17.185.500	10.711.400	5.046.800	15.758.100	975.100	452.300	1.427.400
9. 1954	11.922.200	5.731.100	17.653.200	11.461.000	5.369.700	16.830.700	461.100	361.400	822.500
3. 1955	12.029.200	5.818.500	17.847.800	11.066.500	5.375.800	16.442.300	962.800	442.70	1.405.500
9. 1955	12.251.100	6.050.500	18.301.600	12.026.000	5.780.700	17.806.600	225.100	269.900	495.00
3. 1956	12.395.400	6.155.300	18.550.700	11.728.800	5.802.600	17.531.400	666.600	352.700	1.019.300
9. 1956	12.633.500	6.387.000	19.020.500	12.453.800	6.155.600	18.609.400	179.700	231.400	411.100
3. 1957	12.700.900	6.465.900	19.166.800	12.298.400	6.166.200	18.464.600	402.500	299.700	702.200
9. 1957	12.749.500	6.584.900	19.344.400	12.560.000	6.406.900	18.966.900	189.500	178.000	367.500
3. 1958	12.807.000	6.620.300	19.428.000	11.974.000	6.345.800	18.319.800	833.700	274.500	1.108.200
9. 1958	12.953.600	6.738.500	19.692.100	12.792.900	6.571.700	19.364.600	160.700	166.900	327.600

¹²¹ Federal Republic of Germany, *Statistisches Bundesamt. Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1959*, "Beschäftigte und Arbeitslose," 121 Table 5a. Microfiche.

Table B.2. Unemployment Statistics.¹²²

Unemployment Rates 1950-1958

Date	Rate of Unemployed		
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men and Women (%)
12. 1950	11.2	9.3	10.7
3. 1951	10.2	9.2	9.9
9. 1951	7.2	8.8	7.7
12. 1951	10.2	10.0	10.2
3. 1952	9.7	10.0	9.8
9. 1952	5.7	7.9	6.4
3. 1953	8.3	8.6	8.4
9. 1953	5.1	6.5	5.5
3. 1954	8.3	8.2	8.3
9. 1954	3.9	6.3	4.7
3. 1955	8.0	7.6	7.9
9. 1955	1.8	4.5	2.7
3. 1956	5.4	5.7	5.5
9. 1956	1.4	3.6	2.2
3. 1957	3.2	4.6	3.7
9. 1957	1.5	2.7	1.9
3. 1958	6.5	4.1	5.7
9. 1958	1.2	2.5	1.7

¹²² Ibid.

APPENDIX C
POLLING DATA

Table C.1.¹²³

Question: *"Would you be in favour of Germany being invited, in connexion with the Atlantic Treaty and within the framework of a European Army, to build up her armed forces again?"*

	March 1950		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
No	52	51	53
Yes	33	39	27
Undecided	15	10	20
	100	100	100

Table C.2.¹²⁴

Question: *"Do you think the rearmament of West Germany will serve to consolidate peace in Europe, or will it increase the danger of war?"*

	September 1954		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Consolidate peace	34	41	28
Increase danger of war	33	30	35
Cause no change	20	23	17
No opinion	13	6	20
	100	100	100

Table C.3.¹²⁵

Question: *"What effect do you think a West German army will have on the economy? Will it be favourable or unfavourable to general living conditions?"*

	February 1955		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Favourable	37	41	33
Unfavourable	28	33	24
All depends	9	11	8
Do not know, no opinion	26	15	35
	100	100	100

¹²³ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 436.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 437.

Table C.4.¹²⁶

Question: *"If a referendum were held tomorrow to decide whether we in West Germany should have an army and you could only vote 'Yes' or 'No', would you vote for or against an army?"*

	May 1955		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
For an army	40	46	34
Against an army	45	44	47
Would not vote	15	10	19
	100	100	100

Table C.5.¹²⁷

Question addressed to persons who were not from the outset in favour of disbanding the Bundeswehr: *"And if it were possible to discontinue compulsory military service - would you like to see it discontinued, or retained?"*

	Nov. 1956 (%)	Dec. 1956 (%)	Feb. 1957 (%)	Oct. 1958 (%)
Discontinued	15	12	13	8
Retained	38	41	43	38
Undecided	13	11	14	21
From the outset in favour of disbandment	34	36	30	33
	100	100	100	100

Table C.6.¹²⁸

Question: *"If a rearmament cannot be avoided, should the German units comprise volunteers, or should conscription be reintroduced?"*

	September 1951		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Volunteers	56	59	54
Conscription	28	31	25
Undecided	16	10	21
	100	100	100

¹²⁶ Ibid, 438.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 440.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 443.

Table C.7.¹²⁹

Question: "Are you, in principle, for or against compulsory military service?"

	March 1950 (%)	Nov. 1953 (%)
For	30	50
Against	55	31
Undecided	15	19
	100	100

Table C.8.¹³⁰

Question: "Are you, in principle, for or against compulsory military service - in other words, that every young man who is fit for service should be called up?"

	March 1956 (%)
For	51
Against	31
Undecided	18
	100

Table C. 9.¹³¹

Question to persons who favored conscription: "Why are you in favour of it?"

	March 1956		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
On educational grounds	30	29	32
On military grounds (So that everyone will be capable of defending the country)	7	9	6
No exceptions should be made, all should have the same civic responsibilities	8	11	5
Other reasons	2	2	2
No (concrete) statements	4	4	4
Others not asked	49	47	51
	100	102*	100

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Table C.10.¹³²

Question: *"Who enjoys most respect in the community, the regular soldier or the skilled worker?"*

	February 1956		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Skilled worker	72	76	69
Regular soldier	9	8	9
No opinion	19	16	22
	100	100	100

Table C.11.¹³³

Question: *"If someone asked you whether he should become a regular soldier in the new German army, would you advise him to do so, or would you advise against it?"*

	Jan. 1955 (%)	Feb. 1956 (%)
Advise against	47	43
Advise him to do so	19	16
Depends	12	11
Undecided	22	30
	100	100

¹³² Ibid, 445.

¹³³ Ibid.

Table C.12.¹³⁴

Question: "At present there are two plans under discussion in Bonn: According to the first one, all young men fit for service should be drafted, which amounts to compulsory military service. The other plan is for a regular armed force consisting only of volunteers who can sign on for life. These regulars would, in the course of time, be trained to become technical specialists. What in your opinion, would be the best solution for us: a regular army of voluntary specialists or an army in which all fit men must serve?"

	April 1956			
	For an army in which all must serve (%)	For a regular army (%)	Undecided (%)	
Collective result	44	37	19	100
Men	49	40	11	100
Women	40	35	25	100

AGE GROUPS:

Men only:

18 - 29 years	38	51	11	100
30 - 44 years	43	46	6	95
45 - 59 years	52	34	14	100
60 years and older	60	28	12	100

Women only:

18 - 29 years	39	39	22	100
30 - 44 years	40	36	24	100
45 - 59 years	42	32	26	100
60 years and older	39	30	31	100

Table C.13.¹³⁵

Question: "If compulsory military service is introduced in Germany, if every fit young man is called up, it will be necessary to decide on the period of service. Some say eighteen months, others consider twelve months to be adequate. What do you say?"

	April 1956		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
12 months	46	46	46
18 months	28	37	21
Other periods	8	8	8
Undecided	18	9	25
	100	100	100

¹³⁴ Ibid, 446.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Table C.14.¹³⁶

Question: *"Would you say that the influence of military service is by and large good or bad for young people?"*

	Jan. 1955 (%)	Mar. 1956 (%)
Good	75	61
Bad	11	12
Undecided	9	17
No opinion	5	10
	100	100

Table C.15.¹³⁷

Question: *"It will also have to be decided whether it should be permissible to object to military service. Do you think those called up should, or should not, be allowed to object to military service?"*

	Dec. 1953 (%)	Jan. 1955 (%)	Mar. 1955 (%)
Should be allowed	51	45	48
Should not be allowed	31	39	35
Do not know	18	16	17
	100	100	100

Table C.16.¹³⁸

Question: *"Should men who have been exempted from military service on grounds of conscience perform other duties instead, or should they be wholly exempt from service of any kind for the war?"*

	December 1953		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Should perform some other kind of service	60	65	56
Should be wholly exempt	20	21	19
Refusal to do military service quite out of the question	2	2	1
Do not know	18	12	24
	100	100	100

¹³⁶ Ibid, 447.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 449.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Table C.17.¹³⁹

Question: *"What should conscientious objectors do?"*

	December 1953		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Home service	28	29	27
Serve with medical corps	8	8	8
Join forces, but not on active service	5	6	3
Other replies	15	18	13
No (definite) reply	4	4	5
Against their doing other service	40	35	44
	100	100	100

Table C.18.¹⁴⁰

Question: *"When we in West Germany have an army again, do you think women should be called up for auxiliary military service, or not?"*

	January 1955		
	Collective (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
No	77	75	77
Only volunteers	12	11	13
Yes, should be conscripted	8	11	6
Do not know	3	3	4
	100	100	100

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 451.

Table C.19.¹⁴¹

Question: “Are you in principle for or against conscription – I mean, that every young man who is able be drafted into military service?”

	March 1956			
	For	Against	Undecided	
Collective	50	32	18	100
Men	53	35	12	100
Women	49	28	23	100
Age Groups				
16 - 29 Years	45	36	19	100
30 - 44 Years	52	30	18	100
45 - 59 Years	53	31	16	100
60 Years and older	53	28	19	100
Age Groups only Men				
16 - 29 Years	42	47	11	100
30 - 44 Years	60	31	9	100
45 - 59 Years	53	34	13	100
60 Years and older	58	29	13	100
Age Groups only Women				
16 - 29 Years	48	28	24	100
30 - 44 Years	45	29	26	100
45 - 59 Years	52	30	18	100
60 Years and older	48	27	25	100
Level of Education				
<i>Volksschule</i>	48	33	19	100
<i>Mittlere Reife</i>	58	26	16	100
<i>Abitur</i>	55	35	10	100
Type of Employment				
Worker	45	37	18	100
Agricultural Worker	49	25	26	100
Office Worker	58	27	15	100
Net monthly income of the head of household				
Under 250 DM	47	29	24	100
250 - 400 DM	49	35	16	100
400 - 600 DM	56	28	16	100
600 DM and more	51	34	15	100
Confession				
Protestants	50	34	16	100
Catholics	52	27	21	100
Others or without confession	38	49	13	100

¹⁴¹ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Wehr-Umfrage*, 17.

Home

Refugees, Expellees	57	25	18	100
Locals	49	34	17	100

City and Country

Villager	48	27	25	100
Small and little city	55	31	14	100
Big city	46	36	18	100

Political Orientation

CDU/CSU - Supporter	66	17	17	100
SPD - Supporter	39	51	10	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	64	32	4	100
Supporter of other parties	56	29	15	100

Political Orientation – Only Men

CDU/CSU - Supporter	72	16	12	100
SPD - Supporter	38	53	9	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	63	33	4	100
Supporter of other parties	56	33	11	100

Political Orientation – Only Women

CDU/CSU - Supporter	62	18	20	100
SPD - Supporter	43	47	10	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	66	30	4	100
Supporter of other parties	55	24	21	100

Table C.21.¹⁴²

Question: "Do you find it good or bad that West Germany has begun to build a new German Army?"

	April 1956			
	Good	Not Good	Undecided	
Collective	38	36	26	100
Men	42	41	17	100
Women	35	32	33	100
Age Groups – Only Men				
18 - 29 Years	38	47	15	100
30 - 44 Years	41	44	15	100
45 - 59 Years	41	37	22	100
60 Years and older	50	35	15	100
Age Groups – Only Women				
18 - 29 Years	32	35	33	100
30 - 44 Years	36	32	32	100
45 - 59 Years	39	31	30	100
60 Years and older	33	30	37	100
Political Orientation				
CDU/CSU - Supporter	58	17	25	100
SPD - Supporter	25	58	17	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	49	35	16	100
Supporter of other parties	37	35	28	100
Only Men				
CDU/CSU - Supporter	70	13	17	100
SPD - Supporter	26	61	13	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	53	36	11	100
Supporter of other parties	40	35	25	100
Only Women				
CDU/CSU - Supporter	50	20	30	100
SPD - Supporter	24	53	23	100
FDP/DVP - Supporter	45	33	22	100
Supporter of other parties	34	34	32	100

¹⁴² Ibid, 10.

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