

Scott Torres

*“Sit and stay”:
Max von Stephanitz’s German Shepherd Dog*

ABSTRACT: *This article addresses the establishment of the German Shepherd Dog and the work of its founding breeder, Max von Stephanitz (1864-1936), in late nineteenth-century Germany. Based on newspaper articles, veterinary science journals, and historical scholarship, it first analyzes the German Shepherd Dog’s place within a national framework, then moves to a close examination of Max von Stephanitz’s writings, and finally discusses the German Shepherd Dog in the context of nineteenth-century German unification. The author argues that the establishment of the German Shepherd Dog coincided with overarching national interests that surpassed any notion of its existence primarily as a shepherding breed.*

KEYWORDS: *nineteenth century; Germany; German Shepherd Dog; Alsatian Dog; Max von Stephanitz; war dog; World War I; Phylax Society; Society for the German Shepherd Dog*

Introduction

The path toward national consciousness in Germany exists because of warfare and expansion, as well as industrial and economic growth. Germany, like its western neighbors France and Britain, realized the need to cultivate and unify its citizens across social and economic plains. A population drawing its essence from a common narrative and shared experience, Germany made its greatest strides toward establishing an exclusive national identity in the mid to late nineteenth century. The German wars of unification beginning in 1864 and ending in 1871 underscored German military superiority and reinforced existing anti-French sentiment across the country. Alongside military superiority, geographic expansion through colonialism set Germany on par with its neighbors to the west. From the 1880s up to the end of World War I, German colonial size ranked third behind Britain and France¹. A cultural revival took place as well. German thinkers urged men, women, and children to embrace Germanic lore and mythology. A renewed interest in romantic narratives and Germanic epics glorifying power, war, and sacrifice found its way into every facet of life. Fairy tales, song, and speeches provided examples of the German “Volk” (people) and an ancestral past within the forest. Industrial innovation shuttled Germany into modernity through its construction of a rail system and trade confederation.

The German Shepherd Dog remains a symbol of German unity, efficiency, loyalty, bravery, and strength. This article examines the writing of Prussian Cavalry Captain and dog breeder Max von Stephanitz (1864-1936). Von Stephanitz’s writing is rife with pan-German overtones that reflect a strong nation unified militarily, politically, economically, and socially. Von Stephanitz emphasizes German racial superiority as it applies to both humans and dogs,

¹ Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 2.

and introduces his readers to subjects highly regarded at the time as scientifically revolutionary, such as social Darwinism, eugenics, and pan-Germanism. Von Stephanitz also provides a detailed roadmap on the subject of the establishment of the German Shepherd Dog that is comparable to the path to German unification.

This article highlights the similarities between the formation of national identity and the establishment of the German Shepherd Dog. Firstly, it examines the impact of literature and its ability to reinforce an exclusive German identity in addition to its availability to the masses. Secondly, it looks at attitudes concerning racial preservation and purity, namely popular nineteenth-century influences, and concludes that ideas concerning race and breeding were deemed interchangeable and easily applied to both animals and humans. Finally, this article compares citizen and nation, dog and master. I juxtapose the raising and training of the German youth to the raising and training of German Shepherd Dogs, both in terms of serving a larger national purpose. This article argues that the establishment of the German Shepherd Dog occurred under a nationalist influence. The German Shepherd Dog represents a German path toward modernity, military superiority, economic, social, and racial superiority. The German Shepherd Dog remains a symbol of German efficiency through its display of character, obedience, intelligence, and loyalty to its family. However, the breed serves as a stark reminder of concepts and ideologies responsible for keeping the German nation on its special path toward its mid-twentieth-century downfall.

I. The Revival of the German Spirit through Literature

Von Stephanitz's worldview bleeds onto the pages of his *The German Shepherd Dog in Word and Picture* (published and revised several times since 1901).² However, much of it is entwined within the context of dog breeding. The traits German Shepherd Dogs carry with them are no different than what the German nation instilled in its citizens. Loyalty, obedience, bravery, and utility are common indicators displayed by people and German Shepherd Dogs alike.

Louis Snyder's *Roots of German Nationalism* (1978) highlights the wave of national sentiment German citizens embraced during the nineteenth century.³ Examples of nationalism and an exclusive German essence responsible for

² Max von Stephanitz, *The German Shepherd Dog in Word and Picture*, trans. C. Charke, rev. J. Schwabacher (Jena: Anton Kämpfe, 1923). Von Stephanitz's work was first published 1901 in German as *Der deutsche Schäferhund in Wort und Bild*, accessed May 25, 2019. It was completely revised and expanded for its sixth German edition (1921), accessed May, 2019. The seventh German edition and first English/American edition appeared in 1923; all citations in this article follow this 1923 (first) English/American edition. The 2nd American edition, currently in circulation, is Max von Stephanitz, *The German Shepherd Dog in Word and Picture*, 2nd American ed. (Wheat Ridge: Hoflin Publishing, 1994).

³ Louis L. Snyder, *Roots of German Nationalism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978).

setting Germany apart from the rest of Europe was evident in the political and social discourse. Prior to unification in 1871, Germany had existed in a fractured state. Unification was facing obstacles on numerous fronts. Economic growth, industrialization, and competing geographic expansion are all components of national unity. However, literature stands apart due to its accessibility. Literacy rates in all social classes climbed in the nineteenth century. German literature served as a response to the French Enlightenment model of citizenship. Germany chose not to credit the French as inspiration, but as direct competition: German improvement on the French model, done the German way.

German intellectuals looked to their thinkers of the Enlightenment. The works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) reveal the need to glorify a German past. According to Robert Ergang "German Literature was an effective agent in welding together the diverse people of Germany. It provided a point of contact during a time of division, and it also created the demand for political and economic unity."⁴ Interested in reviving a German spirit lost to French influence, Herder advocated for German thinkers to embrace the written and spoken German language. An influx of literature ranging from books, poems, and song lyrics glorified a German past, linking it historically to ancestral greatness.

Romantic notions of the "Fatherland," Germanic spirituality, and the warrior spirit consumed the minds of German men and women. Recurring themes of sacrifice, war, and death embroiled German narratives from folk tales to opera performances, most notably the works of Richard Wagner (1813-1883). However, the ideas put forth in literature were not accessible or understood entirely throughout society. It is important to take note of the efforts and strides Germany took to instill a sense of national identity in the youth. From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, German children read and learned about German society, culture, and values through fairy tales and adventure stories set in far-off German colonial expeditions. Both fairy tales and frontier fiction provided metaphorical references to German racial superiority over exotic and different racial groups. They enabled children to make the distinction between right and wrong through stories of victory and defeat and the triumph over evil, as well as cautionary tales of foreign invaders. The brothers Grimm's fairy tales, exemplify the way German youth came to view the world around them. It was through folk tales, myth, and song that all classes and ages came to understand the concept of national character.

The brothers Grimm's fairy tales contain numerous metaphorical references and representations regarding the manner in which German citizens viewed themselves among others. Fairy tales, folk stories, and poems provide insight

⁴ Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 177. This work is a reprint of the author's 1931 Columbia University thesis.

into beliefs, norms, and fears that accompany everyday life. They are an important clue to understanding societal constructs such as class division and foreign influence. The brothers Grimm's fairy tales, a widely distributed work of literature served two purposes. With regard to the first, the Grimms' representation of society, American scholar Louis Snyder makes the claim that "in society class distinctions were definite. And in fairy tales the upper and lower classes were depicted favorably."⁵ Fairy tales portrayed class structure in a positive light, yet its representation of the middle class stood out. The middle class comprised of tradesmen, merchants, doctors, and innkeepers—those who were not necessarily rich and not entirely poor either. Snyder specifically highlights the Jewish population within the middle class: "The middle class consisting of merchants, innkeepers, doctors, clerics, and Jews, is condemned for its greed and quackery."⁶ The mistrust of the merchant is reflected by Max von Stephanitz's disdain for dealers of half-bred wolf-dogs, dealers set out to sell ill-bred animals to eager citizens to make a quick profit.

Von Stephanitz refers to such people, just as the fairy tales identify the middle class, as greedy and incompetent. He recalls the crossing of wolves and dogs, stating

[m]ost unfortunately, however, several real crossings have been made and the products of the breeding have been most rashly given into the hands of 'lay-people'. The chief sinners generally in such cases have been Menagerie proprietors who know how to turn a penny by leading to a wolf a bitch on heat, or, vice versa, a domestic dog to their she-wolf.⁷

He drives his idea home regarding the merchant class, making the claim that, in addition to greed, these breeders intend to deceive potential buyers, using the latter's fascination with exotic and foreign products as a tool to influence the purchase of a wolf-dog:

[i]n such Menageries [...] a brave genuine shepherd dog was caste for the role of the savage killer of 'Little Red Riding Hood', and generally got away with it, because the majority of the visitors at such places are eager to swallow all they see and hear.⁸

II. *The Purity of the Race*

Max von Stephanitz stood firm in his belief that a shepherd dog's true beauty lies in its ability to work. Dog enthusiasts labeled as fanciers did not gain a special place in his world of the German Shepherd Dog. Von Stephanitz's commentary on the subject of breeding is an interesting glimpse into the thought process of the man and ultimately reveals darker aspects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: "It is one of the natural laws of Inheritance that creatures of pure blood, where by proper breeding all unevennesses have been eliminated, far

⁵ Snyder, *Roots of German Nationalism*, 43.

⁶ Snyder, *Roots of German Nationalism*, 43.

⁷ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 45.

⁸ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 46.

surpass all mongrels."⁹ Von Stephanitz refers to the progeny of wolves and dogs as mongrels and not suitable for domestication due to racial degeneration. Von Stephanitz highlights French examples as lessons learned with regard to breeding. However, he uses French men and women as a primary example:

It will take twenty years to show the degeneration among the French people consequent on the intimacy of many French women with coloured French subjects. It is a well-known historical fact that intimate connection with another race, foreign to their own, even the superficial adoption of, and identification with their ideas, their conduct and their manners (which are essentially opposed to their own), may utterly crush a people physically, mentally and morally; highly developed though it be. If nothing more, may this at least teach us poor animal breeders a lesson.¹⁰

Purity of race and blood was studied extensively. Von Stephanitz's examples clearly indicate that selection and breeding did not pertain strictly to animals. Ideologies such as social Darwinism and the practice of eugenics dominated nineteenth and twentieth-century breeding processes. Regrettably, Germany, unlike other countries, took the concepts to murderous extremes in the name of progress and racial preservation. As history reveals, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), twenty-five years younger than von Stephanitz, subscribed to these concepts and later applied them to German men, women, and children.

Statements Adolf Hitler made in *Mein Kampf* (first published in 1925) regarding the purity of race and blood resemble those of von Stephanitz: "Every racial crossing leads inevitably sooner or later to the decline of the hybrid product."¹¹ Hitler alluded to the potential degeneration of the German people through intermixing with other races. He viewed mixing of blood and race as a direct threat. Hitler claimed: "There is only the highest human right, and this right at the same time the holiest obligation, to wit, to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of those beings."¹² Another quote from *Mein Kampf* drives home the point of racial preservation: "the Volkisch state must therefore begin by raising marriage from the level of a continuous defilement of race, and give it the consecration of an institution which is called upon to produce images of the lord and not monstrosities halfway between man and ape."¹³ Von Stephanitz and Hitler do not stray far from one another, ideologically, in terms of racial preservation. They both indicate a need to preserve and nurture their breed and race for the future, leading one to make the conclusion that the, selection of mates, breeding, nurturing, training, and education equally apply to dogs and

⁹ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 50.

¹⁰ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 50.

¹¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1943; first published 1925 in German), 400.

¹² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 402.

¹³ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 403.

humans. Von Stephanitz goes a step further, indicating that many cases of breeding outside the race continued primarily for monetary gain.

In many cases, wolf-dog puppies were advertised and sold to make money, a business transaction at most. Unethical and untrained breeders peddled these dogs throughout Germany with success, preying on people's taste for purchasing items that seemed exotic and different. Von Stephanitz refers to those German citizens as "sleepy Michaels." Ultimately, readers can sense his distaste for foreign goods and a genuine dislike for those taking advantage of his compatriots. On the subject, he states:

Sleepy 'Michael', however continues to have unbounded confidence and esteem for every thing from abroad, and is still convinced that all foreign products must be better, nobler, and above all, more valuable than his own.¹⁴

This, according to von Stephanitz, explains the need for an exclusive breed type, particularly an exclusively German breed. There is a definitive racial bias throughout von Stephanitz's writing.

Von Stephanitz clearly does not find anything good in the Russian spirit. Ultimately, he blames the availability of Russian wolves for the contamination of dogs in Germany: "[D]ealers are selling with a supreme audacity wonderful 'wolf sheep dogs' out of a Russian steppe wolf mother."¹⁵ He promotes a greater sense of Germany unity and German commerce, as well as a distrust of foreigners. It appears that he strongly stands by a belief in a self-sustaining German state, and this coincides with his nationalist rhetoric regarding unity and the preservation of a superior German essence. His opinions regarding foreign trade and commerce reflect a pan-German train of thought.

III. The German Shepherd Dog 101

The German Shepherd Dog is a modern breed of dog that emerged in Germany during the late nineteenth century. It was a product of its environment and reflected the needs of farmers in the German countryside. A dog's employment depended on its ability to work long hours in the field. In addition to their employment as shepherds, dogs proved themselves as efficient guardians of both livestock and property, defending them against man and beast. It is important to highlight the point that German farmers utilized numerous different dogs to accomplish these tasks.

The breed resulting from careful selection and development was classified specifically as the German Shepherd Dog. Prior to 1899, the use of shepherd dogs was of little concern to the majority of German men and women, mostly because various dogs were already being utilized with a great degree of success. Leading up to the establishment of the breed, German canine enthusiasts created a society dedicated to establishing a breed of their own. The Phylax Society, formed in

¹⁴ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 45.

¹⁵ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 45.

December 1891, led the charge in observing, selecting, and breeding certain dogs. Yet, the Phylax Society did not last long; it disbanded in 1894.¹⁶ Membership of the defunct Phylax Society continued to show interest in the process of breeding a dog the German nation could proudly call its own.

The consensus among dog breeders and club members regarding breed type and look reflected the interest and need for a uniform breed, a dog suitable for work, and one reflecting the spirit of the German people and nation. Retired Prussian Cavalry Captain Max von Stephanitz, a former student of the Berlin School of Veterinary Science, made it his life work to develop and present the German Shepherd Dog. Von Stephanitz's decision led him, alongside other members of the defunct Phylax Society, to establish the "Verein für Deutsche Schäferhunde (SV)" in April 1899.¹⁷

As von Stephanitz points out, German dog lovers in the 1880s and 1890s had shown no interest in owning a dog or developing a dog of their own. Von Stephanitz recalls the national attitude regarding dog breeding:

The dog races of the country formerly counted for very little in Germany; Germany's interest in the dog was more or less in its infancy; and accordingly wandered with a preference for the more thoroughbred and more 'aristocratic' foreign races.¹⁸

His commentary regarding foreign races in the context of animal breeding is telling of a larger pan-German sentiment. He utilized this example as motivation to move forward in the right direction with breed development.

The selection process utilized by breeders combined shepherd dogs from various German regions. Variables taken into consideration consisted of weight, color, coat density, bone structure, ear length and weight, erect ears or floppy ears, tail length, intelligence, and temperament. Von Stephanitz identified the shortfalls the Phylax Society had experienced, concluding that their limited access to dogs outside of northern and central Germany had impeded their overall progress.¹⁹ The exploration of kennels outside the northern and central region proved a step in the right direction.

Shepherd dogs utilized throughout Germany came in different shapes, sizes, and colors. Certain characteristics stuck out in the minds of dog breeders of the time. The German population of dog enthusiasts paid special attention to dogs' ears and color. The first dog observed and considered for the role of the German Shepherd Dog was the Thuringian shepherd dog. The dog's name reflects the central German state of Thuringia where these dogs worked and lived in at the time. The Thuringian dog, a stocky, erect-eared, wolf-grey-colored dog, according to von Stephanitz, was "full of vigour."²⁰ Enthusiasm for the breed

¹⁶ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 131.

¹⁷ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 131.

¹⁸ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 131.

¹⁹ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 133.

²⁰ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 133.

resulted mainly from its outward appearance. The Thuringian dog displayed a trait dog enthusiasts longed for, namely erect ears. The Thuringians carried their ears similar to wolves, in addition to their dense grey coat. Yet, for von Stephanitz the Thuringians' working ability lagged behind their outward appearance. With regard to developing the breed, the Thuringians apparently displayed wild traits, and many deemed them unsuitable for breeding. Even though a small number of Thuringian shepherds performed well in kennel breeding programs, observations made regarding the Thuringian shepherd dog prompted breeders to venture south. Thus, the southwestern region of Württemberg became the next stop on the mission to find the best dog for further development.

The dogs observed in Württemberg differed from the Thuringians in two distinct ways: their size and appearance of their ears. The Württemberg dogs did not consistently show erect ears, some ears were floppy and hanging to the sides of the head. Despite the absence of erect ears in some, the Württemberg dogs surpassed their Thuringian counterparts:

The Württemberg dogs possessed also great advantages in their bodily features, to which formerly however, little attention was paid, except to their size. They were generally big, large-boned, roomy fellows with good hind quarters and swift gait.²¹

Württemberg breeders praised their dog and appeared satisfied. While the Thuringians were consistently displaying erect ears and a wolf-grey coloring, the desired size, strength, and working ability lay with the Württemberg dog.

German breeders arrived at the conclusion to breed the Württemberg and Thuringian shepherd dogs. Breeders "began in their turn to introduce a dog with erect ears and wolf colour, and thus for the breed of the shepherd dog the 'Egg of Columbus [sic] was laid."²² The breeding project produced a dog with the look and working ability that their German breeders proudly claimed as their own. Hektor-Linksrhein, renamed to Horand von Grafrath, remains the first registered German Shepherd Dog recorded by the SV in addition to its record as the society's number one stud.

Horand von Grafrath was a product of Sparwasser kennels in Frankfurt. Von Stephanitz recalls his character and temperament; it is, however, important to take note that von Stephanitz did not have a hand in the breeding and primary raising of Horand. He simply purchased him from Sparwasser and utilized him for the future of the breed. With regard to his performance, von Stephanitz highlights his intelligence and energetic drive: "Horand embodied for the fancy dog enthusiasts of that time the fulfilment of their fondest dreams."²³ His reference to "fancy dog enthusiasts" reflects a keen interest in a dog solely for its look and not wholeheartedly for its working ability. Nevertheless, what von

²¹ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 135.

²² Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 135.

²³ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 136.

Stephanitz highlights were the desired traits: a medium to large dog with powerful bone structure, good lines, and a nobly formed head, in addition to being obedient and of stable temperament – traits that other German shepherd dogs around the globe display to this day.

Any faults he displayed von Stephanitz placed not on the dog himself but on his previous owners. Von Stephanitz claims that any lack of energy displayed by this dog did not come from a genetic anomaly but from the lack of a task to accomplish or from a lack of purpose. Horand's energy and willingness to learn foreshadowed what was to come for the future of the breed, under the close eye of von Stephanitz and the SV breeding program. The dog's working ability and intelligence surpassed its initial purpose as a shepherd. Von Stephanitz foresaw more for this breed, as he reflected on its versatility: "What could not have become of such a dog, if we had only had at the time military or police service training."²⁴ Following Horand and the establishment of the SV in 1899, within twenty-four years, the society recorded 150,000 German Shepherd Dogs in its official studbook.

IV. A Reflection of the People

The German Shepherd Dog stood as a reflection of the German people. The selection, breeding, and training of dogs, resembled the instilling of cultural and moral values in young German boys and girls. Von Stephanitz's concepts regarding racial purity applied to dog breeding and equally to human classifications. The themes surrounding both German Shepherd Dogs and citizens encompassed bravery, loyalty, sacrifice, service, obedience, and a martial spirit.

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century German military campaigns emphasized the glorification of a masculine warrior spirit. The German wars of unification stoked the fires of perceived German superiority on the battlefield – in addition to a long-standing disdain for the French. War and nation set the stage for the cultivation of future generations. Lessons from primary school up to the Gymnasium (i.e., high school) level propagated a nationalist agenda. Von Stephanitz facilitated and fostered a young dog's drive to please its master, ultimately creating a bond between man and dog that reflected the love and loyalty German boys and girls developed for the "Fatherland," reinforcing the concept that German youth and dog were equally purpose-built.

From the 1840s and up until World War I, Germany reestablished its sense of national identity. Victory on the battlefield provided one example of progress. However, education served as a better way to ensure and preserve the German way of life. Molding the minds of future generations proved to work fairly well. Glorifying past victories through literature provided German society with titles such as Max Schneckeburger's patriotic poem *Watch on the Rhine* (1840), and

²⁴ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 138.

reinforced a distrust and hatred of the French. Literature is an efficient tool, mentally stimulating and influential. Molding the youth also included the numerous athletic and paramilitary associations available. Gymnastics, scouts, and military-style drills provided boys with the opportunity to train their minds and bodies. Such training was designed to keep young boys on the way to manhood physically and morally sound. Ultimately, scouting, paramilitary exercises, and gymnastics aimed to equip the German nation with generations of future soldiers that would be physically and mentally ready to serve and, if need be, die for the "Fatherland."

World War I served to ramp up the need for a nationalist curriculum in schools. Moreover, it encouraged boys and girls to prepare themselves. War pedagogy consumed the lessons taught in schools. Greek and Roman epics provided legendary narratives reinforcing masculinity and power. Alongside the glory commonly associated with warfare, classical epics romanticized battle and death. Students became aware of the power and nobility associated with dying for their nation and viewed it as a noble sacrifice for the "Fatherland." Educational change proposed by Prussian leadership aimed at removing Greek and Roman epics from the Gymnasium's curriculum. In 1890, Kaiser Wilhelm II suggested replacing the classic epics with strictly German stories and legends. The Kaiser argued: "We should raise national young Germans, not young Greeks and Romans."²⁵ A resurgence of German folk stories ranging from fairy tales to exotic colonial expeditions in German Africa, Asia, and the Pacific consumed the minds of young students. Lessons reinforced concepts of racial purity, war, and German racial superiority. In spite of the proposed change to the Gymnasium's curriculum, Greek and Roman classics proved to encourage and instill a warrior spirit among German boys. Andrew Donson's *Youth in the Fatherless Land* (2010) references German army volunteers fresh from the Gymnasium: "In November 1914, hundreds of schoolboys, volunteers fresh out of the classical Gymnasium, allegedly marched into French machine gun fire, to their deaths singing Deutschland, Deutschland über alles."²⁶—a romantic and glorifying example of sacrifice and service, however, a terrifying reality of the power of nationalist rhetoric and an education system fostering its growth.

Similarly, dogs were placed in service of their masters. Max von Stephanitz argued that early training of puppies was paramount to achieving trust and loyalty between a dog and its master. He claimed:

an obedience which is joyful and always willing, founded on love for the master, and as such, (as we have already seen) founded on the satisfaction of a natural craving, which therefore must be consolidated by a wise training from puppyhood.²⁷

²⁵ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 46.

²⁶ Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 63.

²⁷ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 572-573.

Not unlike the training of boys and girls, the recognition of a larger goal is noted. Similar goals are evident in the teaching of children and the training of dogs. Both kids and dogs trained to serve the nation:

[W]ith such a dog every thing is possible later on, for joy in work is combined with its accomplishments. This, as the outpouring of the power accumulated in the dog, is the result of sound nerves and a serviceable body build; and here again it is a matter of breeding, and training both directed to a special purpose with a definite goal in view.²⁸

Education and training within the scope of nation and war make choosing nation over oneself a simple decision. Nation for a human and master for a dog are the same. Von Stephanitz claims selfishness is a natural part of both human and animal life. He refers to the importance of training and the end goal of removing selfishness from the equation in terms of the nation and master:

The dog must seek for, and find the fullest satisfaction of his self-seeking in his master, because he gives him protection, shelter and food. We describe the expression of this primeval self-seeking as love for his master [...].²⁹

The example he provides sheds light on the dynamic between self and master/nation. Human selfless devotion to country resembles the devotion of a dog to his master. Militarism woven into day-to-day activities highlights the process in which boys shed their individual differences en route to becoming selfless agents of the nation. German values and romanticized notions of war made it possible for young men to serve unquestionably, to their deaths in some instances. Examples of unquestionable service include song lyrics referencing the surplus of young minds, such as *German Army, You Fountain of Youth*: "The German army's powerful brawn, / England's hordes of false mercenaries / and all foreign people / have to bow to German strength."³⁰ Another example of song lyrics conveying strength and superiority is *We are the Youth Company*: "Yes, we are German / Want to be German forever / always tried and true / Fatherland, we are yours only; / When we get the call, then we are there. / Our life belongs to you."³¹ The concept of selfless service was instilled in young boys to oblige the nation. Another example of sacrifice provided by von Stephanitz reflects the dog's fidelity and unquestionable loyalty; here, von Stephanitz is quoting E. Schlaiker:

I know no animal which, in its sentiments and sympathies, is as tender and intimate as the dog, or one whose moral characteristics are so strongly developed that one must in this respect indeed rank him higher than humanity. There are few among us who can surpass him in fidelity and unconditional readiness to sacrifice himself.³²

²⁸ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 573.

²⁹ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 575-576.

³⁰ Quoted in Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 122.

³¹ Quoted in Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land*, 122.

³² Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 201.

Training and reinforcing identity in youth is no different from the training of a dog to serve a master. It is no stretch to conclude that these examples best represent the idea of nation and master, as constructs are easily interchangeable. However, one obvious difference is that the life span of a dog compared to its human counterpart is shorter. Therefore, one can see the visible progress a dog makes at a faster rate. Twenty-four months of training a dog from puppyhood to adult dog provided Germany with a ready and eager canine war machine. Max von Stephanitz's German Shepherd Dogs, to his delight, gained international acclaim for their service as war dogs utilized in World War I.

V. War Dogs

Prior to World War I, advances in technology such as reconnaissance airplanes, wireless telegraph, and the telephone had replaced the dog as a carrier of information during wartime campaigns. German Shepherd Dogs obtained their training in German colonies and were utilized as police and guard dogs. Von Stephanitz's dogs, among others used in the colonies, successfully adapted to the extreme climates of Africa and the Pacific. However, von Stephanitz claims the dogs could not meet their potential due to inexperienced trainers in the colonies. Von Stephanitz realized the war presented an opportunity for the employment of the breed in the service of the nation. Dogs took on roles such as message carriers, sentries, and Ambulance Corps assistants. The dogs gained a quick reputation for their intelligence, bravery, and loyalty.

"Ever since Prussia and later a unified Germany emerged as one of continental Europe's foremost military powers,"³³ the German soldier and dog in combination represented a fighting force of legendary status. The latter years of the nineteenth century produced a military known for its organization and efficiency. The German military, despite the outcome of World War I, proved to endure well into the twentieth century. The war dog, like his soldier counterpart, served bravely without question. Examples of success included an improved message delivery system and the safe rescue and return of injured soldiers. The change in battle tactics, specifically trench warfare, proved difficult and deadly for soldiers delivering messages. Machine gun fire, mortar, and cannon explosions left the terrain uneven and pitted. Shelling the terrain resulted in damaged communication lines previously buried in the ground. In addition to mechanized communication, thick smoke from poison gas and artillery impaired a soldier's vision, breaking down the ability to communicate through heliograph and flag signal. Rough terrain, as well as lost mechanical and hand communication, caused military leadership to utilize dogs as message runners.

The army employed pigeons as a delivery system but found them to be inefficient due to weather and time conditions. The dog proved itself a versatile

³³ David Stone, *The Kaiser's Army: The German Army in World War One* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 17.

tool and overall better suited to the environment. Soldiers tasked with delivering messages had to face rugged terrain, and barbed wire fencing, as well as machine gun and artillery fire. These obstacles slowed them down and in numerous instances killed them. The dog moved quickly between destinations and presented the enemy with a much smaller and agile target. Von Stephanitz claims the average soldier needed up to one hour to cover the distance of one kilometer, compared to the average time of three to seven minutes per kilometer covered by dogs.³⁴ Dogs adapted and worked under the conditions of war. They effectively managed their ability to work in extreme weather conditions, resulting in faster delivery times. Heavy machine gun and artillery explosions did not serve as distractions. Dogs performed their duties to the best of their abilities. According to von Stephanitz, "many dogs died through fidelity to the fulfilment of their duty."³⁵ Several dogs and soldiers who were wounded continued their duties. Examples of bravery include a reference to a German Shepherd Dog in the French town of Peronne: "[he] lost his off hind leg near Peronne; he could only run his message slowly on three legs, but he fulfilled his duty, and dropped dead."³⁶ Dogs exceeded expectations as effective message carriers. Dogs were also employed for other tasks, including pest control: they instinctively made themselves useful killing off rodent infestations throughout the German trenches. However, the dogs also served a bigger purpose, namely assisting and attending to injured soldiers.

Ambulance dogs searched for and rescued wounded soldiers during and after battle. The German Ambulance Corps and Red Cross became the first to utilize the working dog during war. Dogs in the medical field in Germany date back to the late 1890s, The German Society for Ambulance Dogs, founded in 1893, realized the need for a group of trained dogs pertaining to medical casualties on and off the battlefield. However, prior to any interaction with the Society for the German Shepherd Dog, the ambulance society remained content utilizing the Scotch Collie. The Society for the German Shepherd Dog (SV) promoted the use of dogs in the ambulance service at the start of the war in 1914. The Society employed specific training and testing of a dog's efficiency in the tracking and rescuing of wounded soldiers. The SV kept deployable dogs at the Ambulance Corps' disposal. The German war office utilized the SV as a contract organization responsible for the keeping and training of German Shepherd Dogs for eventual use in battle and ambulance operations.

Trench warfare did not provide sufficient opportunities for these dogs due to cramped conditions. They required open advancement. Ambulance dogs were used on the eastern and southeastern fronts. According to von Stephanitz,

³⁴ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 349.

³⁵ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 349.

³⁶ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 350.

[i]t is not yet known, and probably never will be, how many thousands of wounded owe them [i.e., these dogs] their lives and their restoration to health, but the future of the Ambulance dog with the Army is now everywhere assured.³⁷

German Shepherd Dogs served the "Fatherland" loyally and bravely, in many cases sacrificing themselves for the lives of their masters.

VI. The Bark Heard around the World

The German Shepherd Dog achieved global notoriety as soldiers returned from the war. Soldiers told stories of the dogs' bravery and intelligence. U.S. soldiers took a keen interest in the breed, soldiers managed to bring a few dogs home, and their popularity spread like wildfire throughout the United States. The dogs brought into the United States by returning GIs began to serve alongside police officers nationwide. However, the breed in the United States felt the harsh impact of American consumer culture. Novice breeders and pet shop owners began breeding these dogs at an alarming rate, producing thousands of dogs cleverly advertised as German police dogs. American breeding did not adhere to the strict selection and breeding guidelines established by von Stephanitz. Many American breeders and dog enthusiasts believed that von Stephanitz's strict guidelines regarding breeding standards, care procedures, and training took a back seat to his racial ideology.

British and American attitudes following World War I reflected a widespread anti-German sentiment. The result of the war and Treaty of Versailles deeply affected the country. Germany was ordered to pay war reparations and accept the shame of war guilt internationally. Unfortunately, the German Shepherd Dog felt the blow as well, yet dog enthusiasts, breeders, and service outlets such as the police and the military kept the breed employed. The dog's ability to work surpassed the feelings of resentment toward Germany as a country. However, the dog's did suffer a number of name changes throughout western Europe and the United States. Britain chose to remove "German" from the dog's title and completely renamed the breed the "Alsatian" Dog. Britons continue to call the German Shepherd Dog the Alsatian Dog. The American Kennel Club removed "German" from its official registry shortly after the war, and the official registration of the breed titled the dog simply as the shepherd dog. Meanwhile, the German Shepherd Dog found its biggest fan base via the silver screen.

Two German Shepherd Dogs revolutionized film and exemplified their intelligence and working ability to audiences across the nation. Strong Heart and Rin Tin Tin captured the imagination of young boys and girls. The two dogs became Hollywood's first mega stars. According to the German Shepherd Club of America, Strong Heart received up to 10,000 fan letters a week, and Rin Tin Tin earned \$2.5 million during his career as a movie star. Unfortunately, the popularity played a role in mass breeding programs, ultimately producing

³⁷ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 357.

poorly bred dogs. The dogs bred in the United States were mediocre versions of their German ancestors. They displayed the correct look, but little to no working ability. The result of poor breeding directly contradicted von Stephanitz's vision of a perfect working dog and proved his theory regarding racial degeneration. Most dogs of American breeding programs suffered from conditions such as arthritis and early-onset hip-dysplasia, all a result of bad breeding.

Outside the United States, the breed's popularity grew out of its display on the battlefield. Von Stephanitz refers to the breed's introduction into neighboring Austria prior to the start of the war:

The taste for our highly bred German Shepherd dog, which had already been widely introduced into Austria before the war, had made important progress during the War, thanks to the splendid services they rendered the various armies. There has been a demand for our race on the other side of the frontier since 1912 [...].³⁸

Countries like Denmark, Finland, Russia, Czechoslovakia (since 1918), and Holland employed the German Shepherd Dog as a service dog in police and security work. However, von Stephanitz credits Dutch and Belgian breeders with the breeding of their own efficient lines of shepherd dogs. The German Shepherd Dog with regard to warfare has seen action in every theater of war since World War I, and has been serving alongside armies and police forces across the globe.

Conclusion

The German Shepherd Dog stands as a symbol of German unity, efficiency, loyalty, bravery, and strength. The breed surpassed its initial job of simply herding sheep on farms throughout Germany. The dogs' efficiency led German leadership to adopt the breed as a definite symbol of German military power alongside the German soldier. German Shepherd Dogs were raised and trained to defend their masters to the end, just as German soldiers were willing to die for the "Fatherland" on the battlefield.

The establishment of the breed confirms that a shared racial ideology prevailed throughout German society. Key factors, including military glory, concepts of the "Volk," modern technology, and colonial expansion served to push Germany toward national exclusiveness. The establishment of the German Shepherd Dog coincided with a nationalist agenda. The German Shepherd Dog represents a German path toward modernity, military superiority, economic, social, and alleged racial superiority. The German Shepherd Dog remains a symbol of German efficiency through its display of character, obedience, intelligence, and loyalty to its family. However, the breed serves as a stark reminder of concepts and ideologies that put the German nation on a special path that led to its mid-twentieth-century downfall.

The concepts of nation building and nationalistic ideology influenced every facet of life in Germany. Politics, the economy, society, and the military all

³⁸ Von Stephanitz, *German Shepherd Dog*, 164.

operated within a nationalist framework. This national framework affected change, and it shaped the way everyday Germans viewed themselves among others.

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