THE BEGINNING OF REARMAMENT
THE HIMMEROD MEMORANDUM AND THE BEGINNING OF WEST GERMAN SECURITY POLICY

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The Himmerod Memorandum stands as the “Magna Charta” of the armed forces (Bundeswehr) of the Federal Republic of Germany. It was the product of a conference of German military experts carried out at the request of the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer in October 1950. The Allied occupying powers also endorsed the mission of the conferees conducted at the monastery at Himmerod. The Memorandum laid out the basic concepts for rearming West Germany after the Second World War.

The full title of the document was “A Study Concerning the Establishment of a German Contingent in the Framework of a Supranational Force for Western European Defense.” The memorandum itself was more than 50 typewritten pages long, and four complete copies were prepared. In 1977 an annotated version with a commentary was published.

Prehistory of Himmerod—The Political Situation

The title of the document makes it clear that the mission of the conference had already been assigned to the participants. Yet neither the conference nor the Memorandum marks the real beginning of West German security policy. In fact, some would date the real beginning of...